

Generals, Dictators, and Kings

*Authoritarian Regimes and Civil Conflict, 1973–2004**

HANNE FJELDE

*Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University
and Centre for the Study of Civil War, PRIO*

Recent years have seen a surge of literature examining how political institutions influence the risk of civil conflict. A comparatively neglected aspect of this debate has been the heterogeneous impact of different forms of authoritarianism. In this article, I theoretically and empirically unpack the authoritarian regime category. I argue that authoritarian regimes differ both in their capacity to forcefully control opposition and in their ability to co-opt their rivals through offers of power positions and rents. Authoritarian regimes thus exhibit predictable differences in their ability to avoid organized violent challenges to their authority. I examine the association between four types of authoritarian regimes—military, monarchy, single-party, and multi-party electoral autocracies—and the onset of civil conflict from 1973 to 2004. I find that military regimes and multi-party electoral autocracies run a higher risk of armed conflict than single-party authoritarian regimes, which on the other hand seem to have an institutional set-up that makes them particularly resilient to armed challenges to their authority. These findings suggest that the emerging view, that political institutions are not a significant determinant of civil conflict, results from treating a heterogeneous set of authoritarian regimes as homogenous.

KEY WORDS: authoritarian regimes; autocracy; civil conflict; civil war; democratic civil peace; political institutions; regime type

1. Introduction

The last decade has seen an increase in literature that examines how political institutions influence the risk of civil conflict. Existing literature has centered on the finding that inconsistent regimes, that is, autocratic regimes that also display some

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seemingly democratic institutions, run a higher risk of civil war than either consistent autocracies or democracies. Recent research has questioned this finding on empirical grounds by showing that the Polity dataset, on which most of the evidence is based, partly defines inconsistent regimes by the presence of political violence (Strand, 2007; Vreeland, 2008). Once the endogenous aspects of the Polity data are removed, the evidence of a higher risk of conflict associated with inconsistent regimes is no longer robust, nor does there seem to be any other clear association between political institutions and civil war.

These findings suggest that the frequently used Polity index is unsuitable for studies of civil conflict, because the Polity score is not independent from the observation of conflict. Moreover, they illustrate that current knowledge of the political determinants of conflict to a large extent builds on aggregate data sources that mask substantial information about actual regime characteristics in the polities we study. Over a decade ago, Gleditsch and Ward (1997) noted that since a country's value on the Polity scale is an aggregation of the value on individual indicators, vastly different institutional configurations can underlie the same Polity score. They warned that users of this dataset thus risk conflating very different types of polities over time and across space. Since then, however, the effort to further unfold the authority patterns of the aggregate regime categories in studies of civil conflict has, with the exception mentioned above, exclusively dealt with institutional differences among democracies (c.f. Reynal-Querol, 2002, 2005). Authoritarian regime type remains a residual category.

This article theoretically and empirically unpacks the authoritarian regime category.¹ It suggests that to stay in power and avoid rebellion aimed at overthrowing the regime, dictators have two principal instruments: coercion, that is, to forcefully marginalize or eliminate political opponents, or co-optation, that is, to transform opponents into supporters through offers of spoils such as power positions or rents. The capacity for both efficient coercion and co-optation is conditioned by the regime's institutional infrastructure. I argue that dictators who govern through political parties are more able to forcefully control and buy off opposition than dictators who either rely on the military to stay in power, or who coordinate their rule through the royal family. Authoritarian regimes thus exhibit predictable differences in their ability to avoid organized violent challenges to their authority.

To examine this argument, the article uses a new dataset by Hadenius and Teorell (2007b) to study the risk of civil conflict in four types of authoritarian regimes—military regimes, monarchies, single-party regimes, and multi-party electoral autocracies—from 1973 to the present, and in doing so, contributes to the literature on political institutions and conflict. The study shows that the emerging view, that political institutions are not a significant determinant of civil conflict, results from treating a heterogeneous set of authoritarian regimes as homogenous. When differentiating between them, I find that both military regimes and multi-party electoral autocracies have a higher risk of conflict than single-party regimes, which on the other hand seem to possess institutions that make them particularly resilient to armed challenges to their authority. Exploring these results further, however, I find that multi-party electoral autocracies have minor conflicts but tend to avoid large-scale civil wars. One explanation is that the need for

¹ I use the terms autocracy, authoritarian regime, and dictatorship interchangeably.

electoral support in these regimes restrains the dictator's use of force. Lastly, I find that the effect of political transitions in authoritarian regimes is more complex than assumed by previous research, and conditioned by the type of regime taking power. For military regimes, the risk is lowest immediately after a regime change and then increases over time. The opposite seems to be the case for multi-party electoral autocracies.

The article proceeds as follows. I first review previous research and conclude that the influence of authoritarian institutions remains inadequately conceptualized and examined in the existing literature on civil conflict. I then outline the argument about the association between authoritarian institutions and civil conflict, discussing the capacity for coercion and co-optation for each regime type. I move on to test these theoretical expectations on a global cross-sectional time-series dataset. The final section concludes.

2. Previous Research

There is a growing empirical literature on how political system influences the likelihood that governments and rebel groups resort to violence against each other. The most influential argument holds that pure autocratic governments raise the costs of rebellion through high levels of threat and coercive behavior, whereas democratic governments decrease the desirability to mount an insurgency by facilitating a substitution to non-violent collective action. Inconsistent regimes that display both democratic and autocratic institutions are expected to be those most prone to conflict: their relative openness creates an opportunity structure for violent mobilization around joint grievances, but the institutions provide few avenues for the opposition to pursue their demands through non-violent means (Hegre et al., 2001; Henderson and Singer, 2000; Muller and Weede, 1990). This argument leads to the expectation of a higher risk of conflict in countries that mix democratic and autocratic institutions.

The empirical evidence to support this argument has predominantly relied on the Polity data (Jagers and Gurr, 1995) to assess a country's political institutions. A number of studies report that countries in the middle of the Polity scale, that is, those classified as inconsistent regimes, have the highest risk of rebellion, producing an inverted u-shaped relationship between democracy and civil conflict (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Hegre et al., 2001; Sambanis, 2001). Recent research has questioned this finding by showing that the Polity dataset partly defines inconsistent regimes by the presence of political violence (Strand, 2007; Vreeland, 2008).² Once the endogenous aspects of the Polity data are removed, there is little evidence of a higher risk of

² Polity's democracy–autocracy scale is generated from the values the country receives on different subcomponents of the scale. Two of the components, 'competitiveness of participation' and 'regulation of participation', are partly defined by whether a country is experiencing large scale political violence. Similar endogeneity concerns are raised by the way many researchers treat observations where the Polity index is given a particular code (–66, –77, –88) because the political institutions could not be classified in terms of the normal criteria. In particular, the recommendation from Jagers and Gurr (1995) to ascribe the value of 0 to periods that are coded as 'interregnum' and given the value of –77 in the Polity data has proved to be problematic, since countries can be defined as being in interregnum precisely because there is political violence (Gleditsch and Ruggeri, 2007; Vreeland, 2008).

conflict associated with inconsistent regimes, nor does there seem to be any other robust association between political institutions and civil war.

A more general line of critique, which is not addressed simply by replacing the endogenous components of the Polity scale, relates to the fruitfulness—in conflict research—of using a single scale to identify regime characteristics. The approach rests on the assumption that relevant differences between regimes can be understood simply by the degree of ‘democraticness’. The use of a one-dimensional and aggregate index thus neglects qualitative differences between regime types. Gleditsch and Ward (1997) show how the additive nature of the Polity scale implies that very different configurations of authority structures can underlie the same Polity score. They warn that users of this data thus run the risk of conflating very heterogeneous institutions across time and space. For example, the Polity scale does not distinguish between the authority characteristics of the Chinese communist regime, the Burmese military junta, and the monarchy of the United Arab Emirates, since they all at some point in time have held the same total score. Polity hence cannot identify, for example, whether dictators govern through a political party or rely on the military to organize their rule. Moreover, a country might undergo significant transitions in the qualitative outlook of its institutions, for example moving from a military dictatorship to some form of electoral authoritarian regime, without this showing up in the Polity score. The aggregated nature of the Polity data thus masks the effect that qualitative institutional differences could have on the risk of civil conflict.

Gleditsch and Ward (1997) advocate unfolding authority patterns beyond the aggregate regime classifications. But except for the recent studies mentioned above that disclose the problems inherent in the inconsistent-regime category (Strand, 2007; Vreeland, 2008), the only existing disaggregated analysis of political institutions deals exclusively with institutional variations among democracies (Reynal-Querol, 2002, 2005).³ Meanwhile, the class of authoritarian regimes has remained a residual category. In the next section, I provide a theoretical rationale for unpacking the authoritarian regime category in studies of civil conflict.

3. Coercion, Co-optation, and the Risk of Civil Conflict

The primary aim of all dictators is to survive in office (c.f. Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003). Contrary to democratic leaders, however, dictators do not rule by winning popular consent. Faced with an opposition that could coordinate to overthrow the regime, dictators have two principal instruments to stay in power. Either they can use coercion, that is, forcefully marginalize or eliminate opponents, or they can use co-optation, that is, attempt to transform opponents into supporters through the distribution of spoils, such as power positions or rents. The success of both coercion and co-optation strategies hinges on the ability to identify political entrepreneurs that by means of their capacity to mobilize groups can credibly threaten to challenge the dictator.

A central argument in the literature on autocratic survival is that the dictator’s capacity to coerce and co-opt potential challengers depends on the institutions the

³ For an exception see Carey (2007), who examines how the selection process for the executive affects the risk of rebellion in sub-Saharan Africa.

regime commands (c.f. Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Gandhi, 2007; Geddes, 1999b; Magaloni, 2008). The institutions determine the dictator's capacity to forcefully control political opposition. They also allow the dictator to regularize rewards to those who are bribed into siding with the regime (Wintrobe, 1998). As argued by Magaloni (2008: 71), institutions are the instruments through which the dictator can 'spy [upon], co-opt and repress opponents'. Building on this literature, I argue that to understand the risk of civil conflict in authoritarian regimes, a central distinction should be made between dictators that exercise power through political parties and dictators that rely on other organizations, for example the military or royal family, to govern.

Below, I develop this into an argument about the diverging risk of civil conflict among four general types of authoritarian regimes: *military regimes*, where 'military officers are major or predominant political actors by virtue of their actual or threatened use of force' (Nordlinger, 1977), *monarchies*, characterized by a constitutional practice of hereditary succession, *single-party regimes*, where there is only one legal party and this controls the access to political office and control policy, and *multi-party electoral autocracies*, where opposition parties are allowed to contend elections, but where autocratic practices of coercion, voter-intimidation, and fraud determine electoral outcomes

3.1. Institutional Infrastructure and Coercive Capacity

The literature on political institutions and civil conflict portrays coercion as the key instrument by which authoritarian governments avoid rebellion (Hegre et al., 2001; Henderson and Singer, 2000; Muller and Weede, 1990). When contrasted with democracies, this assumption is not unreasonable. All autocratic leaders use some coercion to stay in power. Policies that ban political associations opposed to the government and intimidate, arrest, torture, or kill opponents who violate these restrictions are micro-foundations of authoritarian rule (Wintrobe, 1998).

Still, an overwhelming use of coercive force is a costly strategy with a high risk of backfiring. It depletes bases of support and strengthens the cause of potential conspirators to depose the dictator. It also creates incentives to hide such conspiracies and feign loyalty in order to avoid retaliation. Dictators that purge indiscriminately heighten everyone's sense of uncertainty, including their own (Haber, 2006; Tullock, 1987; Wintrobe, 1998). This observation points to the relevance of the dictator's institutional infrastructure. An intrusive societal organization reduces the cost of repression by providing dictators with information that allows them to identify conspirators and selectively target collusion. Moreover, it channels political mobilization into pro-regime organizations. It is the politically insulated regimes that will be forced into relying on overt brutality.

This argument identifies single-party regimes as having the most powerful instrument to systematically marginalize opposition and eliminate rivals. The party organization constitutes a potent institutional infrastructure to monitor societal groups. A decentralized party organization can absorb and thus control the political energies of the population, channeling them into pro-regime activities (Linz, 2000). With regard to already mobilized groups, the party provides the dictator with a venue to control the challenges: access is restricted, and political aspirations and demands from competing factions can be discussed without challenging the foundations of the regime (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006).

This institutional apparatus also increases the regime's ability to detect and selectively target subversive elements that could become viable rebel groups. Single-party regimes have been very successful in subordinating the military to political control (Pecený et al., 2002). Equally important, they also tend to have large non-military intelligence organizations with far-reaching tentacles into society (Brooker, 2000; Lai and Slater, 2006). The intrusiveness of the party institution into all aspects of civil, military, and political life makes it extremely difficult to mobilize an efficient rebel force able to overthrow the government. It provides single-party regimes with a forceful infrastructure to suppress opposition within the wider society, and within the state apparatus itself (Slater, 2003).

The opposite can be said of military regimes. They tend to lack institutions, such as parties, through which the political energies of the population can be channeled and controlled (Nordlinger, 1977). Indeed, Stepan (1971: 263) asserts that military regimes place such a high value on internal order that they do 'not easily tolerate a normal level of dissension and debate needed to build and maintain coalitions with civilians'. Popular mobilization is associated with political turbulence and the possibility of violence. Military regimes hence lack the broad societal front that could allow them to mobilize the population as a source of support for the regime. Instead, military regimes are argued to have a comparative advantage when it comes to coercion, since the expertise of the military as an institution is to enact violence (Davenport, 2007; Wintrobe, 1990, 1998; Wolpin, 1986).⁴ These regimes control the institutional means to implement extreme sanctions for disobedience through force. Yet, they are weak in terms of the organizational reach into society that would allow them to monitor and identify subversive activity in a manner that prevents indiscriminate purges. The political insulation of military regimes forces them to rely on overt terror strategies with a high risk of backfiring.

This reasoning resonates in recent research by Davenport (2007) showing that in the 1976–1996 period, single-party regimes were generally less repressive than other authoritarian regimes—less likely to torture, disappear, and kill their citizens than were, for example, military regimes. Davenport (2007) argues that institutional venues to incorporate the population in single-party regimes reduce the need for overt repression. However, the fact that single-party regimes have lower *recorded* human rights abuses does not mean that these regimes are less coercive. Instead, their control might be so total that most of them need not display overt terror strategies.

Monarchies lie somewhere in between, but share more institutional traits with military regimes than with single-party regimes. Monarchies, like military dictators, rely on a narrow ruling clique—only the monarch and the royal family wield power. While they often are endowed with a force of religious or historical authority, they still rule without institutions that can control political opposition from below. In this respect they share political insulation with their military counterparts. They consequently lack the infrastructural advantage of a mass-based political party when

⁴ Some scholars disagree and argue that when military regimes hold office, they tend to shy away from using violent repression because of organizational norms within professional militaries (Geddes, 1999b) and because the use of coercion could exacerbate internal disunity within the military elite.

it comes to monitoring societal groups and identifying subversive elements. What sets them apart from the military regimes, however, is the lack of coercive expertise. They might consequently be more reluctant to engage in broad terror strategies against opposition, which pose a high risk of violent escalation if the dictator does not rapidly get the upper hand.

Multi-party electoral autocracies are, however, more similar to single-party regimes. Above all they share the institutional advantage of a party apparatus to control political mobilization from below. Two aspects of multi-party autocracy might still challenge the dictator's control. First, political entrepreneurs are empowered with a legalized channel to organize opposition. Even though vote rigging, electoral fraud, and intimidation might secure the electoral victory of the hegemonic party, the regime is faced with outlets for organized opposition that they do not fully control. Second, the ability to selectively target subversive elements might be hindered by restrictions on the extrajudicial means available to eliminate such threats (Levitsky and Way, 2002). Also, multi-party autocracies lack information about such conspiracies because they have weaker control over the political environment, compared with single-party regimes. This resembles the conventional theoretical argument pertaining to inconsistent regimes.

To conclude the above discussion, only single-party regimes have institutions that allow them to forcefully marginalize opposition and selectively sanction subversive elements. This, however, is not a sufficient explanation for the occurrence of rebellion in the other three authoritarian regime types. It does not take into account the possibility that the dictator can buy off political rivals by offers of power positions or transfers of rents.

3.2 Co-optation and Civil Conflict

As noted above, coercion is only one instrument by which non-democratic leaders keep themselves in power. Repression is a salient instrument in the authoritarian repertoire, but a regime cannot control all of society only through the threat of force. First, as noted above, the paradox of overt repression is that it leaves the authoritarian leader more insecure in office (Haber, 2006; Wintrobe, 1998). Second, there are segments of society that are difficult to repress, such as the bureaucratic apparatus and the police. Most scholars thus conclude that to avoid being challenged, authoritarian leaders, regardless of type, need cooperation from some segments of society. A large literature on authoritarian-regime survival thus emphasizes the ability of the regime to build coalitions by enlisting the support of key backers, maintaining elite cohesion, and co-opting opposition (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Geddes, 1999b; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Gandhi, 2007; Magaloni, 2006; Smith, 2004; Wintrobe, 1998, 2007). In the civil war literature, however, this ability to ensure the support of a key constituency has largely been overlooked as a source of societal peace.

Maintaining the support of the ruling coalition is the first barrier to prevent armed challenges to the dictator. This is the segment of the population that brought the leader into office, and concerted action by this group may, in principle, depose the leader. Haber (2006) refers to this subset of society that controls access to political office and the main power positions, as the 'launching organization'. A second barrier is to attract the support of opposition, which is capable of launching a rebellion to

overthrow the dictator. Again a central distinction can be made between dictators that rely on a party apparatus to coordinate their rule, and dictators that do not have any institutional trench other than the narrow ruling clique of the military organization or royal family.

Military dictatorships and monarchies are both characterized by having a pre-existing organization to coordinate their ruling coalition and maintain elite cohesion. In monarchies, the launching organization is the royal family; in military regimes, it is the officer corps. Both of these organizations characteristically rely on the exclusion of most of the population and include only a narrow cohort of society. Thus, the royal family and the military are organizations that are not easily adaptable to cooperating with the opposition immediately outside of the ruling elite. The rules regulating who is eligible to have a formal say in policy are narrowly formulated, and neither the military junta nor the royal family has the societal reach to build broad ruling coalitions and enlist the cooperation of 'outsiders'.

Furthermore, both monarchies and military regimes will often lack societal institutions to turn co-optation strategies into durable and self-enforcing arrangements to support their rule. Magaloni (2008) argues that successful co-optation requires institutions to regularize transfers to potential opponents so as to induce them to remain loyal to the regime and to have a vested interest in the regime's survival. Without an institutional framework, rent-sharing arrangements will be built around on-the-spot transfers, and thus be marked by commitment problems on both sides. Restrained in their ability to use co-optation strategies to expand their societal base, the dictators of monarchies and military regimes are less likely to appease rivals who conspire to overthrow the regime.

Compared with military dictators, monarchies might still be better able to make inter-temporal agreements to offer private benefits in exchange for political support. Through practices of hereditary succession, these regimes have mitigated the difficult problem of succession that haunts most authoritarian systems (Olson, 2000). Potential challengers from within the ruling coalition, deciding whether to invest their support in or challenge the regime, are thus able to consider a longer time-horizon in which they are likely to be able to reap the pay-off from their investments. The opposite holds for the would-be dissenters within military regimes, since succession is not 'institutionalized' and the future value to be derived from being loyal in the present is more insecure.

In general I expect, however, that dictators that govern through political parties are better equipped to co-opt political opposition and thus avoid rebellion than either military regimes or monarchies. Dictators that rely on a political party to stay in power tend to have a large 'selectorate' — to use Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) terminology — that is, a large group of people with a right to express preferences in leadership and policy, and who are eligible to rise within the ranks of the organization and join the narrow governing clique. This makes these regimes particularly effective at co-opting a broader segment of political actors in society. This might for example include mid-level party officials and local leaders, who aspire to gain more powerful positions over time, and thus have strong incentives to remain loyal to the regime as long as it exclusively controls these spoils (Magaloni, 2008). In the words of Gandhi and Przeworski (2006: 15), 'a party offers individuals willing to collaborate with the

regime a vehicle for advancing their careers within a stable system of patronage. In exchange for perks, privileges and prospects of career advancement, members of a single party mobilize popular support and supervise behaviors of people unwilling to identify themselves with the dictator'.

The party not only provides a forum where the dictator can make offers to distribute spoils in exchange for cooperation, but also a forum in which such promises can be enforced in ways that prevent defection on either side. Magaloni (2008) argues that the institutional framework of party regimes turns co-optation into durable de-facto power-sharing arrangements. First, the party organization can be expected to last into the future and thus make credible that pay-offs will continue into the future for those who choose to side with the regime. Second, the party offers exclusive access to these privileges and positions. Government jobs, education opportunities, and regularized cash transfers can be selectively rewarded to loyal elements of the rank and file members of the party. Trade protection, government contracts, and political positions can be offered to elite segments, conditional upon their cooperation. Offers of selective inducements to reward support, combined with a credible threat that the privilege can be withdrawn, serve as a deterrent against the shifting of loyalty among those who receive perks and privileges (Wintrobe, 1998).

What about the distinction between single-party and multi-party electoral autocracies? Both rely on co-optation strategies to avoid elite fractionalization, and selectively buy off political entrepreneurs to aggravate collective action problems for the opposition. However, single-party regimes provide more efficient institutions for co-optation at the elite level. The combination of a large selectorate and a narrow elite that controls executive power is a strong deterrent against elite defection. These institutions provide strong incentives for potential co-conspirators to remain loyal to the dictator. The costs associated with throwing one's loyalty behind a challenging faction is very high, taking into account the loss of ample personal privilege in case of failure (Geddes, 1999a) and the low possibility of being included in future ruling coalitions given the large pool of eligible candidates (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003).

In multi-party autocracies, the presence of legal opposition parties empowers the opposition with an institutional venue for mobilization. Magaloni (2008) argues that as a consequence, the dictator has to work harder and distribute more spoils to prevent defection at the elite level. A similar conclusion is reached by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003). However, since more people need to be bought off when dictators need to satisfy broad coalitions, the unit value of private perks and privileges in the rent-distribution scheme decreases. For the potential opponent who decides whether to challenge the regime or not, the pay-offs from investing in the present regime are lower and more uncertain, since there are more actors that can legally aspire for political power. Elite cohesion is more fragile in multi-party autocracies.

Scholars note that the institutional configuration of multi-party authoritarianism itself reflects an ultimate co-optation strategy vis-à-vis opposition. The dictator tries to secure cooperation and retain power by providing political entrepreneurs with limited policy influence and privilege through opposition parties in exchange for acquiescence (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Magaloni, 2008). Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) point out that a single party might sometimes not suffice to co-opt broad segments of the opposition. Given that competing parties can be tightly controlled,

that is, are 'fronts' rather than real competitors to the regime, the potential for co-optation increases as people simply have a broader selection of contracts to choose from. The introduction of multi-party elections implies, however, that the dictator has exhausted his co-optation potential. When challenged by opposition, the dictator has reached the institutional limits for efficient co-optation and a violent response is more likely.

The above argument again points to the vulnerability of military regimes and monarchies. Their political insulation in society leaves these regimes with few other options than to fight off opposition, if challenged. Their opposite is the single-party regime, which has the institutional infrastructure to efficiently co-opt both elite factions and mid-level party officers into its rule. The institutional infrastructure of single-party regimes thus facilitates both coercion and co-optation. This makes single-party regimes particularly resilient to armed challenges to their authority. Dictators in multi-party autocracies are somewhere in the middle. But compared with single-party regimes, they face more institutional constraints on their ability to offer political power or private transfers to opposition. If they exhaust their co-optation repertoire and face constraints in their use of coercion, fighting off opposition is the only option to maintain office if challenged. The theoretical arguments lead to the following expectations:

Hypothesis 1: Single-party regimes run the lowest risk of civil conflict among authoritarian regimes.

Hypothesis 2: Military regimes run the highest risk of civil conflict among authoritarian regimes.

Hypothesis 3: Monarchies run a higher risk of civil conflict than single-party and multi-party electoral authoritarian regimes.

Hypothesis 4: Multi-party authoritarian regimes run a higher risk of civil conflict than single-party authoritarian regimes.

4. Data and Research Design

4.1 A Typology of Authoritarian Regimes

During the last decade, the systematic study of authoritarian institutions has advanced considerably. Scholars report that institutional differences among authoritarian regimes are significant determinants of cross-country variation in regime failure (Geddes, 1999b, 2003), the risk of inter-state war (Peceny et al., 2002; Lai and Slater, 2006), target reciprocation in militarized disputes (Weeks, 2008), and differences in economic outcomes (Wright, 2008). This research is accompanied by a growing literature on how to classify authoritarian regimes, and scholars have proposed different typologies and empirical classification of countries over time (Geddes, 1999b; Linz, 2000; Diamond, 2002; Lai and Slater, 2006). The most significant contribution to this literature is a typology by Geddes (1999b, 2003), which distinguishes between personalist, single-party, and military regimes, as well as hybrids of these institutional types.

To examine the association between authoritarian regimes and the onset of civil conflict, I rely on one of the most recent and comprehensive datasets. Hadenius and Teorell's (2007b) dataset, which classifies authoritarian regimes according to the 'modes of power maintenance', covers 192 countries in the 1972–2005 period. Hadenius and Teorell build on the seminal contribution by Geddes (1999b, 2003) to make a key distinction between *military regimes* and *single-party regimes*. Furthermore, Hadenius and Teorell separate the *single-party regimes*, in which there is only one legal party, from the *multi-party electoral autocracies*, in which one or more opposition parties are allowed to contest the election but the connection between voter preferences and electoral outcomes is marred by irregularities, so the regime remains authoritarian. Multiparty electoral autocracies have emerged as a prominent regime type in the wake of the third wave of democratization (c.f. Diamond, 2002; Howard and Roessler, 2006; Magaloni, 2008; Schedler, 2006), and the inclusion of this category is a major advantage of the Hadenius and Teorell data over alternative data sources. The last main category in Hadenius and Teorell's data is the *monarchies*.

Contrary to Geddes, Hadenius and Teorell do not treat personalist regimes as a separate type. They argue that personalism is a secondary regime trait that can be more or less present in all regimes. Personalism should accordingly qualify the types rather than constitute a category of its own. Similar points are made by Lai and Slater (2006: 115), who argue that the personalist category hides the infrastructural institutions of those regimes (see also Brooker, 2000, and Magaloni, 2008). Because of the considerations discussed above, I choose the Hadenius and Teorell dataset for my main analysis, but given the centrality of Geddes's (1999b, 2003) data for studies of authoritarianism, I also rely on Wright's (2008) updated version of her dataset to check the robustness of the results.

Hadenius and Teorell's initial separation between democracy and autocracy is set at the 7.5 score on a 10-point scale created by taking the average of the Polity and Freedom House scores (both converted to range between 0 and 10). For more information, see Hadenius and Teorell (2005, 2007a, 2007b).

There is a group of countries that do not belong to any of the four categories suggested by Hadenius and Teorell (military regime, single-party regime, multi-party electoral autocracy, and monarchy).⁵ These countries make up a residual category that I refer to as *other regimes*.⁶

Some of the authoritarian systems exhibit characteristics from more than one category. I use a simplified version of the original typology where all military regimes with amalgams are treated as military, all monarchical regimes with amalgams are treated as monarchies, etc. Together with a dummy variable for consistent democracy, this provides a comprehensive classification of all regimes in the period under study.

⁵ These include, for example, the theocratic rule in the Islamic Republic of Iran from 1979 to the present day, and in Afghanistan under the Taliban; and the transitional rule of post-conflict Burundi between 2001 and 2004.

⁶ There is also a category referred to as 'no-party regimes' where elections are held but only individuals are allowed to participate. There are only six country-year observations in this category—Haiti from 1972 to 1979—and I merge this category with *other*.

Table 1. Distribution of Regime Types, Polity Score, and Conflict Onset by Regime Type

	Country year observations	Percentage of observations	Average Polity score	No. of conflict onsets
One-party autocracy	697	15.23	-7.48	16
Military regime	842	18.40	-6.02	50
Multi-party autocracy	978	21.38	0.68	46
Monarchy	285	6.23	-8.35	4
Other	228	4.96	-3.52	14
Democracy	1546	33.79	9.01	27

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for each of the authoritarian regime variables. In total, 66% of the 4,576 country-year observations in the dataset had an authoritarian form of government between 1973 and 2005. Of the 157 civil conflicts that started during this time period, approximately 130 did so in an authoritarian polity. Table 1 also reports the average Polity scores for each regime category.

4.2 The Onset of Civil Conflict

For my dependent variable, I use data on armed conflict from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, v.4-2007 (Gleditsch et al., 2002; Harbom & Wallensteen, 2007). An intrastate armed conflict is defined as a contested incompatibility between a government and one or more opposition groups that results in at least 25 battle-deaths in a year.⁷ The onset of civil conflict is a dichotomous variable taking on the value of 1 in the year a conflict breaks out, and 0 otherwise. If the conflict intensity falls below the casualty threshold for two consecutive years, the next observation of the conflict is treated as a new onset. Since the UCDP/PRIO dataset allows for multiple onsets of armed conflict, country-years with ongoing conflict are kept in the dataset. The risk of a new conflict onset is, however, likely to be influenced by an ongoing conflict in the country, particularly in small countries. I therefore add a control variable taking the value of 1 if there was an ongoing conflict in the previous year, and 0 otherwise.

4.3 Control Variables

In the analysis, I include control variables that previous research has found to be associated with civil conflict and that could also be associated with regime type. Previous research has identified economic development as one of the most robust predictors of civil peace. Many studies have also discussed the relationship between form of government and level of economic development (Boix, 2003; Przeworski et al., 2000). I control for *per capita income* using the expanded GDP dataset v.5.0 from Gleditsch (2002).⁸ From the same data source, I also include a control for

⁷ See also the Uppsala Conflict Data Program homepage at <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/>.

⁸ The data are made available by the author at <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/exptra-degdp.html>.

population size, since previous research shows that more populous countries run a higher risk of conflict (Hegre and Sambanis, 2006) and country size also could influence regime type. To reduce the influence of country observation with very high values, I take the natural log of both GDP per capita and population. I control for ethnic diversity using the updated *ethnic fractionalization index* (ELF) from Fearon and Laitin (2003). ELF ranges between 0 and 1 and denotes the probability that two randomly drawn people in a country belong to the same group. I refer to Fearon and Laitin (2003) for further details on the sources and the construction of this data. Previous research has found that the risk of armed conflict is associated with political instability (Hegre et al., 2001; Fearon and Laitin, 2003) and that some authoritarian regime types are more unstable than others (Geddes, 1999a; Hadenius and Teorell, 2007b). Hence, to parse out the impact of regime type from the effect of political instability, I include a control for *time since last regime change*. Since the influence of regime transitions is likely to decrease over time, this variable is constructed as a decay function of the time since last transition from one regime category to another, which is given by $2^{(-\text{time since last transition}/\alpha)}$, where α is the half-life parameter (Hegre et al., 2001). I choose a functional form where the influence of last regime change decays over time with a half-life of three years.

To examine my hypothesis on the impact of authoritarian regime types on the risk of civil conflict, I use logit analysis. The estimation reports robust standard errors, clustered by country. To address the problems associated with time-dependence in binary time-series cross-sectional analysis, I add a variable that records the time since the last onset of armed conflict. Since the influence of an onset of armed conflict can be assumed to decrease over time, I also specify this variable as a decay function (Raknerud and Hegre, 1997). The exponential function of the time that has passed without the onset of armed conflict is given by $2^{(-\text{time since last transition}/\alpha)}$, where α is the half-life parameter. I choose a functional form where the influence of an onset of armed conflict decays over time with a half-life of two years. For countries with no recorded civil conflict over the observed period, I specify the decay function to be close to zero.

5. Results

Table 2 presents the results for the empirical model that examines the association between authoritarian regime characteristics and the onset of civil conflict. I begin with a simple model without any control variables except a decay function of time since conflict, to control for temporal dependence between the observations. The reference category in Table 2, Model 1, is single-party regimes, since the theoretical argument suggests that these regimes run the lowest risk of civil conflict. In support of this expectation, the estimated effect of military regime on the risk of civil conflict is positive and significant compared with single-party regimes. Also multi-party electoral autocracies run a higher risk of civil conflict than single-party regimes. These results indicate that single-party regimes—when compared with other authoritarian systems—possess institutions that make them particularly resilient to armed challenges to their authority. In sum, these findings lend preliminary support to Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4.

Table 2. Authoritarian Regime Types and Onset of Civil Conflict 1973–2004

	Single-party ref. category			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Military regime _{t-1}	0.773*** (0.278)	0.872*** (0.337)	0.889*** (0.327)	0.905*** (0.340)
Multi-party autocracy _{t-1}	0.514** (0.238)	0.747** (0.292)	0.685** (0.288)	0.611** (0.304)
Monarchy _{t-1}	-0.784 (0.620)	0.302 (0.583)	0.275 (0.572)	0.290 (0.593)
Other _{t-1}	0.805* (0.456)	1.165*** (0.439)	1.132** (0.444)	1.218*** (0.438)
Democracy _{t-1}	-0.318 (0.374)	0.190 (0.380)	0.129 (0.376)	0.217 (0.392)
Military*breavity of regime			-1.322** (0.627)	
Multi-party*breavity of regime				1.284*** (0.480)
GDP per capita _{t-1, log}		-0.244** (0.115)	-0.212* (0.113)	-0.242** (0.115)
Population _{log}		0.333*** (0.069)	0.327*** (0.070)	0.327*** (0.070)
Ethnic fractionalization		0.945** (0.377)	0.955** (0.371)	0.958** (0.377)
Breavity of regime		0.204 (0.247)	0.584** (0.278)	-0.182 (0.309)
Ongoing conflict _{t-1}		-0.452 (0.282)	-0.490* (0.286)	-0.450 (0.285)
Breavity of peace	1.015*** (0.392)	0.934*** (0.345)	0.915*** (0.338)	0.891*** (0.344)
Constant	-3.759*** (0.220)	-5.595*** (1.137)	-5.765*** (1.113)	-5.576*** (1.112)
Observations	5007	4576	4576	4576
Countries	163	159	159	159
No. of conflicts	169	157	157	157

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

*significant at 10%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

In the same model, the association between monarchy and civil conflict is negative, but not statistically different from the risk of conflict in a single-party autocracy. Contrary to Hypothesis 3, monarchies do not seem to share the military regimes' vulnerability to conflict. In fact, in direct comparison with both military regimes and multi-party autocracies, monarchies have a negative and significant association with civil conflict. Why are monarchies more similar to single-party regimes when it comes to conflict risk? The theoretical section suggested that monarchies might be more credible in their promises of rent-sharing arrangements and thus more equipped to solicit the long-term support of coalitions because they have mitigated

some of the insecurity surrounding autocratic leadership succession. Furthermore, they also have the force of tradition or historical authority that might heighten the credibility of the regime among those whose support the dictator wants to enlist, much like the role of ideology in single-party regimes.

The results reported in Table 2, Model 1, are largely supportive of the main theoretical expectations. However, these results neglect the role of important factors that we know are associated with both regime type and conflict. In Table 1, Model 2, I move on to report the results when all appropriate controls are included. I retain single-party regime as the reference category. Even with all relevant controls, military regimes run a higher risk of experiencing a civil conflict than single-party regimes. Holding all control variables at their mean value, a military regime has a 1.6% annual predicted probability for a conflict outbreak, compared with a 0.7% annual predicted probability of conflict in a single-party authoritarian regime.⁹ Also the results for the multi-party electoral autocracies hold up, thus providing stronger evidence that these have a higher risk of civil conflict than single-party regimes. Holding all control variables at their mean, the risk of civil conflict doubles—from 0.7% to 1.5 %—if moving from the single-party to the multi-party autocracy category. The overall low baseline risks reflect that civil conflict is a rare event, but the relative increase in risk association with military and multi-party electoral authoritarian institutions is quite substantial.

Contrary to the expectation conveyed in Hypothesis 2, the risk of conflict in military regimes is no higher than the risk of conflict in multi-party electoral autocracies. In a pairwise comparison, the estimated effects for these two regime types are not statistically different from each other. Hence, a party apparatus per se is not sufficient to avoid conflict. To provide carrots and sticks that are sufficient to appease potential opponents and avoid rebellion, the party must be ‘the only game in town’. In sum, these results lend support to the argument that dictators in single-party regimes are least likely to be challenged by a rebellion. Still, the finding that military regimes run a higher risk of civil conflict is perhaps the most novel result of this study. This is an association that the aggregate regime measures used in previous studies could not identify.

In a model with all control variables included, I detect no statistically significant association between monarchy and civil conflict, in a comparison with single-party, multi-party, and military autocratic regimes. Hence, there is no support for Hypothesis 3. The peaceful attributes of monarchies noted above therefore seem to be better explained by other covariates of monarchy, rather than particular institutional traits of these polities. Most of the current monarchies are found in the Middle East, and primarily due to their oil-rich economies, they have the highest average GDP per capita among all regime types in this study. My results indicate that it might be difficult to parse out the effect of this particular rent-distribution regime from the effect of monarchy per se.

In Table 2, Models 3 and 4, I probe further into the results and examine how the heightened risk of conflict in military regimes and multi-party electoral autocracy

⁹ I estimate the substantive effects using *Clarify* (King et al., 2000), which is available from <http://gking.harvard.edu/>.

is related to the duration of these regimes. To examine this, I create an interaction term between the decay function of the time since last regime transition (which is centered on its mean to ease interpretation) and each of the two regime dummy variables. While I have no separate hypotheses regarding the association between regime tenure and the risk of conflict, the theoretical argument suggests that the risk of conflict decreases the longer the regime stays in power. First, all regime types are likely over time to develop institutions that facilitate their bargaining with societal organizations. Second, the theoretical argument suggests that regime changes that involve political concessions are endogenous to the political bargaining between the opposition and the leadership. The introduction of multi-party elections might thus reflect strategies to co-opt opposition (c.f. Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Geddes, 2007; Magaloni, 2008). A military take-over might also be precipitated by a strengthening of opposition movements that triggers military intervention to restore order.¹⁰ If so, we should expect the probability of conflict to be highest immediately after the transition, reflecting underlying tensions in society that brought on the change.

For the military regimes this expectation is not supported. The interaction term is negative and significant. Since the value for the decay function of the brevity of the regime is largest immediately after a regime transition, this suggests that the risk of conflict increases with the time that has passed since the military came to power. The coefficient for military regimes (in this model, the estimate refers to the conditional effect when the value of the brevity of the regime variable is zero, i.e. at its mean) remains positive and significant. But the large negative value on the interaction term suggests that immediately after a regime transition, the association between military regimes and civil conflict is negative—compared with the effect of single-party regimes. The resilience of military regimes to violent rebellions then decreases with time. Figure 1 plots the estimated effect of the tenure of the military regime on the risk of civil conflict in log(odds) based on the reported coefficients, and a 95 percent confidence interval. The figure shows how the risk of civil conflict increases with the duration of the military regime, but also shows that the effect of military regime does not become statistically significant until regime duration exceeds approximately three years.¹¹

For the multi-party electoral autocracies, the interaction term with brevity of regime is positive and significant. Hence, similar to the military regimes, the impact of multi-party authoritarianism on the risk of civil conflict is conditioned by the time the regime has held power. However, for these regimes, time works in the opposite direction. The risk of conflict is highest after a regime transition, and then declines over time. One interpretation of this finding is that, over time, the dictator's party establishes a hegemonic position and comes to resemble single-party regimes. Figure 2 plots the estimated effect on conflict risk (in log(odds) relative to the baseline) of the tenure time of a multi-party electoral autocracy, and a 95 percent confidence interval.

¹⁰ Incidences where a military take-over is preceded by armed conflict are not influencing the results since I introduce a one-year lag on the regime variables, and all ongoing conflict years are recorded with a zero on the dependent variable.

¹¹ The main results are not sensitive to choosing a different half-life parameter, such as 5 or 8 yrs.

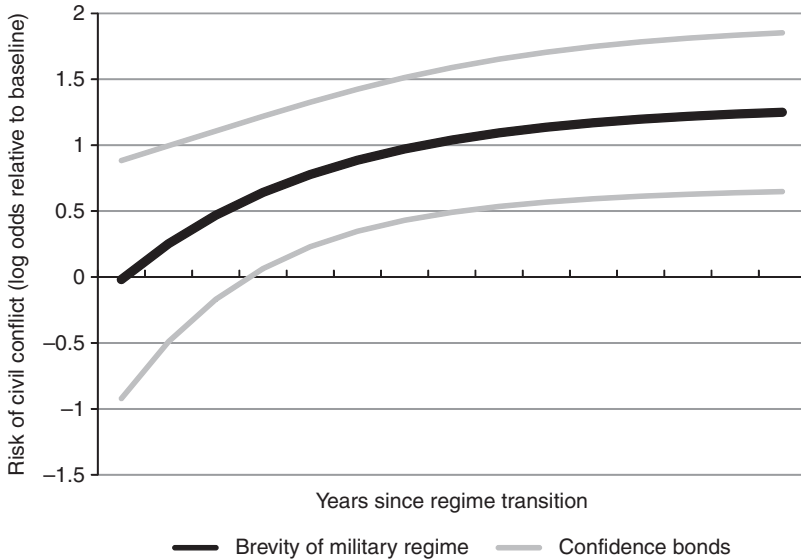


Figure 1. Brevity of Military Regime and Conflict Risk in Log(Odds) Relative to Baseline

The results reported in Table 2, Models 3 and 4, contribute to the literature on how political instability influences the risk of conflict. The results suggest that the effect of regime transitions on conflict is not homogenous, as previous research has assumed (c.f. Hegre et al., 2001; Fearon and Laitin, 2003), but instead conditioned by the type of regime that takes power. Contrary to earlier arguments that political transition leads to a heightened risk of conflict, the unraveling of military authority seems to be precipitated by the time the regime has held power. A military take-over might thus initially induce a sense of stability, but over time the inability to co-opt actors beyond the military apparatus renders those in power increasingly vulnerable to insurgencies aimed at overthrowing the regime.

The results for the control variables largely support prevailing theories about the determinants of civil conflict. Economic development is associated with a lower risk of conflict across all models. I find consistently that countries with large populations run a higher risk of conflict. The same goes for countries with high levels of ethnic fractionalization. I do not find a statistically significant effect of recent regime transitions in Table 1, Model 2, but the results reported in Models 3 and 4 shed some further light on why this is the case. The control for political instability in the main model still works to parse out the effect of political transitions from the effect of regime characteristics¹². As expected, ongoing

¹² The main results are robust to alternative controls for political instability. I have tried to include a dummy variable denoting whether the country has experienced a transition from one regime type to another in any of the past three years, and a dummy variable denoting if there has been a change larger than 3 points on the combined Freedom House and Polity scale during the past three years.

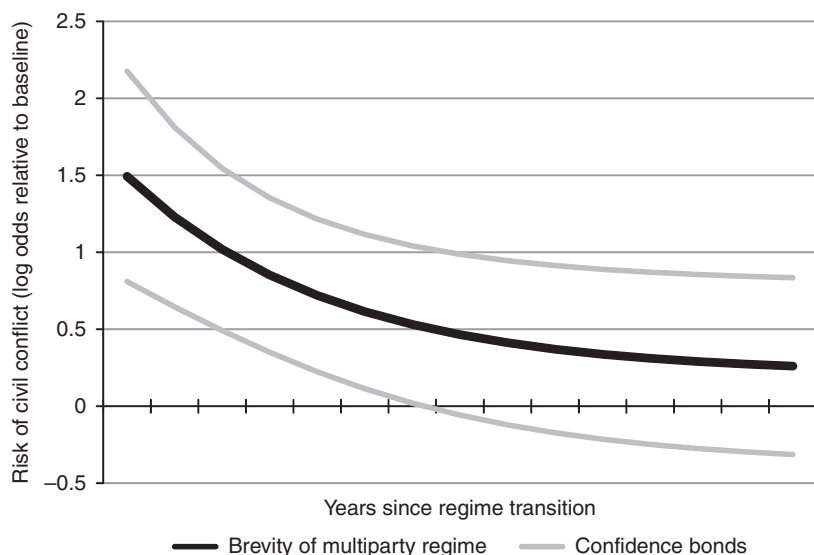


Figure 2. Brevity of Multi-Party Authoritarian Regime and Conflict Risk in Log(Odds) Relative to Baseline

conflict has a negative influence on the probability of a new onset in the same country, but it is only significant in one of the models. The brevity of peace variable has a positive and significant effect on the risk of conflict, suggesting that countries with a recent legacy of armed conflict run a higher risk of renewed onset. In addition to the controls reported in Table 2, I have also ensured that the results are not due to particular Cold War effects by adding a control for the Cold War period (results not reported here). Furthermore, the results are robust to the inclusion of a control for oil dependence, denoting whether the country receives more than one-third of its export earnings from oil (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Last, the results remain substantially unaltered when I include the Polity index in the model. The results hence seem to stem from qualitative differences in authority characteristics, rather than reflecting some underlying measure of ‘democraticness’.

In Table 3, I proceed to examine two alternative specifications of the dependent variable. First, I examine whether the heightened risk of armed conflict in military regimes is explained by the higher risk of military coups in these systems (see Brooker, 2000; Nordlinger, 1977). Coups imply that discontent within the military takes the form of a violent revolt, where the conflict parties are factions of government fighting each other. Several scholars note the vulnerability of military regimes to internal splits within the ruling elite—particularly between the political leadership and professional officers (Geddes, 1999b). If these coups claim at least 25 battle-related deaths, they are recorded in the UCDP/PRIO conflict dataset. To examine whether the incidence of military coups is driving the results reported above, I

employ data collected by Cunningham (2006) that records whether the conflict in the UCDP/PRIO data was a coup or not, and I use this variable to exclude from the original data 23 onsets of armed conflict where the challenger to government authority comes from within the military.¹³ In Table 3, Model 1, I report the results when using this recoded version of the dependent variable. Even when the coups recorded in Cunningham's data are excluded, the military regime category remains a significant predictor of armed conflict. The same also holds for the multi-party electoral autocracies.

Next, I employ a more restrictive definition of civil conflict, including only those conflicts between governments and opposition groups that caused at least 1,000 annual battle-deaths. Apart from the intensity threshold, the operationalization of the dependent variable remains the same as above. As reported in Table 3, Model 2, the military regime type remains associated with the risk of civil conflict using this higher threshold. Compared with single-party regimes, the military regimes run twice the risk of experiencing a civil conflict: the predicted probability of civil conflict breaking out is 0.9% and 2.1% for these types, respectively, holding all control variables at their mean. Interestingly, the presence of multi-party electoral autocracy does not have a statistically significant association with a higher risk of civil wars of *high* intensity, compared with single-party regimes. One possible explanation for this result is that conflict escalation is particularly costly for elites in multi-party electoral autocracies. Dictators in these regimes use popular elections as a tool to legitimize their own rule and are thus more dependent on their population's support than are, for example, military dictators. As already noted, they are also more constrained in their exercise of power. Dictators in these regimes might thus restrain their use of force against rebel opposition when in conflict. This is not sufficient to hinder conflict in the first place, but might prevent conflicts from escalating. Also, because they have the advantage of the party institution, dictators in multi-party electoral autocracies who face a strong rebel opposition might find that their chance of political survival is better served by conceding to demands for democratization than by fighting a full-scale civil war. Military dictators lack not only a political party to run for elections, but also institutions for efficient co-optation, and hence have few alternatives but to try to fight off opposition, even if the conflict escalates.

Hadenius and Teorell's dataset represents one of the most recent and comprehensive attempts to classify authoritarian regimes based on qualitative differences in authoritarian institutions. Their classification has the advantage of including the multi-party electoral regime category, which has replaced single-party and military regimes as the most prevalent regime type in the post-Cold War period. One potential weakness of the Hadenius and Teorell dataset, however, is that it does not identify personalist regimes, that is, regimes where a single individual has monopolized control over policy and recruitment. The data thus does not allow me to separate, for example, the 'true' military regimes where officers rule as representatives of professionalized military institutions, from those regimes

¹³ Cunningham only has data up until 2001, so this reduces the original sample.

Table 3. Authoritarian Regime Types and Onset of Civil Conflict, Alternative Specifications

	<i>Single-party ref. category</i>		
	<i>(1)</i> <i>Coups excluded</i>	<i>(2)</i> <i>War onset</i>	<i>(3)</i> <i>Geddes regime data</i>
Military regime _{t-1}	1.039** (0.405)	1.152** (0.535)	
Multi-party autocracy _{t-1}	0.898** (0.356)	0.626 (0.544)	
Monarchy _{t-1}	0.737 (0.589)	0.708 (0.743)	
Other _{t-1}	1.339** (0.525)	0.542 (0.739)	
Democracy _{t-1}	0.268 (0.434)	-0.272 (0.645)	
Geddes, Military _{t-1}			0.880** (0.430)
Geddes, Hybrid _{t-1}			0.625** (0.291)
Geddes, Monarchy _{t-1}			0.673** (0.292)
Geddes, Personalist _{t-1}			0.719** (0.318)
GDP per capita _{t-1, log}	-0.197 (0.134)	-0.246 (0.165)	-0.060 (0.131)
Population _{log}	0.414*** (0.075)	0.298*** (0.082)	0.276*** (0.065)
Brevity of regime	0.101 (0.274)	0.852** (0.378)	0.505* (0.302)
Ethnic fractionalization	0.951** (0.429)	0.436 (0.481)	0.985** (0.384)
Ongoing conflict _t	-0.418 (0.337)	-0.146 (0.296)	-0.392 (0.310)
Brevity of peace	1.284*** (0.409)	0.747** (0.354)	0.873*** (0.329)
Constant	-7.141*** (1.330)	-6.177*** (1.805)	-6.544*** (1.447)
Observations	4111	4576	4028
Countries	159	159	119
No. of Conflicts	122	54	147

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

where the dictator wears a uniform but has dissolved military councils. The latter should be governed by another dynamic. To explore the robustness of my results, I therefore choose to rely on Geddes's classification (1999b, 2003). Wright (2008) provides an updated and extended version of this dataset. It covers the years

1950–2002, and it distinguishes between military, personalist, single-party regimes, and hybrids of these types.¹⁴

The results, which are reported in Table 3, Model 3, corroborate the earlier findings. Single-party regime constitutes the reference category. The positive and significant coefficient for military regimes supports the notion that regimes that govern through a party apparatus are better able to avoid civil conflict than regimes that rely on military institutions to check opposition. Also, the coefficient for personalist regimes is positive and significant, as expected. Personalist regimes are characterized by their lack of effective institutions, and the dictator rules primarily through personalistic ties. The theoretical argument advanced here suggests that institutions are the key to efficient co-optation strategies, as well as to the ability to systematically marginalize or eliminate opponents. Personalist regimes should, according to this reasoning, be particularly vulnerable to rebellion—even more so than military regimes. These regimes hence not only seem to be vulnerable to regime instability, as argued by Geddes, but also civil conflict. Using Geddes's data, I also find a positive and significant association between monarchy and the prevalence of civil conflict, when these are compared with single-party regimes. In sum, these findings lend confidence to the conclusion drawn above, underscoring, among other things, both the peaceful attributes of single-party regimes and the problems associated with military rule.

6. Conclusion

This article has focused on one comparatively neglected aspect of the literature on the political determinants of civil conflict: the heterogeneous effect of different types of authoritarian regimes. Previous research has largely ignored the large institutional differences between various forms of authoritarian rule and has, both theoretically and empirically, conflated the risk of civil conflict among these regimes. Addressing that lacuna, this article has argued that authoritarian regimes differ both in their capacity to control the form of political mobilization and in their capacity to co-opt political opposition, and that they accordingly exhibit predictable differences in their ability to avoid organized violent challenges to their authority. To empirically assess these expectations, I rely on new disaggregated data on authoritarian regimes that distinguish between military, monarchies, single-party, and multi-party electoral autocracies. While the different policy strategies, that is, coercion and co-optation, cannot be observed directly for these regime types, the empirical results support the proposed theoretical arguments.

By unpacking the authoritarian regime category, this article has contributed to literature on political institutions and conflict. It shows that the emerging view, that political institutions are not a significant determinant of civil conflict, results from treating a heterogeneous set of authoritarian regimes as homogenous. Military regimes and multi-party electoral autocracies run a higher risk of conflict than single-party authoritarian regimes. My argument suggests that this is because military regimes lack the institutional base for co-opting political opposition and retaining

¹⁴ All controls and specifications remain the same as above, though I construct the *brevity of regime* variable on the basis of Geddes's regime coding.

the support of critical backers within the constrained political environment of a non-democratic polity.

While the results reported here support the notion that the risk of civil conflict differs between different authoritarian types, they also suggest that the effects of regime transitions are more complex than previously assumed. In particular, a take-over by a military regime does not seem to be accompanied by the same immediate increase in political risk as the introduction of multi-party electoral autocracy. The finding that the association between political instability and civil conflict is conditioned by the type of regime taking power merits further attention in future research.

In sum, this article suggests that the emerging view, that political institutions do not influence the risk of civil conflict, is a result of the use of aggregate data that masks substantial variations in institutional types and in their associated risk of civil conflict. The article thus calls for more specific measures of political structures that highlight qualitative differences that are important for understanding when and where rebellions form.

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HANNE FJELDE (PhD, 2009) is Assistant Professor at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, Sweden. She is also affiliated with the Centre for the Study of Civil War at the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo. Her research focuses on the relationship between political institutions and armed conflict.