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Authoritarian Regimes, Domestic Stability  
and International Conflict

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

by

Joonbum Bae

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Authoritarian Regimes, Domestic Stability  
and International Conflict

by

Joonbum Bae

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Deborah W. Larson, Chair

This dissertation addresses the argument that there may not be room for cooperation in relations with (and in between) states with authoritarian systems of rule because international conflicts may strengthen their hold on power. To this end, it asks 1) whether authoritarian regimes benefit in terms of their duration in power from conflict, 2) whether conflicts stabilize domestic politics by moderating the violence involved during regime transitions (in terms of how they fall), and also 3) whether conflicts decrease the human costs involved in the fall of an authoritarian regime. It finds that conflict does not, in general, benefit authoritarian rulers in terms of their duration in power. An adverse security environment actually makes personalist regimes more vulnerable to internal challenges and decreases their time in power. For military regimes, however, conflict stabilizes domestic politics in a way that had not been systematically examined previously. A conflict-prone external environment increases the incentives for the military to act in unison and military leaders are more likely to choose a non-violent and orderly return to the barracks when facing the prospects of mass protests or armed insurgencies. This is because divisions within the military over the response to the unrest become more costly. Similarly, within an adverse security environment, the threat that wielding deadly force in an effort to retain power poses to the unity of the armed forces moderates the actions of the military and lowers the chances of force being used in ways that kill. Thus casualty levels are lower within a conflict-prone security environment for military regimes compared to those that are not.

The dissertation of Joonbum Bae is approved.

David Kang

John Zaller

Arthur Stein

Deborah W. Larson, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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## VITA

2007                    MA (International Relations), Seoul National University, Korea

2004                    BA (English Language and Literature), Seoul National University, Korea

Summer 2015        Primary Instructor for Introduction to Global Studies

Summer 2013/14    Primary Instructor for Introduction to World Politics

Spring 2011/12     Teaching assistant for “Peace and War”

Fall 2011/12        Teaching assistant for “Introduction to Quantitative Analysis”

Winter 2011         Teaching assistant for “Foreign Policy Decision-Making

Summer 2012        Research assistant to Barbara Geddes

## PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

“The South Korean Left’s Northern Question,” Korea Yearbook 2009 - Politics, Economy, Society, No.3, September, 2009.

“International Conflict, Authoritarian Regime Breakdown, and Violence”, presented at Junior Scholar Symposium of the Annual International Studies Association Conference, March 2015, New Orleans, LA.

“Impossible Allies? -Korean Views of Japan in a Changing World Order”, presented at poster session of the American Political Science Annual Meeting, Sept 2014, Washington DC and the

UCLA-USC Joint East Asian Studies Center Annual Conference, November 2013, Los Angeles, CA.

“Rivalries, Conflict, and the Duration of Authoritarian Regimes”, presented at Junior Scholar Symposium of the Annual International Studies Association Conference, March 2014, Toronto, Canada.

Strategic Ambiguity during International Crises”, presented at the Junior Scholar Symposium of the Annual International Studies Association Conference, March 2013, San Francisco, CA.

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction: Authoritarian Regimes, Domestic Stability and International Conflict

### 1.1 Introduction

In the late 1990s, North Korea's nuclear program and long-range missile activities were changing the strategic environment for the United States and its allies in East Asia. Under growing political pressure from those arguing that the 1994 Agreed Framework with the North Koreans was insufficient to address US interests in the shifting strategic context, the Clinton administration tasked Secretary of State William Perry with a review of policy toward North Korea. If needed, recommendations for a new approach to the North Korean threat would be proposed. The result of an extensive eight month review was a report that advocated a "two path strategy" of combining positive incentives with latent threats toward North Korea.<sup>1</sup> The report provided the basis for what essentially became US policy toward North Korea for the remainder of the Clinton administration.

The document is informative not just for the policies it advocates but also the assumptions and rationale that motivate them. In particular, a point made throughout the report is that American policy cannot be based on assumptions or projections about the domestic politics of North Korea. For example, because "there is no evidence that change is imminent," American policy would have to "deal with the North Korean government as it is, not as we might wish it to be." This conclusion is reached despite the preceding observation that "logic would suggest that the DPRK's evident problems would ultimately lead its regime to change." The absence of information on organized opposition or internal challenges to the regime precluded policies that assumed or depended on

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<sup>1</sup>William J. Perry, *Review of United States Policy toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations*, October 12, 1999.

their existence, despite the domestic problems in North Korea seemingly providing grounds for destabilization.

Going further, the report explicitly argues for its policy recommendations on the grounds that it does not rely on particular views about North Korean intentions or actions. The proposed strategy is “flexible and avoids any dependence on conjectures or assumptions regarding DPRK intentions or behavior – benign or provocative.” The strategy could be implemented regardless of the nature of the regime’s intentions toward the outside world and without assuming any particular timeline for the collapse of the regime for it neither “seeks, nor depends upon... a transformation of the DPRK’s internal system for success.”

The US strategy toward North Korea took into account a wide range of possibilities for both the duration of the regime and its intent. North Korea could be belligerent or benign. The regime could also endure for the foreseeable future, or it might not. The constraints put on information gathering by the unusually isolated nature of North Korean society made reaching an estimate about its intent or duration particularly challenging.<sup>2</sup> However, this uncertainty is only an extreme version of a general issue in interactions between states. Uncertainty over duration and foreign policy intentions are pervasive in international relations and tend to be more acute with authoritarian forms of rule. From the fall of the Communist Bloc countries to the Arab spring, unpredictability has been noted as a key feature of authoritarian regime collapses.<sup>3</sup> As debates about the “rise of China” show, uncertainty about the intentions of other states, particularly when coupled with changing capabilities, is one of the central concerns of states in an anarchic international system.

The Perry report raises the question of whether it is possible to come up with better assessments about the stability and intentions of authoritarian forms of rule in general. Are there domestic traits of authoritarian rule that are closely associated with certain “intentions or behavior,” particularly belligerence toward other state? Are certain types of authoritarian rule more unstable or prone for

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<sup>2</sup>More than 10 years after the report, intelligence on North Korea does not seem to have improved. “In Kims Undetected Death, Sign of Nations Opacity,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2011.; “Death of Kim Jong Il has US Waiting and Worrying,” *Washington Post*, December 19, 2011.

<sup>3</sup>Moreover, the degree of openness of a society seems to have little to do with more accurate estimates of their stability.

”transformation”? There is also a possibility that the Perry report does not address - perhaps understandably given its conclusions for conditional engagement with North Korea: that the stability of a regime and its outward behavior are related. Are dictatorships more stable because they are involved in conflicts abroad?

These questions matter for the theories that guide our understanding of international conflict and the stability of authoritarian forms of governance. The rationale that authoritarian regimes may have an inherent domestic political interest in conflict bears directly on one of the core tenets of the bargaining model of war.<sup>4</sup> If certain regimes have a preference for conflict in the interest of maintaining power, then it does not necessarily follow that states as rational actors should prefer to avoid war because of the costs it entails. Hence a settlement preferable to war may not always exist. If on the other hand, authoritarian regimes do not seem to benefit from a conflict-prone environment, this would add to the evidence against the “diversionary” rationale as an important motivation in international conflict.<sup>5</sup> However, even if the diversionary logic was not at work in most international conflicts, if the international security environment and domestic stability interacted in other ways, this would validate the “second image reversed” argument that it is the two in conjunction that explains a variety of domestic outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Explanations that focus primarily on domestic causes for domestic (in)stability could be incomplete or even misleading.

The stakes are more than purely academic. Given the level of uncertainty regarding the duration and intentions of a potential threat to national security such as outlined in the Perry Report, a states response is likely to resemble the policy options that the Report recommended: a mixture of positive incentives with consequences if cooperative efforts are not met. However, decreases in the level of uncertainty can alter what the best response is. Higher confidence in a shorter duration for a regime, for example, may shift the policy recommendations of the Perry report to a focus on reforming or undermining the regime - two policy options the Perry report explicitly reject because

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<sup>4</sup>James Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization*, Vol. 49., No. 3, 1995.

<sup>5</sup>Jack Levy, “Domestic Politics and War,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988.

<sup>6</sup>Peter Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed: the International Sources of Domestic Politics, *International Organization*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1978.

of the uncertainty over the timeframe for a change of regime. With a high degree of confidence in a coming breakdown of the regime, a state may also simply choose to wait it out until the regime is replaced in lieu of other policy measures, as the doctrine of “strategic patience” in effect does.<sup>7</sup> More certainty about the belligerent nature of the regime would shift the balance of the response toward sticks rather than carrots.

Attempts at negotiating settlements to outstanding issues would also become less likely if there was higher confidence that regimes enjoyed enhanced stability from external conflict. The argument that dictators derive domestic political benefits from conflict has provided one of the key rationales for those that have argued against the efficacy of attempting “strategies of engagement,” toward rival states. Negotiations aimed at resolving differences of interest and sources of conflict with such regimes, according to this view, are doomed to fail or counter-productive.<sup>8</sup> Evidence regarding this purported relationship will directly bear on debates about responses to potential threats.

Lastly, in formulating policy toward authoritarian regimes, just as important as their longevity in power and how the duration of their tenure relates to international conflict may be the level of stability that results after, and as a consequence of, the breakdown of the regime. Recent developments after the “Arab Spring” have demonstrated that it is not just the longevity of a particular regime but also the level of (in)stability that results during and after the fall that has ramifications for stakeholder states. Not only do regimes in transition pose different challenges for other states in terms of how conflict-prone they are,<sup>9</sup> violence and instability during the breakdown of a regime and its aftermath have humanitarian and economic costs. The violence can also spread over national borders into internationalized civil conflicts and have destabilizing consequences long after

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<sup>7</sup>The White House, *The National Security Strategy*, February 2015.

<sup>8</sup>For an argument regarding why states may choose to engage another state even when they assess that such effort may fail, Victor Cha, “Hawk Engagement and Preventive Defense on the Korean Peninsula, *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2002.

<sup>9</sup>Mansfield and Snyder, “Democratization and the Danger of War,” *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1995; See also Narang and Nelson, “Who are these Belligerent Democratizers? Reassessing the Impact of Democratization on War,” *International Organization* Vol. 63, No.2, 2009.



the initial revolt against the regime and well beyond its place or origin.<sup>10</sup> Such developments call for a rethinking the concept of stability to go beyond the simple longevity of regimes, and point toward the need to incorporate how a regime breaks down and the level of violence involved during the process. A deeper appreciation of the dynamics of regime breakdown will better inform policy decisions towards those states. It will make possible a better understanding of the interrelationship between international conflict, regime longevity, and domestic political turbulence.

## 1.2 Literature Review

### 1.2.1 The Benefits of Conflict

International relations scholars have tackled the relationship between domestic stability and the international security environment from a variety of perspectives. Arguments that international conflict has a positive impact on domestic stability range from a focus on the diversionary effects of war to how repeated conflicts favor certain domestic ruling coalitions over others, as well as cultural factors that influence how actors view conflict.

The theory of diversionary war posits that leaders have an incentive to initiate conflict when faced with domestic turmoil in order to evade political harm.<sup>11</sup> Not only does war divert attention from the source of political discontent, it also has the effect of raising the level of support for the leader (at least in the short term) as the public closes ranks around the leader.<sup>12</sup> An implication of the theory is that leaders are able to better weather high levels of discontent when there are crises that involve enemies or threats to the state. Even without a war, such crises can have a diversion effect from domestic troubles, for public attention will tend to focus on the (potential) conflict and

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<sup>10</sup>Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer, "Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars: A Comprehensive Look at their Distribution over Time, 1816-1997" *International Studies Quarterly*, No. 47, Vol.1, 2003.

<sup>11</sup>Jack Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988.; Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique" in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).; Tarar, "Diversionary Incentives and the Bargaining Approach to War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2006.

<sup>12</sup>Crises also often leave the opposition to the regime vulnerable to the critique that its activities against the government are aiding the enemy or benefiting those that seek to harm the country.

drown out other issues, changing the terms of political competition in favor of those in the ruling coalition. The perpetuation of high levels of tension from conflicts, or frequent spikes in the level of threat can therefore serve the interests of the ruler by making it possible for him to ameliorate domestic unrest.<sup>13</sup> While diversionary war theory has been mostly applied to democracies, the core logic has also been thought to motivate the foreign policy of autocracies.<sup>14</sup> Autocratic governments, while most do not have to face elections, face the threat of a upheaval or a challenge that can unseat them and can also benefit from the reprieve that high international tension can provide from domestic dissatisfaction.<sup>15</sup>

Conflict can also affect the distribution of power and preferences among actors in a state. Solingen argues that military conflicts and external threats empower domestic groups that do not have a vested interest in better and more open relations with the outside world. In states that experience repeated conflicts, these “inward looking” coalitions gain more influence on policy, which in turn strengthens monopolies, protectionist tendencies, and military industrial complexes.<sup>16</sup> For example, repeated militarized disputes between countries can lead to a large standing army and increased expenditure on the domestic security apparatus, resulting in more influence for these bureaucracies and increased capacity on the part of the regime to quell revolts against it. At the same time, a tense security environment undercuts the ability to attract foreign investment and by ex-

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<sup>13</sup>In the context of country specific studies, Christensen has also made this argument regarding Maos policy toward the US. According to his argument, Mao instigated tension with the West to consolidate domestic power. Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>14</sup>Examples of include the following: Stein, “Calculation, Miscalculation and Conventional Deterrence I: The View from Cairo,” in *Psychology and Deterrence* ed. Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press: 1985).; Nicholls, Huth and Appell, “When is Domestic Political Unrest related to International Conflict? Diversionary Theory and Japanese Foreign Policy 1890-1941,” *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 54, No. 4, 2010.; Joll and Martel, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Longman, 2007).

<sup>15</sup>Others have argued that electoral incentives are behind behavior that keeps tensions high with rival countries. Colaresi, in the context of democracies that are involved in long-running rivalries with other states, argues that leaders face an increased chance of losing elections when they make concessions to countries with which they have a history of military disputes. This gives hawks the advantage in domestic electoral competition. According to Colaresi, this is one of the mechanisms for why rivalries endure and evidence for previous disputes having a causal role in subsequent conflicts. Colaresi, “When Doves Cry: International Rivalry, Unreciprocated Cooperation, and Leadership Turnover,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2004.

<sup>16</sup>Etel Solingen, *Regional Order at Century’s Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

tension, the influence of internationalists, further weakening the power of more conciliatory forces within the state. This dynamic takes away the incentive for the state to improve relations with an adversary because more of the coalition in power is made up of those that do not have as much vested in good relations with the outside world.<sup>17</sup>

Culture has also been cited as an explanation for why states have come to view conflict as being in their interest. Wendt argues that it is possible for stable ideational structures to emerge where the meaning of another state as an enemy is shared across a polity, imbuing that society with a common set of beliefs that view aggressive policies and actions taken against the commonly held enemy as being in the national interest, and thereby legitimate.<sup>18</sup> Repeated clashes or spikes in tension with other nations can breed ideological or cultural antagonism toward the rival state that makes it hard for the domestic opposition to the regime to offer, or even think of, alternative approaches to foreign policy, further contributing to the perpetuation of antagonistic relations.

### **1.2.2 Conflict and its Trade-offs**

However, inherent in the initiation, escalation, or perpetuation of a dispute or conflict there are not only potential benefits, but potential costs as well. Decisions to initiate or escalate can lead to a full-blown war. Furthermore, due to the lack of complete information regarding the opponent, there is a possibility of the war ending in defeat. Even short of war, there is also the possibility that escalation can result in a humiliating back-down, with the domestic political costs for the leader that it entails. Leaders aware of the benefits that a high tension environment can confer for domestic rule must weigh the benefits against the potential costs of ending up in a costly war or a humiliating back-down.

Authoritarian leaders in particular may have good reason to be sensitive to the domestic political ramifications of war. Previous studies on the effect of wars on leadership tenure have indicated

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<sup>17</sup>Kreps and Pasha draw on this framework to make the case that the dispute over Iran's nuclear program has essentially followed this rationale. Kreps and Pasha, *Threats for Peace? The Domestic Distributional Effects of Military Threats*, in Solingen (ed), *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>18</sup>Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

that instead of stabilizing the status quo within states, wars can actually decrease the time in power for authoritarian leaders. Bueno de Mesquita has found that losing wars tends to have a substantively important negative effect on the tenure of authoritarian leaders. Goemans and Debs, focusing on the costs that leaders have to bear as a result of being removed from office, find that because autocrats are more sensitive to war outcomes and face higher costs once they are removed from office, they are more averse to making concessions and more likely to engage in risk-acceptant behavior.<sup>19</sup>

The costs and risks associated with a conflict and the particularly high costs that some authoritarian rulers have to pay when ousted from office may be a reason why the literature has not been able to find support for the domestic interests derived from conflict, despite the logics outlined above. The identification problems associated with often not being able to observe instability or popular grievances at the regime from expressing itself because strategic leaders may be pre-empting the unrest by instigating a conflict poses further problems. Furthermore, even if authoritarian rulers face both potential benefits and costs from conflicts, it does not necessarily follow that higher levels of tension have unambiguous effects on domestic stability. The direction of the effect, or whether there is one, depends on how the politics between the key actors within the regime interact with the adverse security environment. Different authoritarian forms of rule show considerable variation in the way they organize their base of support, maintain their ruling coalition, manage their relationship with the military and security apparatus, and deal with potential rivals and challengers. Because the key actors interact in different ways, it is possible that international tension can have heterogeneous effects on the stability of different types of authoritarian regimes.

Distinct from the relationship between regime longevity and international conflict, the security environment could influence *how* authoritarian regimes fall. As the literature on diversionary conflict demonstrates, the relationship between domestic stability and international conflict has largely neglected how the international security environment influences the mode of authoritarian break-

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<sup>19</sup>Bueno De Mesquita, Silverson and Woller, "War and the Fate of Regimes: A Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3, 1992.; Alexandre Debs and H.E. Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No.3, 2010.; H.E. Goemans, "Which way Out? The Manner and Consequence of Losing Office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008.

down. By focusing on the duration of leaders and equating shorter leader tenure with instability, it has not differentiated between different modes of authoritarian collapse and the level of violence involved in the process. This is a curious omission, for the international security environment can affect the incentives of the actors whose decisions will lead to the fall or survival of the government. While the diversionary literature has focused on how a conflict can favor the government, the opposition can also see an international conflict as an opportunity, as Lenin famously did when he called for "conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war," arguing that Russian involvement in World War I was an opportunity for the Bolsheviks to "take advantage of the difficulties experienced by its governments... in order to overthrow them."<sup>20</sup> International conflict presented an opportunity for seizure of power through a particular means for Lenin: the violent overthrow of the government. It was also a means for seizing power that resulted in a civil war before the eventual consolidation of power by the Bolsheviks.

### 1.2.3 Coups, Civil Wars, and Repression

Research on the question that Lenin raised about how international conflict relates to the mode of authoritarian breakdown and the violence that is involved in the process has focused on the costs that leaders face after leaving from office as a key factor in foreign policy decision making. Higher costs to be born after leaving office has implications for decisions while in power.<sup>21</sup> The focus on the costs to the individual leader may be apt in cases where the decision-making power is concentrated in the individual leader. However, it may not be the best approach if key decisions are the result of interactions between multiple actors. In most military and single party regimes, for example, the nominal leader faces constraints from other actors within the ruling coalition. These actors often have different preferences from those of the leader and hence the incentives that the leader face may not provide a complete picture of the key dynamics at work. This can particularly be the case if shifts in the security environment change the incentives of the actors

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<sup>20</sup>Lenin went further to argue that "revolutionary tactics were infeasible unless they 'contribute to the defeat' of their own government." V.I. Lenin, *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 21 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp 277.

<sup>21</sup>Bueno De Mesquita, Silverson and Woller, *op. cit.*, Goemans and Debs, *op. cit.*, Goemans, *op. cit.*

within authoritarian regimes in different ways.<sup>22</sup> Analysis at the individual level also loses sight of the costs that may be born at the societal level as a result of the breakdown of authoritarian regimes.

### 1.2.3.1 Coups

Other works have explored particular subsets of the forms that the breakdown of an authoritarian regime can take. An extensive literature has investigated the causes of military coups. As early as Machiavelli, the acute dilemma of how to control those that control the means of violence has been debated in the context of militaries. Research has pointed to institutional weakness, underdevelopment, economic performance, size of the country, arms-transfers, the political centrality and cohesiveness of the armed forces, the professionalism of the officer corp, and lack of political pluralism.<sup>23</sup> As Feaver notes however, with notable exceptions such as Huntington, who argued that threats to a country's security was an important factor in the state's civil-military relations, most works in this tradition of civil-military relations have focused on domestic factors as the primary movers of the military's relationship to other domestic actors.<sup>24</sup> More recent formal models have explored the interplay between the external level of threat, domestic political interests, and foreign policy, but as yet remains in its early stages and has not been tested in a general context.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>A partial exception to this general trend is Escriba-Folch and Wright, "Dealing with Tyranny: International Sanctions and the Survival of Authoritarian Rulers," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 2, 2010.

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Johnson, Robert Slater, Pat McGowan, "Explaining African Coups d'Etat, 1960-1982," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, 1983.; Egil Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1967.; WR Thompson, "Regime Vulnerability and the Military Coup," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 7, No.4, 1975.; Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Have, Yale University Press. 1968).; Londregan and Poole, "Poverty, the Coup trap and the Seizure of Executive Power," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1990.

<sup>24</sup>Peter Feaver, "Civil Military Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2, 1999.; Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957).; Aguero similarly argued that an external threat facilitates civilian reforms of the military, thereby facilitating democratic change and consolidation.

<sup>25</sup>McMahon and Slantchev, "The Guardianship Dilemma: Regime Security through and from the Armed Forces," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 109, No. 2, 2015.; Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni, "A Theory of Military Dictatorships," *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2010.

### 1.2.3.2 Civil War

While not about regime breakdowns per se, the research on the onset and duration of civil war overlaps with the scope of this dissertation since many civil wars are the result of breakdowns of an authoritarian regime. However, general works on the causes of civil war or their consequences seldom take into account the ramifications of the international environment for their argument or explore why a breakdown would result in variation in the intensity of violence during the process.<sup>26</sup> While the bargaining models applied to domestic/civil conflicts provides a way of explaining the breakout of violence during authoritarian breakdown, the variables that account for the costs or casualties that conflicts are difficult to gauge unless they are revealed *ex post*, such as resolve or motivation.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, country specific works on civil wars have pointed to factors that influence the level of violence involved, such as the degree of control over a particular territory or the internal structure of the warring factions as key variables in the degree of violence against civilians.<sup>28</sup> However, they have not tested in a more general way whether these or other factors may be behind the costs that different civil wars, or authoritarian breakdowns, entail.

### 1.2.3.3 Repression

Studies about violence in the form of repression under authoritarian rule have tackled the issue of what factors lead to more or less repression, particularly in the context of the strategies that authoritarian leaders use to stay in power, but by focusing on how these leaders stay in power, do not address why some breakdowns result in much more violence than others.<sup>29</sup> Again, the

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<sup>26</sup> Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *International Organization*, Vol. 97, No.1, 2003.; Fearon, "Why do some Civil Wars last so longer than others?", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004.; Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom, "On the Duration of Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Walter, "Bargaining Failures and Civil War," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.); Weinstein, "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Milan Svolik, "Contracting on Violence: The Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* No. 57, No. 5. 2013.; Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, "A Dictator's Toolkit: Understanding how Co-optation affects repression in autocracies," *Journal of Peace Research*, Printed On-line March 20, 2014.; Escriba-Folch, "Repression, political threats, and survival under autocracy," *International Political Science*

external environment does not play a role in these explanations for the repressive actions taken by the regime in these works.

In sum, the theories on the domestic political benefits of conflict have been complemented, and to a certain extent been supplanted, by those that have posited a less uniform relationship between international conflict and domestic stability. Taking into account both the potential benefits and costs of conflict to foreign policy decision making, the more recent research has taken a more nuanced view of the domestic political effects of conflict. The unit of analysis has tended to remain on the individual leader, however, and the costs and benefits have focused on the stability of the leader's hold on power. At the same time, while a large body of research has examined violence under authoritarian rule in terms of coups, civil wars, and repression, efforts to connect the international environment with the question of why some regime collapses turn violent and resort to non-institutional means while others are peaceful and orderly remain underdeveloped.

### 1.3 Theory

By focusing on the institutions of dictatorships as indicators of the nature of politics within them and testing hypotheses about how an adverse security environment alters such politics inside these regimes, this dissertation seeks to better explain the relationship between international conflict and domestic stability. Drawing on an emerging body of work on how the politics within different types of authoritarian regimes -whether military, personalist, or single party - affect a range of domestic and international outcomes,<sup>30</sup> I develop and test a theory of how an adverse security environment interacts with the domestic institutions of authoritarian regimes to produce divergent

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Review, Printed On-line July 5th, 2013.

<sup>30</sup>Since Geddes first introduced the typology various works have sought to test their relevance to various outcomes in international relations. These include Jessica Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: regime type and signalling resolve," *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1, 2008.; Jessica Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 2, 2012.; Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship, Institutions, and Outcomes in Authoritarian Regimes*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2011).; Escriba-Folch and Wright, "Dealing with Tyranny: International Sanctions and the Survival of Authoritarian Rulers," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No.2, 2010.; Wright, "How Foreign Aid can Foster Democracy in Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2009.



outcomes regarding how long these regimes last in power, how they fall from power, and the consequences of their collapse. The analysis of institutions allows for inclusion of other strategic actors besides the leader. Conceptualizing stability as meaning both longevity of rule as well as an orderly and peaceful process of authoritarian transition allows for testing the possibility that certain actors could prioritize domestic order over longevity of rule under certain conditions. Such an alternative conceptualization of stability could help explain why some transitions of authoritarian regimes involve costly force and entail high human costs (with many developing into civil-wars), while others do not.

Key actors in authoritarian forms of rule operate within different sets of institutions, with varying interests and different consequences to decisions they make. International tension alters the incentives that key actors face within different types of regimes in ways that have different implications for the duration of authoritarian rule and the level of violence involved when they collapse - at times in non-obvious ways. By analyzing how repeated conflicts over time between states relate to these outcomes, I seek to demonstrate that the effect of the international security environment is contingent upon how the key actors in these regimes interact with each other, which are in turn shaped by the different types of authoritarian institutions.

Different authoritarian forms of rule show considerable variation in the way they organize their base of support, maintain their ruling coalition, manage their relationship with the military and security apparatus, and deal with potential rivals and challengers. Because the key actors interact in different ways, international conflict can have heterogeneous effects on the stability of different types of authoritarian regimes.<sup>31</sup> How, or whether, the nature of the interaction between key regime actors changes with repeated episodes of international conflict varies by type of regime.

The generals and officers taking part in military authoritarian regimes tend to value the autonomy and unity of the military organization. This is because they prize a professional military that is cohesive, both as a means to further the interest of the military and to best guarantee the security of the country. It is also because a break-up of the military into warring factions carries huge

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<sup>31</sup>Geddes offers a general survey of the differences between different types of authoritarian regimes. Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). Chapter 2.

costs. The leaders of a military are essentially involved in a “game of coordination,” preferring to act together whether it is in power or in the barracks to any alternative where they are split. The military prioritizing unity over division has direct implications for the stability of these regimes, for it means that they would prefer giving up power in unison rather than face a split within its ranks over remaining in power. That military officers are rarely persecuted after they cede power also makes the decision to give up power easier. These features together make military regimes particularly prone to give up power and the reason why on average military regimes tend to last the shortest time in power.

Conflicts with other states does not affect in a significant way the stability of military regimes, for it does not alter the nature of intra-regime interaction. The value placed on unity of the armed forces may be even higher when the country faces the possibility of conflict. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the stability of a military regime is enhanced. Putting a higher value on cohesion of the military means that both “coordination options” of staying in power and returning to the barracks in unison become more attractive. While it is an empirical question which of these options military regimes choose and the conditions under which they do so, there does not seem to be an *a priori* reason for these regimes to choose one over the other when the country is involved in repeated conflicts. For military regimes therefore, heightened tension is not expected to have a substantial effect on domestic stability.

Party leaders and cadres in single party regimes, such as the communist parties in the former Eastern Bloc or the ruling party in Singapore, also have an incentive to act in unison. The difference from military regimes is that they prefer to cooperate solely when in power and not out of office (or when leaving office). Regardless of whether they are the majority or minority faction, these party leaders have a “dominant strategy” of staying in power together over any other options that are available to them. Under single party rule it is better for the minority faction to be a junior partner in government rather than leading the opposition because of the influence and the benefits that being in government brings. Since internal divisions detract from the ability of the regime to stay in power by making it more likely that defectors will join the opposition, accommodation and co-optation of (potential) opposition into the ruling apparatus is the norm for these regimes. For this type of regime’s fall, a defection of a faction within the party large enough to form a coalition

that can defeat the ruling party is needed. Since few within the ruling party are willing to risk the spoils of rule in order to do so, single party regimes tend to be the most stable among authoritarian regime types.

As with military regimes, elevated levels of international tension do not alter how the key regime actors prioritize their options under single party rule. Stints in the opposition do not become more attractive when there is conflict. Because the value of cooperation in power does not become devalued during periods of heightened tension, the strategies for the key actors do not change. The majority faction within the leadership may even be more likely to accommodate demands by other factions within the ruling party during periods of high international tension. It is also possible that minority factions will moderate their demands because life in the opposition become less attractive during such periods. Whichever the case, because the shift in the security environment does not alter the strategic context in which the key actors make decisions, it is not likely to have a significant effect on the stability of the regime.

Personalist leaders such as Saddam Hussein and Muammar Ghadafi and insiders in personalist regimes face a different set of circumstances. Amongst the factions in personalist regimes there doesn't exist the incentives for acting in unison as within military regimes, or the clear best option of cooperating to remain in power as in single party regimes. Because so much authority is concentrated in the leader, the leader essentially controls those who get to participate as members of the leader's faction and those that don't. It is in the leader's interest (as well as those in his faction) to minimize the resources that are distributed to those that are not core members of the regime but are needed to remain in power. Regime insiders have a large incentive to stay in the favor of the leader, for their position and well-being depend almost entirely on their relationship with him/her. When the minority faction receives enough benefits to outweigh the potential benefits from a challenge to the leader, then the regime remains in power unchallenged. In other words, the interaction within personalist regimes resembles an "ultimatum game," where the leaders offers benefits to potential participants in the regime, and they in turn can accept the offer or reject it and revolt. Because the costs to a failed challenge to personalist leaders are so high, these benefits from the status quo are normally enough to keep the regime together.

Because the costs to a failed challenge to personalist leaders are so high, the benefits from

the status quo are usually enough to prevent a challenge against the leader. However, high levels of tension can upset the status quo. Because the benefits from the status quo and the expected costs from a challenge together impede a challenge against the leader, decreasing the benefits from the status quo or increasing the expected benefits from a challenge has destabilizing effects on the regime. Repeated conflicts over time do both under personalist rule. Extended periods of tension call for additional resources to be spent for national security, decreasing the amount that is available for those within the regime. The channelling of resources to the military can also strengthen potential challengers,<sup>32</sup> despite efforts by personalist leaders to control the military with family members or ethnic allies. At the same time, the higher probability of war makes the status quo less attractive. A spike in tension or a international crisis can also offer a focal point for the groups that are excluded from the spoils of government to coordinate a challenge against the leadership. Therefore in contrast to single party and military regimes, conflicts have clear destabilizing consequences for personalist regimes.

External conflicts may therefore not extend a regime's stay in power and may even reduce it. However, are there circumstances where it can enhance stability, defined in a way that is different from the traditional conception but that is nevertheless important theoretically and substantively? The inclusion of multiple actors within an authoritarian regime into the analysis allows for testing this possibility. Recall that in contrast to the key actors in personalist regimes and single party regimes, the generals in a military regime prefer any outcome where they act in unison preferred to ones where they are divided. Crucially, this means that even generals in power prefer a joint return to the barracks to the military split and at odds on opposite sides. A mutual interest in avoiding a clash between the different factions within the military, however, does not guarantee that the generals leading these factions will be able coordinate their actions. Differing intensity of preferences over multiple coordination options between the factions can result in a failure to coordinate when the option of costly committing to a position exists. Actors can attempt to commit to a favorable position in an attempt to get the other side to back down. As I formally show in Chapter 3, under certain conditions two factions within the military can commit to positions

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<sup>32</sup>Milan Svolik, "Contracting on Violence: The Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 57, No. 5, 2013.

that they favor, in which case mis-coordination and a split in the military can result. However, a conflict-prone external environment increases the incentives for the military to stay together and makes them more averse to any decision that could result in a clash within the military. Therefore when faced with discontent at the regime in a tense security environment, military leaders are more likely to choose to return to the barracks rather than face the prospects of mass protests or armed insurgencies and the resulting division in the military regarding the response to the crisis. An implication of this is that the end of military regimes in an adverse security environment should be less likely to experience non-institutional means of breakdown such as insurgencies or mass uprisings.

An additional implication of the theory of how a high-threat security environment interacts with the politics within authoritarian regimes is that conflicts abroad will influence not just the form of breakdown, but the propensity for large scale violence to occur as well. The high value that military organizations place on organizational unity as the means to safeguarding the nation means that they will be not only be more likely to leave office before facing internal divisions over how to respond to mass protests or a popular insurgency, they are also likely to avoid decisions that can lead to violent conflicts and high levels of casualties. This is a different prediction from previous studies have suggested that military dictatorships are more likely to wield violence and become involved in civil wars.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps counter-intuitively, military regimes are thus less likely to become embroiled in domestic conflicts that result in heavy casualties as the result of their breakdown, and this tendency is stronger when the regime in power faces a precarious international security environment. External conflicts thus facilitate orderly and peaceful transitions of power. A tense security environment enhances domestic stability, not in the sense of extending leader or even regime tenure, but by reducing the level of violence involved in the transition from (or between) authoritarian regimes.

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<sup>33</sup>Hanna Fjelde, "Generals, Dictators, and Kings: Authoritarian Regimes and Civil Conflict 1973-2004," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2010.

## 1.4 Method

In empirically assessing the relationship between domestic stability and international conflict, my dissertation departs from the literature in a number of ways. First, as its unit of analysis, it takes authoritarian regimes, or the formal and informal "rules of the game" that govern the behavior of actors and influence outcomes under authoritarian rule. As leadership changes in the former USSR and the People's Republic of China demonstrate, many authoritarian regimes experience leadership changes frequently, if not regularly, as part of an institutionalized process. Treating these institutionalized leadership changes as the same as forced or violent falls from power may bias inferences about the causes of (in)stability.<sup>34</sup> Dictators also often lose power only to give way to other forms of authoritarian rule and aggregating different types of autocracies under a single category of dictatorship, as the study of transitions to democracy do, may similarly misinterpret causes of instability. This is particularly true if such peaceful transitions of power or democratization occur more frequently in particular types of authoritarian regimes. Analyzing regimes as the base unit avoids these two sources of potential bias.

Conceptually, I operationalize stability not just to mean the duration of rule (whether by an individual or a regime), but the level of violence that is involved in the breakdown of the regime. Behind the collapse or persistence of different types of authoritarian regimes is the strategic interaction between the key actors in that regime. While it may seem unusual to take into account the level of violence during the fall of a regime when investigating the causes of instability, it is plausible that under certain circumstances actors within authoritarian regimes make decisions to avoid high levels of internal violence rather than to maximize their time in office. When (and if) actors choose to prioritize such domestic stability over remaining in power and how the level of threat faced by the country in the international realm influences such choices is a question the dissertation addresses. Asking this question, based on rethinking the concept of stability to go beyond a focus on the longevity of rule, may make it possible to reveal previously overlooked relationships.

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<sup>34</sup>Bueno De Mesquita, Silverson and Woller, "War and the Fate of Regimes: A Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3, 1992.; Alexandre Debs and H.E. Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No.3, 2010.; H.E. Goemans, "Which way Out? The Manner and Consequence of Losing Office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008.

Lastly, in terms of the scope of analysis, instead of solely wars, it examines a wider range of inter-state disputes and the effect they have on domestic stability. If war is *ex post* inefficient because of the costs it entails, or a different logic governs wars from disputes that fall short of full-blown war, expanding the breadth of analysis to lower levels of conflict (and hence lower costs) may lead to different conclusions than an exclusive focus on wars. This is particularly important when testing the hypothesis that authoritarian leaders may become part of conflicts for low grade conflict, rather than wars, may be the optimal strategy for leaders. Because war is costly and there is uncertainty about the outcome, a leader may prefer to garner the domestic benefits through lower level of international conflict and tension without incurring the costs of a war.

## 1.5 Structure

Taking this approach, the dissertation first examines how the security environment impacts the duration of authoritarian regimes. While many have argued that authoritarian regimes derive benefits from external conflict because of the stabilizing effect it has on domestic rule, in Chapter 2 I find no evidence, at least as a general proposition, for the argument that external conflicts lead to longer durations of authoritarian rule. Various specifications of hazard models show that for most authoritarian regimes conflicts have no effect on the duration of rule, while it actually curtails it for personalist regimes.

Chapter 3 and 4 test the hypothesis that in the case of military regimes, transitions from authoritarian rule would be more likely to be peaceful and orderly within the context of repeated conflicts. Chapter 3 tests through various regression models whether military regimes in a conflict-prone environment are less likely to fall by mass protests and insurgencies. Chapter 4 does the same but with casualties during the regime breakdown as the measure of violence and dependent variable. I find strong support for both predictions. This indicates that the purported stabilizing effect of conflict may take the form of reducing the level of violence during the transition process instead of extending the tenure of leaders (or regimes) as previously thought.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Jack Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988.; Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique" in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman,

A case study of North Korea in Chapter 5 also tests implications of the theory. A glaring exception to the general finding that personalist authoritarian regimes are more prone to become destabilized within a conflict-prone environment is the North Korean regime under the leadership of three generations of the Kims. The theory presented above attributes the long duration of this regime to the ability of the regime to deter challenges against it through repression or the supply of private benefits to regime insiders, and not to the tension resulting from conflicts with other nations. Since personalist regimes such as those headed by the Kims in North Korea do not benefit from repeated conflicts, Chapter 2 argues, they do not have the incentive to instigate them during domestic crisis. To test whether the pattern of conflict on the Korean peninsula is consistent with this claim, I check whether domestic instability in North Korea is associated with higher episodes of militarized disputes. To deal with the problem that instability is largely unobservable in North Korea, I utilize the famines that North Korea has experienced during the last 20 years as a proxy for domestic crisis in order to examine whether such periods coincide with more frequent episodes of international conflict. Since famines are the result of largely unpredictable fluctuations in the weather, using it as our measure of instability also alleviates concern that rather than instability causing belligerent behavior, it could be the other way around.

To complement the test of whether external conflict has been used as a means to stabilize the North Korean regime, I also examine the provision of private goods on the part of the regime as a means of holding on to power. While much of the popular reporting on the country has focused on the brutally repressive nature of the regime, I attempt to gauge the capacity of the regime to accumulate private benefits in the field of international trade and investment during March and April of 2014. To do so, I conducted surveys of investors with experience inside North Korea in the three Chinese provinces bordering North Korea. While those advocating for more economic engagement with North Korea argue that market forces are creating incentives for actors in North Korea to create more stable structures/institutions for further economic exchanges, the theory presented here suggests that this is unlikely in the case of long-lasting personalist regimes because the very survival of these regimes depends, in large part, on maintaining the private nature of the

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1989).; Tarar, "Diversionary Incentives and the Bargaining Approach to War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2006.



benefits from economic exchanges with the outside world in order to divert them for the interests of the regime (leader). Confirming that the logic of regime survival takes priority for these regimes in international trade, one of the striking findings from the surveys is that despite variation in the industries and length of commerce with North Korea, the investors/traders consistently pointed out the lack of increased institutionalization of commerce and investment over time.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

The results of the chapters in the dissertation point toward the need for a more nuanced understanding of the domestic context in the target nation of a state's foreign policy. I find no evidence that a particular type of authoritarian regime has an interest in instigating or prolonging conflict. This points toward the conclusion that in general the authoritarian nature of a government should not preclude efforts to reach a negotiated settlement to outstanding differences. There are however, different sets of trade-offs involved in dealing with particular types of authoritarian regimes. In formulating policy toward a personalist regime that has been involved in repeated conflicts, for example, one can reasonably count on a higher probability of a curtailed time in power for the regime. A policy of "strategic patience," may not be optimal however, for the probability of mass violence during the breakdown is much higher for such regimes than any other type of regime. Military regimes in a conflict-prone environment, on the other hand, are much more likely to transition peacefully given the collapse of the regime. High levels of casualty are unlikely. However, external conflicts do not have the destabilizing effect that they do for personalist regimes. Awareness of the exact nature of these trade-offs will better inform policy debates.

As discussed in more detail in the conclusion, the outcomes associated with the different regime types and their security environment also lead to further avenues for research. What conditions makes it more likely that a breakdown of a regime lead to the emergence of a "better" post transition regime? What type of authoritarian regime or democratization is likely to follow the collapse of any particular regime? What role does the security environment play in the process? This dissertation can provide the baseline for tackling these questions as well.

## CHAPTER 2

# International Conflict and the Duration of Authoritarian Regimes

### 2.1 Introduction

Thomas Friedman has argued regarding the latest conflict in Ukraine that Vladimir Putin's "domestic policy of... keeping himself permanently in power... seems to require adventures like Ukraine that gin up nationalism and anti-Westernism to distract the Russian public."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, some have argued that North Korea's new leader Kim Jong-un, "may have been stoking fears of a foreign threat primarily to dampen political unrest at home."<sup>2</sup> This paper seeks to test the claim in these examples that international conflicts contribute to stabilizing the rule of authoritarian regimes. Theoretically, the rationale that authoritarian regimes may have inherent interest in conflict bears directly on one of the core tenets of the bargaining model of war. If certain regimes have a preference for conflict in the interest of domestic stability, then it does not necessarily follow that states as rational actors should prefer to avoid war because of the costs it entails. Hence a settlement preferable to war may not always exist.<sup>3</sup> This purported relationship has provided one of the rationales for those that have argued against the efficacy of attempting "strategies of engagement" or negotiations aimed at resolving differences of interest between states.

One of the implications of the view that authoritarian rulers benefit from conflict is that more frequent international disputes should lead to more stable authoritarian rule. This hypothesis seems

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Friedman, "Playing Hockey with Putin," *New York Times*, April 6, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>Sheila Miyoshi Jager, "Domestic Politics, Pyongyang Style," *New York Times*, March 14, 2013.

<sup>3</sup>James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, Vol. 49., No. 3, 1995.

to find some support within the aggregate data. <Table 1> below compares the mean duration of authoritarian regimes in the Geddes, Wright, and Frantz dataset (hereafter GWF dataset) that were involved in repeated conflicts over extended periods of time against those that have not.<sup>4</sup> As a measure of high level of tension or conflict, it uses the criteria of whether a country has been involved in an “enduring rivalry,” for all or most of their duration.<sup>5</sup> To the extent that conflicts short of full-blown war may enhance domestic stability, an advantage of this criteria is that it utilizes not solely wars but all conflicts where military force was threatened, mobilized, or used.<sup>6</sup> The table lists the means for regime duration for all authoritarian regimes in the GWF dataset, taking the regimes still in power in 2010 and considering them to have ended in 2010.<sup>7</sup> The results are consistent with the view that conflict serves the interests of authoritarian regimes, with regimes in a rivalry relationship lasting on average about 17.5% longer in power than those not in one. Since many of the longest surviving authoritarian regimes that are part of a rivalry are still in power, leaving them in the sample results in a higher mean for authoritarian duration under rivalry conditions despite their time in power being “censored,” or assumed to have ended in 2010. The censoring implies that the actual difference between the average duration of rivalry and non-rivalry regimes is probably being underestimated. Regimes in multiple rivalries on average last almost 12 years longer (a 75.1% increase) than regimes not involved in any rivalry, also supporting the idea that higher levels of external tension enhance domestic stability.

Possible confounding factors make it difficult, however, to assess the relationship between external tension and internal stability from the aggregate data. Also, authoritarian regimes often

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<sup>4</sup>Geddes, Wright and Frantz, *Autocratic Regime Data*, available at <http://dictators.la.psu.edu/>

<sup>5</sup>“Most” is defined as 50% or more of the duration of the regime. Dataset available at <ftp://128.196.23.212/rivalry/riv500web.zip>

<sup>6</sup>Klein, James P., Gary Goertz, and Paul F. Diehl, “The new rivalry dataset: Procedures and patterns,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2006.

<sup>7</sup>Taking the means for the subset of all the authoritarian regimes in the dataset that had fallen from power by the year 2010, the last year in the GWF dataset, it is the regimes in non-rival relationships that last longer than those in a rivalry. However, it is likely that many of the longest enduring authoritarian regimes were still in power in 2010. Hence taking these regimes out gives less weight to the regimes that exhibit higher stability and therefore can potentially lead to a bias.

**Table 2.1:** Mean Duration of Authoritarian Regimes by Rivalry Participation

Years	Mean Duration of All Regimes	Mean Duration of Regimes in Rivalry	Mean Duration of Regimes not in Rivalry	Mean Duration of Regimes in Multiple Rivalries	% Difference between Rivalry and Non-Rivalry
Treating Regimes in power in 2010 as having ended in 2010)	18.41  (n=271)	20.81  (n=68)	17.69  (n=203)	27.46  (n=26)	+17.46%

The last column is calculated by subtracting column III from column II and dividing by column III

choose to opt out of relationships that have exhibited high levels of tension over time and it is not clear why they would do so if they gain domestic benefits from external conflict. Do autocratic forms of government derive domestic political benefits from conflicts with other states in the form of enhanced stability of domestic rule? How do different types of authoritarian regimes interact with a conflict-prone security environment?

This paper seeks to answer these questions by drawing on an emerging body of work on how the politics within different types of authoritarian regimes -whether military, personalist, or single party - affect their foreign policies.<sup>8</sup> High levels of tension with other states can have a variety of benefits for authoritarian regimes and their leaders. Perhaps the most important of these is that they can help the regime survive in power by diverting focus from the regime's performance, channelling resources towards those domestic actors that do not necessarily have an interest in peaceful external relations, mobilizing nationalist sentiments, and providing the opportunity to persecute opponents of the regime. However, there are also risks to being involved in a conflict. The leader could be forced into a humiliating back-down after a decision to escalate. Opposition forces could be emboldened to mount a challenge against the regime. Worse, the state could end

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<sup>8</sup>Since Geddes first introduced the typology various works have sought to test their relevance to various outcomes in international relations. These include Jessica Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: regime type and signalling resolve," *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1, 2008.; Jessica Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 2, 2012.; Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship, Institutions, and Outcomes in Authoritarian Regimes*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2011).; Escriba-Folch and Wright, "Dealing with Tyranny: International Sanctions and the Survival of Authoritarian Rulers," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No.2, 2010.; Wright, "How Foreign Aid can Foster Democracy in Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2009.

up mired in a war that it could lose. The political fallout from a back-down or a costly war can become a real threat to regime stability. Therefore it is not clear that any regime would purposively seek war or conflict for the sake of regime stability for there exists a trade-off between the potential benefits that conflict can provide and the risks that are incurred from it.

Not all authoritarian leaders, however, face the same set of trade-offs between the costs and benefits of higher levels of tension. Actors in different types of regimes operate within varying sets of institutions, with often conflicting interests and different consequences to decisions they make. For example, leaders of different types of authoritarian regimes face varying levels of costs once they lose power, ranging from death and persecution to a leadership role in the opposition that has a real chance at returning to power. International tension, then, can alter the incentives that key actors face within different authoritarian regimes in ways that have different implications for domestic stability. In military and single party regimes, where the costs and benefits the key actor face prioritize cooperative behavior, a high tension environment does not facilitate - and perhaps even deters - challenges to the leadership. On the other hand, for actors in personalist regimes, such an environment shifts the incentives in ways that makes challenges to the leadership more likely, both by decreasing the benefits of the status quo and by increasing the benefits from a challenge. This leads to the hypotheses that higher levels of international tension should have no particular effect on the stability of single party and military regimes. At the same time, it should, perhaps counter-intuitively, destabilize personalist regimes.

By demonstrating that the longevity of authoritarian regimes are in general not prolonged by international conflict, this paper dissents from the literature that has argued that dictators have a preference for conflict despite its costs due to the domestic benefits it provides. It also contributes to the literature on the impact that domestic authoritarian institutions have on foreign and domestic outcomes. Additionally, by offering analysis of the variation within authoritarian regimes regarding how they interact with an adverse international security environment this paper provides evidence that can inform policy toward particular types of regimes.

## 2.2 The Heterogeneous Effects of Conflict

### 2.2.1 Conflict and its Trade-Offs

International relations scholars have tackled the issue of why and how domestic actors would benefit from conflict-prone relations from a variety of perspectives. The theory of diversionary war posits that leaders have an incentive to initiate conflict when faced with domestic turmoil in order to evade political harm.<sup>9</sup> Not only does war divert attention from the source of political discontent, it also has the effect of raising the level of support for the leader (at least in the short term) as the public closes ranks around the leader.<sup>10</sup> The theory implies that leaders are able to better weather high levels of discontent when there are crises that involve enemies or threats to the state. Even without a war, such crises can have a diversion effect from domestic troubles, for public attention will tend to focus on the (potential) conflict and drown out other issues, changing the terms of political competition in favor of those in the ruling coalition. Frequent spikes in the level of tension can therefore serve the interests of the ruler by making it possible for him to ameliorate domestic unrest. While diversionary war theory has been mostly applied to democracies, the core logic has also been thought to motivate the foreign policy of autocracies.<sup>11</sup> Autocratic governments, while most do not have to face elections, face the threat of a upheaval or a challenge that can unseat them and can also benefit from the reprieve that high international tension can provide from domestic

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<sup>9</sup>Jack Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988.; Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique" in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).; Tarar, "Diversionary Incentives and the Bargaining Approach to War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2006.

<sup>10</sup>Crises also often leave the opposition to the regime vulnerable to the critique that its activities against the government are aiding the enemy or benefiting those that seek to harm the country.

<sup>11</sup>In the context of country specific studies, Christensen has also made this argument regarding Maos policy toward the US. According to his argument, Mao instigated tension with the West to consolidate domestic power. Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

dissatisfaction.<sup>12</sup>

Conflict can also affect the distribution of power and preferences among actors in a state. Solingen argues that external threats empower domestic groups that do not have a vested interest in better and more open relations with the outside world. In states that experience repeated conflicts, these “inward looking” coalitions gain more influence on policy, which in turn strengthens monopolies, protectionist tendencies, and military industrial complexes.<sup>13</sup> For example, repeated militarized disputes between countries can lead to a large standing army and increased expenditure on the domestic security apparatus, resulting in more influence for these bureaucracies and increased capacity on the part of the regime to quell revolts against it. At the same time, a tense security environment undercuts the ability to attract foreign investment and by extension, the influence of internationalists, further weakening the power of more conciliatory forces within the state. This dynamic takes away the incentive for the state to improve relations with an adversary because more of the coalition in power is made up of those that do not have as much vested in good relations with the outside world. Kreps and Pasha draw on this framework to make the case that the dispute over Iran’s nuclear program has essentially followed this rationale.<sup>14</sup>

Culture has also been cited as an explanation for why states have come to view conflict as being in their interest. Wendt argues that it is possible for stable ideational structures to emerge where the meaning of another state as an enemy is shared across a polity, imbuing that society with a common belief that aggressive policies taken against that state as being in the national interest, and

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<sup>12</sup>Examples of include the following: Stein, “Calculation, Miscalculation and Conventional Deterrence I: The View from Cairo,” in *Psychology and Deterrence* ed. Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press: 1985).; Nicholls, Huth and Appell, “When is Domestic Political Unrest related to International Conflict? Diversionary Theory and Japanese Foreign Policy 1890-1941,” *International Studies Quarterly* Vol. 54, No. 4, 2010.; Joll and Martel, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Longman, 2007).

<sup>13</sup>Etel Solingen, *Regional Order at Century’s Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>14</sup>Kreps and Pasha draw on this framework to make the case that the dispute over Iran’s nuclear program has essentially followed this rationale. Kreps and Pasha, *Threats for Peace? The Domestic Distributional Effects of Military Threats*, in Solingen (ed), *Sanctions, Statecraft, and Nuclear Proliferation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

thereby legitimate.<sup>15</sup> Repeated clashes or spikes in tension with other nations can breed ideological or cultural antagonism toward the rival state that makes it hard for the domestic opposition to the regime to offer, or even think of, alternative approaches to foreign policy, further contributing to the perpetuation of antagonistic relations.

However, while these theories provide different logics of how domestic interests can be served (or constructed) by international conflicts or tension, this does not necessarily mean that those that benefit from antagonistic relations instigate or perpetuate them in order to increase their chances of staying in power. This is because inherent in the initiation, escalation, or perpetuation of a dispute there are not only potential benefits, but potential costs as well. Such acts can lead to a full-blown war. The war can end in defeat. Even short of war, there is also the possibility that escalation can result in a humiliating back-down, with the domestic political costs for the leader that it entails. Leaders aware of the benefits that a high tension environment can confer for domestic rule must weigh the benefits against the potential costs of ending up in a costly war or a humiliating back-down. This is also why they are likely to consider other options ahead of escalation or initiation.<sup>16</sup> Authoritarian leaders in particular may have good reason to be sensitive to the domestic political ramifications of war. Previous studies on the effect of wars on leadership tenure have indicated that instead of stabilizing the status quo within states, wars can actually decrease the time in power for authoritarian leaders. Bueno de Mesquita argued that losing wars tends to have a substantively important negative effect on the tenure of authoritarian leaders.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>16</sup>Chris Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions: Governmental Structure and the Externalization of Domestic Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1997.

<sup>17</sup>Bueno De Mesquita, Silverson and Woller, "War and the Fate of Regimes: A Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3, 1992.; Alexandre Debs and H.E. Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No.3, 2010.; H.E. Goemans, "Which way Out? The Manner and Consequence of Losing Office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008.



### 2.2.2 Characteristics of Authoritarian Regimes

If authoritarian rulers face both potential benefits and costs from conflicts, it does not necessarily follow that higher levels of tension have unambiguous effects on domestic stability. The direction of the effect, or whether there is one, depends on how the politics between the key actors within the regime interact with the adverse security environment. Different authoritarian forms of rule show considerable variation in the way they organize their base of support, maintain their ruling coalition, manage their relationship with the military and security apparatus, and deal with potential rivals and challengers. Because the key actors interact in different ways, international tension can have heterogeneous effects on the stability of different types of authoritarian regimes. Following the typology of Geddes, I survey the politics within the three most common types of authoritarian regimes,<sup>18</sup> and deduce hypotheses on the effect that a conflict-prone international environment has on them.

Single party regimes such as the communist parties in the former Eastern Bloc tend to build relatively large and deep support coalitions. They sometimes have formal rules or an informal understanding about how to select new leaders from within and in some cases, as in Singapore, win elections without resorting to fraud or repression. Even when they are ousted from power as part of the democratization process, their support base and party machine rarely implode and they often compete in multi-party elections afterwards. At times they even win back power under democratic rule as the Institutional Revolutionary Party's victory in the most recent election in Mexico shows. For this type of regime's fall, a defection of a faction within the party large enough to form a coalition that can defeat the ruling party is needed. Since few within the ruling party are willing to risk the spoils of rule in order to do so, single party regimes tend to be the most stable among authoritarian regime types.

Military regimes have a narrower base of rule compared to single party regimes for while they often enjoy initial popular support, the power base for the ruling coalition is in the armed forces. Even when in government, they tend to have some form of checks and balances within their ruling

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<sup>18</sup>Geddes offers a general survey of the differences between different types of authoritarian regimes. Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). Chapter 2.

apparatus, often sharing decision making power among high ranking officers in the military. While they have direct control over the means for coercion, when faced with a decision about which the armed forces cannot come to an agreement, they are susceptible to giving up power and returning to the barracks. This is both because a conflict within the military carries huge costs, with possible degeneration into a civil war, and also because they are usually guaranteed a transition back to life as a soldier after leaving power. As a result, military regimes tend to last the shortest time in power.<sup>19</sup>

Personalist leaders such as Saddam Hussein and Muammar Ghadafi on the other hand, usually consolidate power into a very narrow group of people, often with personal ties with the leader. Security organs and even the armed forces are often put under the control of this small circle. Leaders of personalist regimes generally hold together their coalition through provision of rents and private benefits. Regime insiders have a large incentive to stay in the favor of the leader, for their position and well-being depend almost entirely on their relationship with him/her. Groups that can act as checks on the leader, such as political parties or the military are often marginalized, weakened, or put under the control of the leader's personal allies. Coordination amongst minority or rival factions to unseat the leader poses the most serious internal threat to this type of regime.

### **2.2.3 Authoritarian Regimes, Conflict and Domestic Stability**

Does the nature of the interaction between key regime actors changes with repeated conflicts? The answer varies by type of regime. The generals and officers that take part in military authoritarian regimes tend to prioritize the autonomy and unity of the military organization. This is because they value a professional military that is cohesive, both as a means to further the interest of the military and to best guarantee the security of the country, and also because a break-up of the military into warring factions carries huge costs. The leaders of a military are essentially involved in a “game of coordination,” preferring to act together whether it is in power or in the barracks to any alternative where they are split. The military prioritizing unity over division has direct implications for the

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<sup>19</sup>Barbara Geddes, Erika Frantz, and Joseph Wright, “Military Rule,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 17, 2014.

stability of these regimes, for it means that they would prefer giving up power in unison rather than face a split within its ranks over remaining in power. That military officers are rarely persecuted after they cede power also makes the decision to give up power easier. These features together make military regimes particularly prone to give up power.

Being involved in repeated conflicts with another state (or other states) does not affect in a significant way the stability of military regimes, for it does not alter the nature of this intra-regime interaction. The value placed on unity of the armed forces may be even higher when the country faces the possibility of conflict. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the stability of a military regime is enhanced. Putting a higher value on cohesion of the military means that both “coordination options” of staying in power and returning to the barracks in unison become more attractive. While it is an empirical question which of these options military regimes choose and the conditions under which they do so, there does not seem to be an *a priori* reason for these regimes to choose one over the other when the country is involved in repeated conflicts. For military regimes therefore, heightened tension is not expected to have a substantial effect on domestic stability.

Party leaders and cadres in single party regimes also have an incentive to act in unison. The difference from military regimes is that they prefer to cooperate solely when in power and not out of office. Regardless of whether they are the majority or minority faction, these party leaders have a “dominant strategy” of staying in power together over any other options that are available to them. Under single party rule it is better for the minority faction to be a junior partner in government rather than leading the opposition because of the influence and the benefits that being in government brings. Since internal divisions detract from the ability of the regime to stay in power by making it more likely that defectors will join the opposition, accommodation and co-optation of (potential) opposition into the ruling apparatus is the norm for these regimes.

As with military regimes, elevated levels of international tension do not alter how the key regime actors prioritize their options under single party rule. Stints in the opposition do not become more attractive when there is conflict. Because the value of cooperation in power does not become devalued during periods of heightened tension, the strategies for the key actors do not change. The majority faction within the leadership may even be more likely to accommodate demands by other factions within the ruling party during periods of high international tension. It is also possible that

minority factions will moderate their demands because life in the opposition become less attractive during such periods. On the other hand, leaders could pay a price for any missteps taken during the crises. Whichever the case, because the shift in the security environment does not alter the strategic context in which the key actors act, it is not likely to have a significant effect on the stability of the regime.

The leader and regime insiders in personalist regimes face a different set of circumstances. Amongst the factions in personalist regimes there doesn't exist the incentives for acting in unison as within military regimes, or the clear best option of cooperating to remain in power as in single party regimes. Because so much authority is concentrated in the leader, the leader essentially controls those who get to participate as members of the leader's faction and those that don't. It is in the leader's interest (as well as those in his faction) to minimize the resources that are distributed to those that are not core members of the regime but are needed to remain in power. When the minority faction receives enough benefits to outweigh the potential benefits from a challenge to the leader, then the regime remains in power unchallenged. In other words, the interaction within personalist regimes resembles an "ultimatum game," where the leaders offers benefits to potential participants in the regime, and they in turn can accept the offer or reject it and revolt. Because the costs to a failed challenge to personalist leaders are so high, these benefits from the status quo are normally enough to keep the regime together.

However, high levels of tension can upset the status quo under personalist rule. Because the benefits from the status quo and the expected costs from a challenge together impede a challenge against the leader, decreasing the benefits from the status quo or increasing the expected benefits from a challenge has destabilizing effects on the regime. Repeated conflicts do both. Extended periods of tension call for additional resources to be spent for national security, decreasing the amount that is available for those within the regime. The channelling of resources to the military can also strengthen potential challengers, despite efforts by personalist leaders to control the military with family members or ethnic allies.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the higher probability of war makes the status quo less attractive. When there are many groups that are excluded from the spoils

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<sup>20</sup>Milan Svolik, "Contracting on Violence: The Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 57, No. 5, 2013.

of government and there is a chance to coordinate on a challenge against the leadership between these groups, a spike in tension or a international crisis can also offer a focal point for such action as well. Therefore while in single party and military regimes conflict does not incentivize challenges to the regime - it remains the preferred strategy to cooperate for all factions (whether it is the dominant strategy or there exist multiple coordination options)- it does under personalist rule. Conflicts thus have destabilizing consequences for personalist regimes.

Circumstances where the context of multiple conflicts can destabilize single party and military regimes exist. If the leadership of these regimes were to engage in risky behavior that others within the ruling coalition saw as a serious threat to their interests, they could move to remove the leader. However, in both of these regime types the institutional traits work against the possibility of arbitrary, unilateral, or erratic foreign policy decisions. This is because leaders of these regimes are subject to higher levels of institutional checks. Collective decision-making characterizes many military regimes, with leaders of the various branch of the services and other high ranking generals often join the leader in making key decisions. This puts constraints on the leader in foreign policy, not only because there are more sources of possible dissent but also because the military often has access to its own independent intelligence assessments. Even when the leadership does not take the form of collective decision making, rarely does the leader harm the autonomy or professionalism of the armed forces under military rule. This in turn means that the military's ability to constrain the leader regarding key military or foreign policy decisions remains intact.

Single party regimes also tend to have the participation of a relatively broad support base within the ruling coalition. Institutionalized decision making procedures with various checks on the leader from other actors within the ruling party is the norm. Within the context of long-running conflicts, the effects of institutional checks, by themselves, are not necessarily lead to more moderate policy. A leader may want to improve relations with the other side by offering concessions, for example, only to have other actors oppose the move. However, such checks temper the excessive risk taking of leaders and make unilateral decision less likely both by direct input during decision making and through posing potential costs on the leader in the case of a failed policy.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Jessica Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs," *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No.1, 2008.

Thus the institutional traits of military and single party regimes work against the possibility of the leader taking foreign policy action that threatens the other key actors within the regime. Such institutional checks moderate the external behavior of such regimes and thus the leadership of single party and military regimes are less likely to subject themselves to decisions that invite a challenge to the leadership. When they do decide to initiate or escalate a militarized dispute, it is more likely to come after internal deliberation and with a wider consensus among the elites of the regime. In short, the divergence in outcomes we expect between personalist regimes on the one hand and single party and military regimes on the other should hold.

The varying institutional features of authoritarian regimes and the interests they shape lead to different predictions for how international conflict affects domestic stability in these regimes. Personalist regimes are subject to a higher probability of destabilization when they are party to repeated conflicts while military and single-party regimes do not experience significant changes in the stability of the regime. How the politics within authoritarian regimes interacts with interstate relations lead to the following hypotheses:

H1: Personalist regimes in a high-threat security environment last for shorter periods in power than those not in one.

H2: Single-party and military authoritarian regimes in a high-threat security environment last for similar periods in power than those not in one.

## **2.3 Empirical Analysis**

### **2.3.1 Unit of Analysis, Variable Specification, and Data**

In empirically addressing the relationship between domestic stability and the international security environment, this paper makes a number of methodological choices. First, it looks at a wider range of inter-state disputes and the effect they have on domestic stability in order to provide a

more complete picture regarding the dynamics of inter-state conflict and domestic stability. While some previous studies have examined the domestic repercussions of wars<sup>22</sup>, wars are fairly rare events in international politics, and if the same logic governs lower levels of conflict in terms of their domestic political implications, expanding the analysis to take into account a wider range of disputes will allow for stronger inferences on the relationship.<sup>23</sup> If war is *ex post* inefficient because of the costs it entails,<sup>24</sup> or a different logic governs wars from levels of disputes below it, expanding the scope of analysis to lower levels of conflict (and hence lower costs) may lead to different conclusions than an exclusive focus on wars.

Second, in terms of domestic (in)stability, this paper takes as its unit of analysis the duration of authoritarian regimes, or the formal and informal "rules of the game" that govern the behavior of actors and influence outcomes under authoritarian rule. Many autocrats lose power only to have a different system of authoritarian rule take its place, and analyzing regimes as the base unit of potential destabilization may capture relationships that the studies focusing on transitions from autocracy to democracy (and thereby aggregating different types of autocracies) do not.

Taking the duration of leaders in office as the dependent variable in assessing the effect of heightened international tension, as some other works have done, may not accurately capture how the stability of rule is impacted by variation in the security environment. As leadership changes in the former USSR and China demonstrate, many authoritarian regimes go through leadership changes frequently, if not regularly, without it being a sign or consequence of instability. Therefore whether, and when, the leaders steps down may not be a good measure of stability. Including cases of more or less institutionalized changes in power with those that result from instability to the system of rule can bias inferences about the effect of other factors. If changes in leadership are not necessarily a sign of weakness but institutionalized practices that do not reflect instability or

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<sup>22</sup>bueno92, bueno95

<sup>23</sup>These include Debs and Goemans, *op. cit.*; H.E. Goemans, "Which Way Out? The Manner and Consequences of Loosing Office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008; Chris Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions: Governmental Structure and the Externalization of Domestic Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1997.

<sup>24</sup>Fearon, *op. cit.*, 1995.

perhaps even capture the underlying capacity of some regimes to adapt to political changes and maintain/consolidate its position, the wrong conclusions could be drawn from the cases.

Taking the duration of regimes (regime-years) as the unit of analysis alleviates these concerns. Changes of regime, or a wholesale change in the rules governing the coalition in power, is a sufficient condition of destabilization.<sup>25</sup> While a change of a ruler does not necessarily mean destabilization of the ruling system, given a change of regime, it follows that destabilization of the previous order has occurred. Regime termination also by definition cannot be a sign of regime strength or flexibility. There exists a trade-off, however, in that focusing exclusively on regime changes may overlook cases where leadership changes within the same regime were cases of destabilization. However, in that this approach limits the cases to the clear cut cases of regime instability, it may provide a better opportunity at inferring the factors that affect it.

To implement this approach, this paper utilizes data from several sources. For authoritarian regimes, the GWF dataset offers the most comprehensive classification of authoritarian rule based on domestic institutions. These institutions determine power arrangements, decision making procedures, and allocation of state resources. The GWF dataset classifies all authoritarian regimes from 1945 to 2010 into different types, among which the three most common types are military, personalist, and single party (as well as hybrids between them). The dataset offers the advantage of being able to differentiate between leadership changes that are limited to changes in personnel without far-reaching changes to the broader structure of power, and those which are overhauls of the ruling system.

It draws from a dataset on “enduring rivalries,” defined as militarized disputes between two states over a given period of time.<sup>26</sup> Four different categories of interstate disputes, namely the threat of force, the display of force, limited use of force, and war are included in this dataset, capturing a wider range of disputes than a sole focus on wars.<sup>27</sup> The observation that militarized

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<sup>25</sup>As is consistent with this claim, there are very few leaders who survive a change in regime to remain as leader after a change in regime.

<sup>26</sup>Diehl and Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup>Ghosn, Faten, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart Bremer, “The MID3 Data Set, 1993-2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* Vol. 21, No. 2, 2004.



disputes tend to be concentrated within a small subset of the total number of possible dyads between states has led to the conceptualization of enduring rivalries, or dyads that experience repeated disputes over particular periods of time. Operationalization as a certain frequency of militarized disputes in a dyad during a given duration of time necessarily entails a certain level of arbitrariness, but one of the most commonly used definition is a dyad with (at least) 6 militarized disputes within a span of 20 years.<sup>28</sup> This paper utilizes this operationalization of enduring rivalries and also posits that the level of tension captured by the existence of an "enduring rivalry" is such that it will have an effect on the longevity of the authoritarian regimes involved in one.<sup>29</sup>

<Table 2> shows the mean duration in power for each type of authoritarian regime by whether they were involved in a rivalry or not. A separate column lists the means for those regimes in multiple rivalries. The two hypotheses seem to find preliminary support in the data. Personalist regimes have, on average, a shorter life span within rivalry relations. Military and single party regimes, on the other hand, survive longer in power when part of an enduring rivalry.

**Table 2.2:** Mean Duration in Years by Type and Rivalry Involvement

	Mean Duration of All Regimes	Mean Duration of Regimes in Rivalry	Mean Duration of Regimes not in Rivalry	Mean Duration of Regimes in Multiple Rivalries	% Difference between Rivalry and Non-Rivalry
Personalist	13.1 (n=102)	11.3 (n=22)	13.6 (n=80)	12.6 (n=7)	-16.8%
Military	5.71 (n=48)	6.1 (n=12)	5.4 (n=36)	10.7 (n=3)	+12.5%
Single Party	32.5 (n=48)	38.1 (n=8)	31.4 (n=40)	68.5 (n=2)	+21.4%

Do these relationships remain when a variety of other factors that have been shown to lead to regime stability are taken into account? I attempt to answer this question by controlling for

<sup>28</sup>An additional condition is that the maximum gap year between MIDs cannot exceed 10 years.

<sup>29</sup>The hypothesized relationship could take a linear form, where the number or intensity of MIDs leads to a general increase in the longevity of autocratic rule, or a non-linear one, where there is a certain threshold of conflict intensity or number of conflicts (or some combination of the two) for there to be an impact on regime longevity. The uncertainty about the functional form of the relationship is why the increase in the number of MIDs or the intensity of the MIDs by themselves would not be adequate tests of the relationship.

a number of factors that have been shown to be associated with regime longevity within a hazard model. Hazard models allow for the estimation of a hazard rate, which can be thought of as the rate of termination of a certain process or event. In applying this model to the duration of authoritarian regimes, a regime's time in government is treated as the "process" and the regime's fall from power as the "termination" of that process. The unit of analysis is the regime-year, where each regime lasts in power for a number of years until it loses office. The hazard rate produced by the model is a measure of the durability of different types of authoritarian regimes. Of interest for the purposes of this article is how that rate is affected by exposure to an adverse security environment.

The key advantage of the hazard model is that it allows for inclusion of regimes that are currently in power, which would otherwise be excluded or treated as having lasted only until the last year in the dataset in other specifications. Excluding the surviving autocratic regimes would not only lead to a loss of the information provided by those cases; the inferences drawn from the remaining cases can be biased if the cases that are dropped share features that are systematically related to how long they last in power. Including these regimes as if they had ended in 2010, also removes the information that they were still in power at the time when the data ends. Hazard models treat these cases as censored, or as having lasted (but not ended) until the period where the data ends.

Before presenting the results of the hazard model, I check for two potential sources of bias in the results. First, to the extent that militarized crises are instigated by choice, it could be that certain types of regimes are more prone to become involved in repeated inter-state disputes. This non-random selection of particular regimes into conflicts could bias our estimates of the role that higher levels of external tension have on domestic stability. Substantively, it could be the case that weak regimes feel the need to instigate crisis in order to shore up their domestic support, as diversionary war theory implies, or that unstable governments are more prone to become the targets of military action by adversaries so that weak regimes are disproportionately amongst the states that experience inter-state crisis. Then to the extent that we do find some kind of negative effect of inter-state tension on domestic stability, it could be an artefact of the self-selection and not the

conflict environment itself.<sup>30</sup>

Second, it is possible that rather than a conflict-prone environment enhancing regime stability, it is stability of rule that leads to states becoming more aggressive and conflict prone. Domestic stability after all, is a precondition for a state's growth in capabilities, and it is not implausible that higher levels of stability could be leading to a more aggressive foreign policy, thereby creating a rivalry relationship with another state. This endogeneity would bias the coefficient for the effect of conflicts upward, thereby rendering any positive effect we find for regime stability suspect. To the extent that such endogeneity coexists with the self-selection discussed above, the effects of the two would tend to cancel each other out.<sup>31</sup>

Below in Table 3 are the results of a logit regression that tests for these sources of potential bias. It assesses whether particular types of authoritarian regimes are more likely to become part of rivalry relationships and whether more stable regimes are associated with repeated conflicts. The dependent variable is whether an authoritarian regime is part of an enduring rivalry during each regime-year throughout its time in power. Every year of a country-regime that is party to a dyad classified as an enduring rivalry is coded as a 1, and all other regime years are coded as a 0.

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<sup>30</sup>On the other hand, any positive effect should underestimate the size of the actual effect.

<sup>31</sup>Some have argued that the distribution of rivalries is consistent with a random distribution of conflicts and that rivalries do not have particular endogenous traits to them that perpetuate conflict. Gartzke and Simon, "Hot Hand: A Critical Analysis of Enduring Rivalries," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, No.3, 1999.

**Table 2.3:** Authoritarian Regime Type and Rivalry

Variable	(1)
RGDP Logged	0.273 (0.216)
RGDP Change	0.002 (0.010)
Population Logged	0.870*** (0.255)
Personalist	-0.028 (0.519)
Military	0.026 (0.617)
Regime Duration	-.091 0.071
Duration*Personalist	— —
Duration*Military	— —
GDP*Personalist	— —
GDP*Military	— —
Alliance	-.121 .130
Cold War	3.96*** (1.046)
Spline (squared)	0.006 (0.004)
Spline (cubed)	-0.000*** (0.000)
n	3151

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

Clustered standard errors by country.

Significance levels \*\*\* 1% \*\* 5% \* 10%

The regressions control for factors that plausibly influence the level of violence involved. The level of development as well as the performance of the economy has been shown to have an influence on regime stability and the log of GDP per capita as well as percent gdp growth are included as a control.<sup>32</sup> Since the economic performance from last year can have an effect well into this year, a one year lag of the growth rate is also included.<sup>33</sup> The size of the population may be related to the political stability of the state, for it affects the cost of organizing or controlling political groups. The population data, also from the Penn World Tables Dataset, is logged in the model. Alliances can affect the domestic stability of regimes by offering both external security and also by guaranteeing the internal security of a particular coalition. An example is the tacit, and at times overt, guarantee the Soviets gave toward Communist Parties in Eastern Europe during the Cold War both externally through the Warsaw Pact and internally through intervention when ally communist parties were threatened. The Correlates of War dataset on formal alliances is used to control for this influence.<sup>34</sup> The Cold War period is also thought to have stabilized many authoritarian regimes in ways that are not reduced to the formal alliances, either through non-formal guarantees or through the political and pressures that the Cold War imposed on all countries of the world. A dummy variable for the Cold War period from 1945 to 1989 controls for this possibility. To take into account the possibility that the propensity for lethal violence breaking out is time dependent on the duration of the regime, years since a regime came to power is also part of the model as a control. Lastly, scholars have argued whether a regime is in power when a conflict starts has destabilizing consequences for the public puts the blame for the conflict on those in power at the time.<sup>35</sup> This binary variable codes regimes by whether they were in power

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<sup>32</sup>On democratic transitions from authoritarian rule and economic growth, refer to Haggard and Kaufmann, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).; Przeworski and Limongi, "Modernization: Theory and Facts, *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1989. On economic coups and economic performance, refer to Galetovic and Sanhuenza, "Citizens, Autocrats, and Plotters: A Model and New Evidence on Coup D'états," *Economics and Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2000.; Nam Kyu Kim, "Revisiting Economic Shocks and Coups," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Published Online, 2014.

<sup>33</sup>Adding two year lags does not affect the substantive or statistical findings reported below in a meaningful way. All GDP data is from the Penn World Tables dataset, Version7.0.

<sup>34</sup>Douglas Gibler, *International military alliances, 1648-2008* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009).

<sup>35</sup>Sarah E. Croco and Jessica L. Weeks, "Willing and Able: Culpability, Vulnerability and Leaders Sensitivity to

when a rivalry started. Regional dummies are also included as a control for unobservable variables that may have an effect on the level of violence. Dummies for Latin America, East Asia, Middle East, Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa are included. Splines are also included to account for potential temporal dependence. Because countries have multiple authoritarian regimes during the period of analysis, robust standard errors are obtained by clustering the data by country. The ten cases of regimes that fell through “foreign impositions” are excluded from the analysis.<sup>36</sup>

Column I is the base model. Dummies for personalist and military regimes are included to examine whether the regimes differ significantly in their likelihood of becoming part of a rivalry from single party regimes (the omitted type). While in the GWF dataset, regimes can be characterized as hybrids between the “pure” types, these have been aggregated into the three types in the manner following Geddes.<sup>37</sup> Column II & III adds interactions between regime duration and regime type as well as real GDP growth and regime type, respectively, to the base model. The two interaction terms are to check for the possibility that only weak regimes are “selecting themselves” into rivalries. Regime duration is the revealed stability of the regime, and if weak regimes are selecting themselves into rivalries in a systematic way, the interaction term should be negative and statistically significant. Real GDP growth leads to higher durability on the part of authoritarian regimes and if low growth, unstable regimes are more prone to become involved in a rivalry, the interaction terms again should be negative and statistically significant.

Since the theory presented in this paper predicts that personalist regimes are particularly likely to become destabilized within a high threat security environment, it can be problematic if weak personalist regimes are more prone to become part of enduring rivalries: uncertainty arises regarding whether to attribute an effect to the security environment or to weak personalist regimes

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War Outcomes,” Unpublished Manuscript.

<sup>36</sup>Since these cases a forced removal of a leader and imposition of a new government after an invasion by a foreign force are interventions into the lifespan of each regime, and affect regime duration by a different mechanism than the intra-regime politics that are the focus in this chapter they are omitted from the sample. Leaving them in the model weakens slightly the statistical significance of some of the findings and does not affect in a significant way the substantive effect of the coefficients.

<sup>37</sup>Independent military, military-personal, and military regimes are aggregated into the military regime category. Single party, party-military, party-personal, party-personal-military, oligarchies, and Iran 1979-2010 are collapsed into the single party category. Personalist regimes are not combined with any of the hybrid types

becoming involved in rivalries in the first place. However, as can be seen in the results of Table 3,<sup>38</sup> personalist regimes in general and weak personalist regimes in particular do not seem more likely to become part of an enduring rivalry. Proxies for regime strength, such as real GDP change, and actual measures of durability such as regime duration are not statistically significant by themselves or when interacted with the personalist regime dummy. The direction of the effect is also inconsistent, with duration having a small positive term while real GDP growth actually has a small negative value when interacted with personalist regimes.<sup>39</sup> It is not implausible that weak personalist regimes could be selecting into rivalries and therefore surviving longer in power, in which case we would still see the same results that we observe here. However, if this were the case, we would observe that personalist regimes in a rivalry would be surviving longer than comparative ones not in a rivalry. As we see below, the opposite is actually the case.

Additionally, as can be seen from the coefficient on the “duration” variable, it is not the case that the stronger, more durable regimes are more aggressive in terms of foreign policy and as a result becoming party to rivalries. In all three models, as the coefficient and standard errors on the duration variable show, the longer a regime lasts has no statistically significant relationship with how likely it is to become part of a rivalry. If anything, there seems to be a negative effect of regime duration on rivalry participation.<sup>40</sup> This is not an artefact of the different average longevity of the three authoritarian types: running the model with different specifications regarding the minimum years they have lasted (3, 5 or 10 years) does not change the statistical or substantive content of the results. Higher levels of domestic stability either has no effect on, or is associated with a moderately lower likelihood of, rivalry participation and not more aggressive behavior toward other states over prolonged periods of time.

Given that weak personalist regimes do not seem more prone to take part in rivalries and that regime stability, if anything, seems to lead to a lower propensity for involvement in a rivalry, does

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<sup>38</sup>Regional dummies are omitted on the table. None approach statistical significance.

<sup>39</sup>The military regime variable interacted with economic growth is statistically significant with a positive term, which indicates that military regimes are more likely to become part of rivalries with better economic performance.

<sup>40</sup>In all of the models the coefficient is negative and approaches statistical significance at the  $p=.10$  level.

the data on the duration of authoritarian regimes support the hypotheses presented above on the heterogeneous effects of enduring rivalries? <Table 4> shows the results of a number of hazard models that test whether being involved in a rivalry relationship with either one or multiple states enhances a regime's stability. A Weibull model is used to capture duration dependence of the rate of regime breakdown. A log-logistic survival model and a Cox proportional hazards model are also employed as robustness tests but there were no significant deviations from the results of the Weibull model. The results presented below are limited to the Weibull model.

The first two columns list the coefficients of the base model that has the rivalry variable along with the authoritarian regime types alongside several control variables. In the first column single party regimes are again the omitted type. In the second column, all three "pure" military, single party, and personalist regime types are included in the model. The baseline that the three types are compared against in this column are the regimes that have been coded in the GWF dataset as "hybrids" between the three types. Slightly less than a quarter of regimes are coded as hybrids of two or all three of the regime types and the mixed character of these hybrids should be able to act as a control that can underscore the effects that the "pure" types have.



**Table 2.4:** Effects of Conflict on Regime Duration (Hazard Ratio)

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Rivalry	0.99 (0.27)	1.02 (0.26)	0.46 (0.32)	0.78 (0.42)
Personalist	2.52*** 0.59	1.15 (0.26)	1.97*** (0.46)	0.94 (0.23)
Military Regime	6.80*** 1.79	4.84*** (1.32)	6.17*** (1.71)	4.48*** (1.40)
Party Regime	— —	0.46*** (0.13)	— —	0.48** (0.14)
Riv*Personalist	— —	— —	4.98** (3.92)	2.80* (1.68)
Riv*Military	— —	— —	1.85 (1.30)	1.19 (0.822)
Riv*Party	— —	— —	— —	0.54 (0.62)
RGDP	0.71** (0.10)	0.67*** ( 0.09 )	0.71 *** (0.09)	0.67*** (0.09)
RGDP Change	0.96*** (0.008)	0.96*** (0.008)	0.97*** (0.009)	0.96*** (0.008)
Population	0.91 (0.08)	0.92 (0.08)	0.89 (0.08)	0.91 (0.08)
Alliance	1.04 (0.30)	1.21 (0.34)	1.06 (0.31)	1.24 (0.35)
Cold War	0.62 (0.19)	0.55* (0.17)	0.55* (0.18)	0.49** (0.16)
Residual	1.31 (0.93)	1.60 (1.17)	1.21 (0.86)	1.49 (1.12)
n	2911	2911	2911	2911

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

Clustered standard errors by country.

Significance levels \*\*\* 1% \*\* 5% \* 10%

The third and fourth column adds interaction terms between rivalry and each type of authoritarian regime type to the first and second columns, respectively. This is to test the hypothesis that the effect of a threatening security environment on domestic stability is contingent on the authoritarian regime type. All the models also have included as a control the residuals from the model in Table 3.<sup>41</sup> This is to take into account possible omitted variables in the model that predict selection into a rivalry. Regional dummies are also included as a control for unobservable variables that may have an effect on the propensity for regime breakdown. Because countries have multiple authoritarian regimes during the period of analysis, robust standard errors are obtained by clustering the data by country.

In all four of the model specifications, percent change in real GDP is statistically significant as is absolute levels of gdp. The table presents coefficients from GDP growth that is lagged one year but the coefficients attain the same level of statistical significance when using gdp data from the current year. In line with the work on the relationship between economic performance and authoritarian breakdown, the results show that higher levels of economic growth as well as higher levels of development lead to more stable dictatorships. However, in contrast to the descriptive statistics from <Table 1> and the argument that dictators benefit from conflict in terms of domestic stability, the coefficient (the hazard ratios) for both the rivalry variable is not statistically significant in any of the four specifications. From 1945 to 2010 the authoritarian regimes governing states in enduring rivalries were, in general, neither more or less likely to fall from power than those that were not involved in rivalries. Once the hazard model utilizes information from regimes that have not fallen and takes into account a number of control variables, higher levels of inter-state tension are not associated in a statistically significant way with the stability of authoritarian regimes. In the four models the direction of the effect of rivalries is also unstable. The coefficient in the first two columns indicate that authoritarian rule is essentially not affected under rivalry relations in terms of stability. Those from the last two columns indicating that they are considerably more stable (lower than 1 hazard ratio). The rivalry variable does not achieve statistical significance at conventional levels in any of the model specifications.

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<sup>41</sup>The key findings below are robust to excluding the residuals.

The different specifications regarding which authoritarian regime variables to use do not change the results of the rivalry variable. None are statistically significant. The results do confirm what previous research has shown regarding the longevity of different types of regimes. Military regimes have a higher hazard rate (they last for shorter time in power) in all four model specification. The results are strong both statistically and substantively. Single party regimes tend to have the lowest hazard rate (remain in power for longest). In columns II and IV, a single party regimes is about half as likely to fall from power in a given period compared to the population of hybrid authoritarian regimes, while military regimes are more than three times as likely to fall from power against the same baseline standard. Both coefficients are statistically significant at the 1% level. Personalist regimes do not exhibit any significant difference, both in terms of substantive or statistical significance in models I and III, while they are more likely to fall than single party regimes both in substantive and statistical terms in models II and IV. This is expected given that their average longevity is close to the average longevity of the population of hybrid authoritarian regimes.

Does a conflict-prone international environment stabilize some authoritarian regime while destabilizing others, as hypothesized? Models III and IV test for this possibility by including the interaction term between each authoritarian regime type and the rivalry variable. As in the previous models, in general military regimes survive for a relatively shorter period of time and single party regimes for longer period of time. The coefficients on the party regime and military regime remain significant at the 1% level. However, the coefficients for the interaction terms for single party and military regimes are substantively small and statistically insignificant. Being involved in repeated militarized disputes over time does not seem to affect how long these regimes last in power. However, conditional on being involved in a rivalry, personalist regimes uniquely exhibit a higher propensity to lose power relative to those that are not. Personalist regimes in a rivalry are about 2.8 times to about 5 times more likely to lose power in a given period compared to those that are not. The difference is statistically significant at the 90 percent or 95 percent confidence level, depending on the model specification.

Utilizing the full range of militarized disputes as a measure of a threatening security environment and regime breakdown as a measure of authoritarian instability, analysis of how domestic authoritarian regimes are influenced by the security environment reveals results that are at odds

with much of the literature on the relationship between external conflict and domestic stability as well as the aggregate data in Table 1. Authoritarian regimes in general do not benefit from repeated episodes of external conflict. This does not seem to be the result of unstable states choosing to become involved in repeated conflicts.

At the same time, the effect of high levels of tension on domestic stability seems to vary depending on the politics within authoritarian regimes. A conflict prone external environment emboldens the opposition and takes away from the capacity of the regime leader to hold his regime together. Therefore while weak personalist regimes do not seem to be more likely to select themselves into rivalries compared to other personalist regimes, personalist regimes involved in an enduring rivalry exhibit a higher probability of losing power than those not in one. This empirical pattern diverges from those of single party and military regimes, which demonstrate similar probabilities of losing power regardless of whether they are part of a conflict-prone environment or not. These results are consistent with the theory about the nature of intra-regime politics within these regimes, where the strategy of the key regime actors remains to cooperate or coordinate with each other even within a conflict-prone environment.

As a last check against the possibility of selection effects driving the results, I run the same models in the Table 4 on solely those regimes that did not initiate a rivalry. This restricts the analysis to those regimes that did not select into rivalries but rather inherited them. If the same results as from the analysis of all the regimes hold, we have additional reason to believe the effect is not due to regimes selecting into rivalries. As can be seen in Table 4,<sup>42</sup> The substantive and statistical results remain essentially the same. Regardless of whether a regime was present at the making of a rivalry or had no control over the initiation of the dispute but nevertheless had to deal with the consequences of it, the effect on regime duration remains the similar, both statistically and substantively.

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<sup>42</sup>Regional dummies are again omitted on the table. None approach statistical significance.

**Table 2.5:** Effects of Conflict on Non-Culpable Regime Duration (Hazard Ratio)

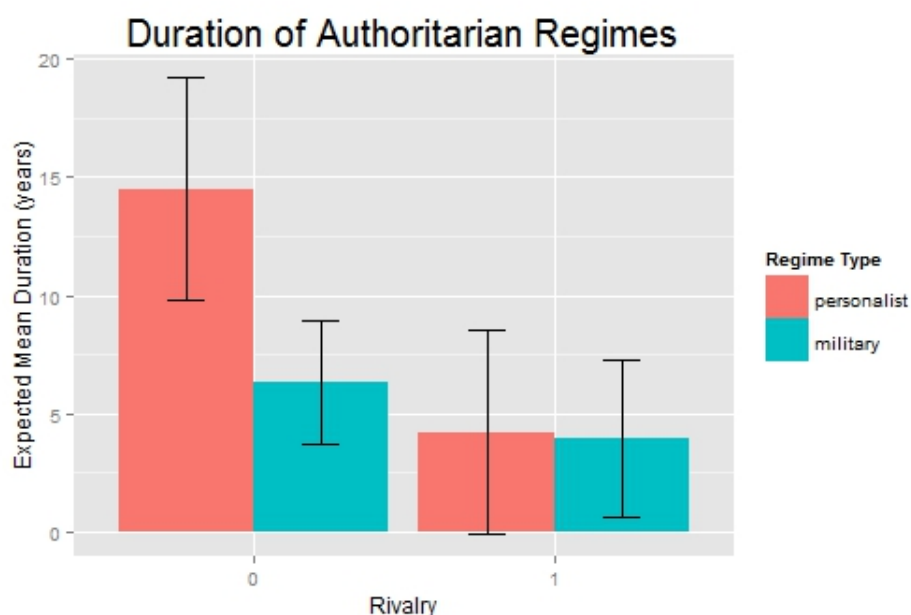
Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Rivalry	1.08 (0.28)	1.20 (0.29)	0.20* (0.19)	0.79 (0.44)
Personalist	2.55*** (0.62)	1.17 (0.26)	1.95*** (0.47)	0.93 (0.23)
Military Regime	6.81*** (1.96)	4.93*** (1.39)	6.03*** (1.70)	4.68*** (1.36)
Party Regime	— —	0.47*** (0.12)	— —	0.48*** (0.14)
Riv*Personalist	— —	— —	15.91** (17.37)	4.36** (2.79)
Riv*Military	— —	— —	4.77 (4.67)	1.38 (1.02)
Riv*Party	— —	— —	— —	0.00*** (0.00)
RGDP	0.71** (0.11)	0.69** ( 0.10 )	0.73** (0.10)	0.68*** (0.10)
RGDP Change	0.96*** (0.009)	0.96*** (0.009)	0.96*** (0.010)	0.96*** (0.01)
Population	0.93 (0.08)	0.95 (0.09)	0.91 (0.08)	0.93 (0.09)
Alliance	0.78 (0.25)	0.79 (0.26)	0.77 (0.25)	0.83 (0.27)
Cold War	0.65 (0.21)	0.56* (0.18)	0.556* (0.181)	0.48** (0.16)
Residual	1.22 (0.94)	1.50 (1.18)	1.11 (0.817)	1.46 (1.15)
n	2612	2612	2612	2612

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

Clustered standard errors by country.

Significance levels \*\*\* 1% \*\* 5% \* 10%

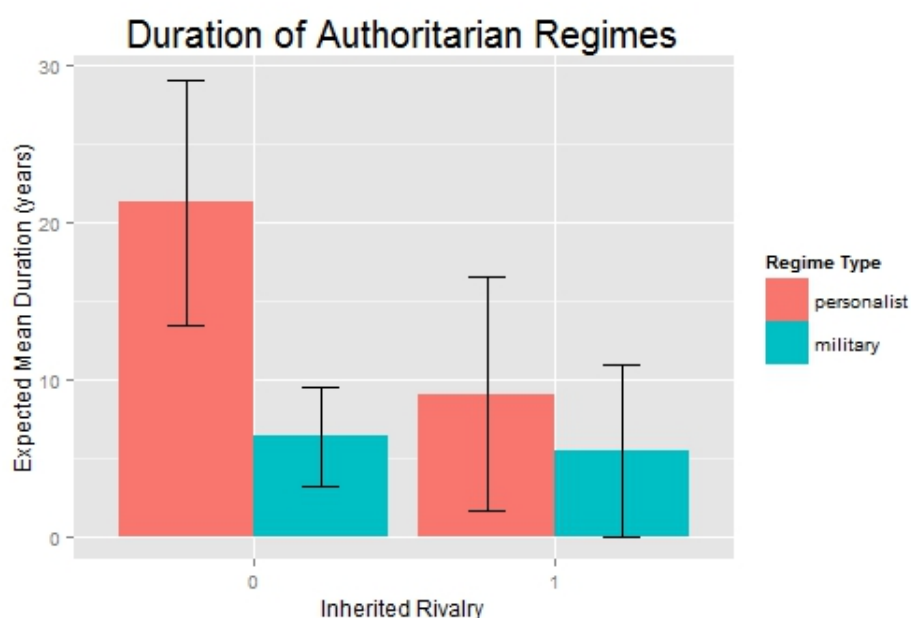
What are the size of the substantive effects that a conflict-prone environment has on authoritarian regimes in terms of the time they remain in office? Figures 5 and 6 plot the conditional effect of being in an enduring rivalry by regime type on the expected mean duration of the regime. Confidence intervals at the 95 percent level are also included in the figures. All variables other than rivalry are placed at their mean in both plots to assess what the size of a shift from a non-rivalry to rivalry relationship. The output in Figures 5 and 6 are from Columns III and IV in Table 4, respectively. Figure 5 plots the change in the expected duration that the security environment has for the aggregated form of each type of authoritarian regime type, where for example, hybrid regime types such as military-personalist regimes are classified as military regimes. For such military regimes, the expected duration in a non-rivalry relationship is 14.5 years. For those in a rivalry relationship, the expected duration drops over ten years to 4.2 years. This is a 71 percent decrease in the expected mean duration and this change is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. For military regimes, the drop is less pronounced. Those not in a rivalry are expected to last about 6.3 years, while the corresponding number for those in one is 3.9 years. The difference of 2.4 years is not statistically significant.



**Figure 2.1:** Expected Duration by Regime Type, In and Outside of Rivalry

Figure 6 plots the expected mean duration for the pure types of authoritarian regimes. Per-

sonalist regimes not in a rivalry last on average 21.3 years while those in a rivalry fall after an expected mean time in power of 9.1 years. This is a 12.2 year difference in longevity, or a 57 percent decrease. Again, this difference is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. On the other hand, military regimes have an expected duration of 6.4 and 5.5 years within a rivalry and outside of one, respectively. This difference of less than a year translates into a decrease of about 14 percent, and is not a difference that is statistically significant at conventional levels. As the coefficients and the significance levels from table 4 suggest, the expected durations from the model with only inherited rivalries produce results that are very similar in terms of both substantive and statistical significance as those from the model with all regimes.



**Figure 2.2:** Expected Duration by Regime Type, In and Outside of Inherited Rivalry

## 2.4 Conclusion

In debates on policy toward a perceived threat or enemy, the argument that attempts to improve relations are doomed to fail because the other side (often a dictatorship) has an inherent interest in perpetuating the conflict is often made. The interest that the authoritarian regime derives from conflict is usually thought to be the regime's grip on power. However, at least as a generalized

proposition, this paper does not find evidence that being in a more conflict prone environment makes it easier for authoritarian regimes to stay in power. Despite the various arguments on how a threatening security environment can serve the domestic interests of rulers, there does not seem to be a benefit derived by authoritarian regimes from repeated conflicts in terms of regime longevity. This adds to the empirical work that has found no support for the diversionary conflict thesis.<sup>43</sup> If authoritarian leaders do perceive that there is something to be gained from being in a high-threat security environment, such perceptions are not translating into the outcome that they expect. This is a different finding from studies that have focused on leadership tenure and examined whether leaders have a rational preference for conflict in terms of leadership tenure.<sup>44</sup>

Such heterogenous effects by regime type suggest that in the aggregate, the cumulative effect of repeated conflicts on authoritarian regimes in general will be negligible or even negative. This is because personalist regimes make up the largest proportion of authoritarian regimes in the Geddes, Wright and Frantz dataset, the measure used in this paper. Personalist regimes are roughly about the same number as military and single party regimes combined.

Conflict also seems to have different effects contingent upon the domestic institutional traits of the authoritarian regime. While being involved in an enduring rivalry does not have any particular effect for the durability of single party and military regimes, for personalist regimes it has the effect of making it more likely that it will fall. This paper has argued that the different modes of interaction between regime actors in each type of authoritarian regime are behind the heterogenous effects on regime stability. Repeated conflicts have the effect of raising the expected costs for those outside the close inner circle of regime insiders in personalist regimes, and also puts constraints on the resources that can be distributed to these outsiders, lowering the benefits from the status quo. The cumulative effect of these changes is to make a challenge against the leadership more likely.

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<sup>43</sup>R.J. Rummel, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior within Nations, 1946-1959," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1966.; "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior within and between Nations, 1958-1960," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1966.; James Meernik, *The Political Use of Force in US Foreign Policy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004).; Charles Ostrom and Brian Job, "The President and the Political Use of Force," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 1986.

<sup>44</sup>Chiozza and Goemans, "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War still Ex Post Inefficient," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2004.; Goemans, *op. cit.*; Geomans and Debs, *op. cit.*.



Repeated conflicts do not change the strategies of key actors in single party and military regimes, which prefer to cooperate in the face of a deteriorating security environment.

Future research could test further implications of the theory. While this paper has taken participation in an enduring rivalry as the threshold measure to test for the effect of conflict, it could be that different levels of conflict can have varying effects on regime stability. The enduring rivalry measure aggregates all actions by states that involve force and therefore doesn't discriminate, for example, between states that repeatedly threaten the use of force and those that have actually wielded it. It would be possible to test whether lower (or higher) levels of conflict have different or even opposite effects on regime stability.

The findings of this paper suggest that foreign policy toward rival authoritarian states could benefit from taking into account the regime type of the opposing side. While there are many obstacles toward forging more peaceful relations among states that have a history of repeated conflicts, the result that authoritarian regimes do not benefit in terms of how long they last in power by the perpetuation of a conflict-prone relationship suggests that strategies of engagement aimed at improving relations should not be dismissed as bound to fail. At the same time, personalist regimes' tendency to destabilize when part of a rivalry relation points toward the need for policy makers to be cognizant that a transfer of power is a more likely possibility when deciding which policy to adopt. This may validate a posture of "strategic patience" toward personalist regimes with the expectation that dealing with the regime that emerges afterwards is preferred to the current one. This expectation is dependent on, among other factors, on whether the transition is orderly and peaceful as well as what type of subsequent regime emerges. The next two chapters deal with these topics.

## CHAPTER 3

# International Conflict and the Mode of Authoritarian Breakdown

### 3.1 Introduction

In the midst of World War I, Vladimir Lenin called for the "conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war," arguing that Russian involvement in war abroad was an opportunity for the Bolsheviks and the revolutionaries of Europe to "take advantage of the difficulties experienced by its governments... in order to overthrow them."<sup>1</sup> Lenin saw in the participation of Russia in World War I a political opportunity to unseat the tsarist regime. Moreover, for Lenin it was an opportunity to seize power through a particular means: the violent overthrow of the government.<sup>2</sup> Do international conflicts make a violent collapse of authoritarian rule more likely, as the success of the October Revolution seems to suggest? Are there differences among authoritarian forms of rule regarding their propensity to experience such violent falls?

To answer these questions, this paper draws on recent work that has examined how the politics within different types of authoritarian regimes - whether military, single party, or personalist - affect a variety of political outcomes ranging from the tenure of authoritarian leaders to conflict initiation.<sup>3</sup> It develops a theory of how an adverse security environment interacts with domestic

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<sup>1</sup>Lenin went further to argue that "revolutionary tactics were unfeasible unless they 'contribute to the defeat' of their own government." V.I. Lenin, *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 21 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp 277.

<sup>2</sup>The fall of the regime also resulted in a high number of casualties, with the death toll of solely the military personnel estimated at 750,000 for the civil war that ensued. B. Ulanis, *Wars and Population* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971).

<sup>3</sup>These include Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sandcastles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). Chapter 2.; Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs:

authoritarian institutions to have heterogeneous effects on how authoritarian regimes collapse. This chapter then tests implications of the theory utilizing data on the fall of all authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 2010. The results indicate that external conflicts can have moderating effects on the manner in which authoritarian regimes fall - a stabilizing domestic political effect distinct from previous research that has focused on stability as the tenure of the leader. The effect is also, perhaps counter-intuitively, limited to military regimes.

There exists an extensive literature on the causes of violent collapses of domestic authoritarian rule. However, research that has made an explicit link between the international security environment and the form of domestic collapse, as Lenin's call for revolution does, remains rare. For example, regarding coups, research has pointed to institutional weakness, underdevelopment, economic performance, size of the country, arms-transfers, the political centrality and cohesiveness of the armed forces, the professionalism of the officer corp, and lack of political pluralism.<sup>4</sup> As Feaver notes however, with notable exceptions such as Huntington, who argued that threats to a country's security were an important factor in the state's civil-military relations, most works in civil-military relations have focused on domestic factors as the primary movers of the military's relationship to other domestic actors.<sup>5</sup> More recent formal models have explored the interplay between the external level of threat, domestic political interests, and foreign policy, but as yet remains in its early stages and has not been tested in a general context.<sup>6</sup>

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regime type and signalling resolve," *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1, 2008.; Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 2, 2012.; Frantz and Ezrow, *The Politics of Dictatorship, Institutions, and Outcomes in Authoritarian Regimes*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2011).; Escriba-Folch and Wright, "Dealing with Tyranny: International Sanctions and the Survival of Authoritarian Rulers," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No.2, 2010.; Wright, "How Foreign Aid can Foster Democracy in Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2009.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Johnson, Robert Slater, Pat McGowan, "Explaining African Coups d'Etat, 1960-1982," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, 1983.; Egil Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1967.; WR Thompson, "Regime Vulnerability and the Military Coup," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 7, No.4, 1975.; Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Have, Yale University Press. 1968).; Londregan and Poole, "Poverty, the Coup trap and the Seizure of Executive Power," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1990.

<sup>5</sup>Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>6</sup>McMahon and Slantchev, "The Guardianship Dilemma: Regime Security through and from the Armed Forces," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 109, No. 2, 2015.; Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni, "A Theory of Military

Similarly, works on the causes of civil war or their consequences seldom take into account the relevance of the international environment for their argument or explore why a breakdown would result in variation in the intensity of violence.<sup>7</sup> While bargaining models applied to domestic/civil conflicts provides a way of explaining the breakout of violence during authoritarian breakdown, the variables that account for the costs or casualties that conflicts entail are difficult to gauge unless it is revealed *ex post*, such as resolve or motivation.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, country specific works on civil wars have pointed to factors that influence the level of violence involved, such as the degree of control over a particular territory or the internal structure of the warring factions as key variables in the degree of violence against civilians.<sup>9</sup> However, they have not tested in a more general way whether these or other factors may be behind the costs that different civil wars, or authoritarian breakdowns, entail. To the extent that works on civil war have explicitly linked the international security environment, it is to note that civil conflict can spill over into internationalized civil conflicts, positing a relationship between civil conflict across borders via a diffusion effect.<sup>10</sup>

Studies about violence in the form of repression under authoritarian rule have tackled the issue of what factors lead to more or less repression, particularly in the context of the strategies that authoritarian leaders use to stay in power, but by focusing on how these leaders stay in power, do not address why some breakdowns result in much more violence than others.<sup>11</sup> Again, the

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Dictatorships,” *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War,” *International Organization*, Vol. 97, No.1, 2003; Fearon, “Why do some Civil Wars last so longer than others?”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004.; Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom, “On the Duration of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Walter, “Bargaining Failures and Civil War,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.); Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Kyle Gleditsch, Transnational Dimensions of Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2007.; Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer, “Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars: A Comprehensive Look at their Distribution over Time, 1816-1997” *International Studies Quarterly*, No. 47, Vol.1, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Milan Svolik, “Contracting on Violence: The Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* No. 57, No. 5. 2013; Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, “A Dictator’s Toolkit: Understanding how Co-optation affects repression in autocracies, *Journal of Peace Research*, Printed On-line March

external environment does not play a role in these explanations for the repressive actions taken by the regime in these works.

While research has examined violence under authoritarian rule in terms of coups, civil wars, and repression, efforts to connect the international environment with the question of why some regime collapses turn violent and resort to non-institutional means while others are peaceful and orderly remain underdeveloped. Research that has addressed the question of how international conflict relates to the mode of authoritarian breakdown has mostly focused on the costs that leaders face after leaving from office. Higher costs, it is argued, has implications for decisions while in power including those in the foreign policy realm.<sup>12</sup> More dire fates after being driven from office, for example, could make leaders become more belligerent while in office in the hope that such behavior can stave off being driven from power.<sup>13</sup> The focus on the costs to the individual leader may be apt in cases where the decision-making power is concentrated in the individual leader. However, it may not be the best approach if key decisions are the result of interactions between multiple actors. In most military and single party regimes, for example, the nominal leader faces constraints from other actors within the ruling coalition. These actors often have different preferences from those of the leader and hence the incentives that the leader face may not provide a complete picture of the key dynamics at work. This can particularly be the case if shifts in the security environment change the incentives of the actors within authoritarian regimes in different ways.<sup>14</sup>

By focusing on the institutions of dictatorships as indicators of the nature of politics within them and testing hypotheses about how an adverse security environment alters such politics inside these regimes, this chapter seeks to better explain the relationship between international conflict

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20, 2014; Escriba-Folch, "Repression, political threats, and survival under autocracy," *International Political Science Review*, Printed On-line July 5th, 2013.

<sup>12</sup>Bueno De Mesquita, Silverson and Woller, *op. cit.*, Goemans and Debs, *op. cit.*, Goemans, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup>Lenin acted under the assumption that the opposite effect was at work, however. For him, conflict abroad would lead to the violent overthrow, and hence a more dire fate, for the leader of the regime.

<sup>14</sup>A partial exception to this general trend is Escriba-Folch and Wright, "Dealing with Tyranny: International Sanctions and the Survival of Authoritarian Rulers," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 2, 2010.

and how dictatorships fall. Bringing institutions in allows for inclusion of other strategic actors besides the leader. At the same time, rethinking stability to mean not just longevity of rule but also an orderly and peaceful process of authoritarian transition allows for testing the possibility that certain actors could prioritize domestic order over longevity of rule as well as inquiring into the conditions under which they do so. Such an alternative conceptualization of stability could help explain why some transitions of authoritarian regimes involve costly force and entail high human costs (with many developing into civil-wars), while others do not.

By shedding light on how a state's external security environment influences how authoritarian regimes collapse this chapter can help better understand not just the internal politics of authoritarian regimes but also the (international) causes of the different manners in which they collapse. The stakes are more than just academic. Recent developments after the "Arab Spring" have demonstrated that it is not just the longevity of a particular regime but also the level of (in)stability that results during and after the fall that has ramifications for stakeholder states. Not only do regimes in transition pose different challenges for other states in terms of how conflict-prone they are,<sup>15</sup> violence and instability during the breakdown of a regime and its aftermath have humanitarian and economic costs. The violence can also spread over national borders into internationalized civil conflicts and have destabilizing consequences long after the initial revolt against the regime and well beyond its place or origin. Inflows of refugees can also pose economic and social challenges to the receiving states, as well as become new sources of instability and conflict. Foreign policy decisions often hinge upon projections and assumptions about the future political landscape in the target country that may emerge as a result of a collapse of the regime, and a deeper appreciation of the dynamics and consequences of the mode of regime breakdown will be of interest for the decision makers of stake-holder states.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. An overview the institutional context of decision-making in different types of authoritarian regimes and how they influence how regimes break down follows in Section 2. Section 3 discusses how and why a conflict prone international environment

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<sup>15</sup>Mansfield and Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1995; See also Narang and Nelson, "Who are these Belligerent Democratizers? Reassessing the Impact of Democratization on War," *International Organization* Vol. 63, No.2, 2009.

interacts in different ways with them. It focuses on how for military regimes, in contrast to other types of authoritarian rule, a threatening security environment can further an orderly and peaceful transition of power. Sections 4 and 5 describe the data used for the analysis and tests the predictions from the previous sections. The final section summarizes and concludes.

### **3.2 Authoritarian Regime Breakdown**

As its unit of analysis, this chapter takes authoritarian regimes, or the formal and informal institutions that govern the behavior of actors and influence outcomes under authoritarian rule. There are different such "rules of the game" that key actors under authoritarian rule operate under. Actors operating within these institutions have different interests and consequences to their decisions. There are two main reasons for incorporating institutional variation into the analysis. From a substantive standpoint, incorporating institutions allows for inclusion of other strategic actors besides the leader in analysing what leads to the variation in how regimes break down. Below I argue that international tension alters the incentives that key actors face within different types of regimes in ways that have different implications for how authoritarian rule breaks down - at times in non-obvious ways. The inclusion of these different actors and varying preferences allows for such analysis. An exclusive focus on leaders under the assumption that simply seek to prolong their time in power does not.

Second, an analysis of how regimes break down (as opposed to how the rule of an individual dictator ends) may lead to a more accurate assessment of what factors can facilitate peaceful and orderly transitions of power. Changes in the ruling institutional setting of a country are by definition an overhaul to the ruling coalition in the country and explaining what the mode these breakdowns of the ruling institutions take will lead to a better understanding of what form changes in the basic political order of society take. On the other hand, as leadership changes in the former USSR and the People's Republic of China demonstrate, many authoritarian regimes experience leadership changes frequently, if not regularly, as part of an institutionalized process. The propensity for such institutionalized leadership changes varies with the authoritarian regime type and not taking this into account when analyzing the causes of violent falls of leaders, for example, will

be likely to lead to a biased inferences about the causes of violence during leadership change.<sup>16</sup> Analyzing regimes as the base unit avoids this source of potential bias.

How do the different preferences of actors across different authoritarian regimes matter? Previous research has shown that regimes influence a range of political outcomes including their duration and the manner in which they fall from power.<sup>17</sup> In military authoritarian regimes, the generals and officers taking part in them tend to value the autonomy and unity of the military organization. This is because they prize a professional military that is cohesive, both as a means to further the interest of the military and to best guarantee the security of the country. It is also because a break-up of the military into warring factions carries huge costs. The leaders of a military are essentially involved in a “game of coordination,” preferring to act together whether it is in power or in the barracks to any alternative where they are split. The military prioritizing unity over division has direct implications for the stability of these regimes, for it means that they would prefer giving up power in unison rather than face a split within its ranks over remaining in power. That military officers are rarely persecuted after they cede power also makes the decision to give up power easier.<sup>18</sup> These features together make military regimes particularly prone to give up power and the reason why on average military regimes tend to last the shortest time in power.

Single party regimes such as the communist parties in the former Eastern Bloc tend to build relatively large and deep support coalitions and often have highly institutionalized procedures for decision-making, including those for leadership changes. Leaders and cadres in single party regimes also have an incentive to act in unison as in military regimes. The difference however, is that in a single party regime, they prefer to cooperate together to remain in power over any option where they are out of power. In other words, regardless of whether they are the majority or minority

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<sup>16</sup>If personalist regimes are more likely to initiate conflicts, and personalist regimes are more likely to experience a violent fall, not taking into account the distinctive politics within personalist regimes could bias effect of conflicts on violent falls in the positive direction.

<sup>17</sup>Geddes, *op. cit.*; Geddes, Wright and Frantz, “Autocratic Regimes and Transitions,” *Perspective on Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2014.

<sup>18</sup>Leaders of different types of authoritarian regimes face varying levels of costs once they lose power, ranging from death and persecution at the hands of protesters for many personalist leaders to a leadership role in the opposition with a real chance at a return to power in the case of some single party leaders.



faction, these party leaders have a single “dominant strategy” of staying in power together. Much as in democracies, under single party rule it is better for the minority faction to be a junior partner in government rather than leading the opposition because of the influence and the benefits that being in government brings. For this type of regime to fall, a defection of a faction within the party large enough to form a coalition that can defeat the ruling party is usually needed. Since internal divisions detract from the ability of the regime to stay in power by making it more likely that defectors will join the opposition, accommodation and co-optation of (potential) internal opposition into the ruling apparatus is the norm. Few within the ruling party are willing to risk the spoils of rule in order to join the opposition in a risky and uncertain bid for power, and consequently single party regimes tend to be the most stable among authoritarian regime types.

Personalist regimes such as those led by Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi provide a different setting for decision making by key regime actors. Amongst the factions in personalist regimes, there does not exist the incentives for acting in unison as in military regimes. A high concentration of power in the hands of one person or a small group of close confidantes characterizes these regimes. This allows the leader to decide who gets to participate as an insider within his regime as well as the level of benefits that they receive. The faction that is left out of the leader’s group must choose whether to accept the benefits that they are offered or to refuse and revolt against the leader’s faction. When the excluded faction receives enough benefits from supporting the ruling coalition to outweigh the potential benefits from a challenge to the leader, the regime remains in power unchallenged. Because the costs of a failed challenge to personalist leaders are so high - possibly resulting in loss of life - these benefits from the status quo are normally enough to keep the regime together. However, although challenges to the leader are relatively rare, when they are driven from power, personalist leaders tend to have punishing fates awaiting them. Rarely do their falls from power end well, with many forced into exile, imprisoned, or killed. Incentives are thus high for these leaders to circumvent negotiations with opposition forces and attempt to maintain power when the regime is under threat.

The domestic institutional setting that these regimes face also lead to diverging predictions about the manner in which they fall. Leaders of personalist regimes should be reluctant to relinquish power due to the uncertainty and severity of the costs they face afterwards. Due to this

uncertainty, they often bear down in the face of opposition, resisting negotiations for a transition of power. This, in turn, makes a peaceful transition of power very difficult. Therefore while personalist regimes tend to last longer than military regimes,<sup>19</sup> they are more likely to be forced from office by popular revolts, insurgencies, or coups when they do fall from power. For the same reasons, personalist leaders are also more willing to wield violence in an effort to stay in power. This can have a spiral effect: since these leaders are unlikely to negotiate an end to their time in office, the opposition is also more likely to resort to violence when attempting to drive them out of office.

In contrast, a challenge to military regimes amidst a political or economic crisis is likely to lead to a peaceful transition of power. Military regimes value the organizational integrity of the armed forces and such challenges often lead to polarization of opinion within the ranks regarding the appropriate response, particularly if use of violence to stay in power results in civilian casualties. Rather than face such divisions and damage the cohesion of the military organization, leaders of these regimes often choose to negotiate with the opposition. That the military and their leaders are rarely persecuted or punished after leaving office facilitates peaceful transfers of power. Having little to fear from leaving office and much to lose from clinging to it amidst serious opposition, military leaders have little incentive to mobilize violence in order to maintain power. An orderly and peaceful transfer of power becomes more likely. Since they are more open to a negotiated ceding of power, the opposition also does not need to resort to forceful measures.

While the members of single party regimes, much like personalist regime insiders, have large incentives to remain in power, they rarely face the dire fate that many personalist leaders face. Even after single party regimes lose their monopoly on power, their support base and party machine rarely implode and they often compete in multi-party elections afterwards. Sometimes they are even able to win back power after being unseated as the Institutional Revolutionary Party's victory in the most recent election in Mexico shows. Because they face lower costs and less uncertainty than personalist regimes over their futures after giving up power, single party regimes also are less likely than personalist regimes to experience violence during the fall of the regime.

The different institutional contexts in which the key actors of these regimes make decisions

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<sup>19</sup>Geddes, Frantz and Wright, "Military Rule," *Annual Review of Political Science*, No. 17, 2014.

lead to the following hypotheses.

H1: Military regimes are more likely than personalist regimes to transition from power through non-violent means.

H2: Single party regimes are more likely than personalist regimes to transition from power through non-violent means.

### **3.3 International Conflict and the Mode of Authoritarian Regime Break-down**

What effect does a high-threat international environment have on the dynamics of authoritarian breakdown? Repeated conflicts and higher prospects of war alter the setting in which the key actors under authoritarian rule make decisions. However, they do so in contrasting ways for different authoritarian regime types, with different ramifications for the way these regimes fall. Because the key actors inside these regimes interact in different ways, international conflict has heterogeneous effects on the stability of different types of authoritarian regimes.

For military regimes, a conflict prone international environment makes a split of the armed forces more costly, and thereby raises the relative value placed on the unity of the armed forces. As external threats to the nation rise, the cohesion of the armed forces takes on added value for military regime leaders. Divisions within the military become even more detrimental to the safeguarding of the country and the unified, professional military which best serves that goal. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the stability of a military regime is enhanced. Putting a higher value on cohesion of the military means that both “coordination options” of staying in power and returning to the barracks in unison become more attractive. While it is an empirical question which of these options military regimes choose and the conditions under which they do so, there does not seem to be an *a priori* reason for these regimes to choose one over the other when the country is

involved in repeated conflicts.

While an adverse security environment does not necessarily lead to the enhanced durability of military regimes, increasing costs of division does lead to a lower probability of a violent fall from power, whether it be through a coup, insurgency or mass protests. A military regime's fall can be the result of a negotiated transfer of power or one coerced by an insurgency, mass protests, or a military coup.<sup>20</sup> Such coerced breakdowns of the regime are in large part the result of 1) a faction within the military risking a clash with another faction but ultimately succeeding in a credible first move in the case of a coup, or 2) the military leadership hanging on to power and refusing to negotiate with opposition forces despite widespread discontent at it, and thereby leading to uprisings - armed and unarmed. The refusal to negotiate with the opposition or opponents of the regime strengthens the tendency for such non-institutional means of influence. The increased costs to conflict between factions in the military that a security scarce environment entails weakens both of these mechanisms, making it less likely for a military regime to fall by coercive means.

Regarding the first mechanism, it is important to note that even in coordination games such as the one that characterizes interaction within military regimes, the existence of multiple outcomes that all the actors prefer over others does not necessarily mean that agreement upon which option to coordinate will be reached. While military regime insiders with different preferences may be able to reach a consensus through internal deliberations on any issue that calls for a response, factions within military regimes have incentives to attempt to credibly commit to a position in an attempt to force the other side acquiesce to their lead. For example, one group of generals may try to force other military leaders to follow their lead by making a credible first move, thereby forcing the other generals to acquiesce to their actions or bear the high costs of division. Military coups often follow this scenario of a first move by a group of officers and the subsequent falling in line by other factions within the military.<sup>21</sup> The credibility of this first move comes in part from the costs to backing down from it. With such costs to committing to an action and backing down -

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<sup>20</sup>These are not mutually exclusive means, as the military (or a faction) can act as an arbiter during crisis brought on by insurgencies or mass protests.

<sup>21</sup>Credible first-moves are not limited to power-grabs by the military. A collapse of a regime can also result from a credible first move out of power by a faction or group within the military as well.

as it does when parts of the military are involved in maneuvers or movements not sanctioned by the entire leadership - and uncertainty about the level of such costs for the other side, there is a possibility that both sides commit to incompatible positions and then fail to back down, leading to a clash within the armed forces. This can occur despite the existence of multiple options that both sides prefer over a clash.<sup>22</sup>

However, despite varying intensity of preferences and an incentive to commit to a favorable position, a high-threat security environment makes a clash within the military as a result of commitments unlikely. This is because with higher costs of a divided military, all factions are less likely to commit to a position that will lead to a clash. The higher costs to a disagreement makes each faction within the military moderate their demands. This makes a coup less likely.

Regarding the second mechanism, mass uprisings and insurgencies against the military regime are likely to polarize the military into different camps regarding the response. Those factions that preferred the military not go into government in the first place can increasingly call for, and perhaps implicitly threaten, a return to the barracks. Because this raises the probability of a split in the military, faced with a political crisis or discontent amongst the populace the military is therefore more likely to relinquish power (usually through negotiations) before being forced to by a full blown insurgency or mass protests. The institutional setting where it is in the interests of the key military actors to act together, together with the higher costs of a divided military that a conflict-prone environment produces, facilitates negotiated returns to the barracks when there are military factions that have different preferences about being in power and the regime faces discontent that can develop into mass protests or full-blown insurgencies.

An alternative way a conflict-prone environment could influence domestic transitions is through affecting the costs attached to losing power. Previous works on the relationship between conflict and authoritarian rule has identified the post-exit fate of authoritarian leaders as an important factor in how they behave while in office.<sup>23</sup> Dire post-exit fates, for example, tend to make dictators

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<sup>22</sup>Crawford, "A Theory of Disagreement in Bargaining," *Econometrica*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 1982).

<sup>23</sup>Chiozza and Goemans, "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War still Ex Post Inefficient," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2004.

entrench themselves in office, avoiding negotiations with the opposition even amidst high levels of disapproval and growing opposition. In turn, such refusal to negotiate an exit to office often leads to mass uprisings, insurgencies, and military coups that oust the leader. In the case of military regimes, soldiers are usually guaranteed a return to life in the armed forces even after leaving power. However, a substantial change in how military leaders are treated post-transition within a conflict-prone context could influence the manner in which military leaders exit office. Utilizing the Archigos dataset and the COW data on MIDs, it is possible to calculate the rate of negative post exit fates of military leaders when the regime has faced multiple conflicts with another country during or before its tenure in power. The data indicates that a tense international environment does not substantially affect the post-exit fates of leaders. Within a high threat security environment, 34% of military leaders were either exiled, imprisoned, or killed after leaving office while 35% faced those fates in a non-conflict setting.<sup>24</sup> Given these numbers, it seems unlikely that conflict is leading to changes in how military leaders behave via influencing their post-exit fates.

In contrast to military regimes, leaders of personalist regimes face high costs once they are ousted from power. Other factions within personalist regimes also do not have the incentives to coordinate their actions with the leader. Because the leader faces such dire fates when they leave office, personalist leaders usually resist calls to step down and usually have to be forced into giving up power by coercive means such as mass protests, armed insurgencies, or military coups. High levels of tension do not seem to raise the costs of a downfall for personalist leaders - perhaps because these costs are so high to begin with. Nor does it change the nature of their interaction with other key actors within the regime. Therefore an adverse shift in the security environment should not influence how personalist regimes break down. By and large, they remain attached to their office due to the uncertainty of the fate that awaits them without it, usually until they are forced out by forceful measures by the military, rebel groups, or protesting masses.

Under single party rule, elevated levels of international tension do not alter how the key regime actors prioritize their options when facing threats to their rule. The post-fall fates of single party

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<sup>24</sup>Neither giving more weight to the more severe post-exit fates nor running a multi-variate logistic regression controlling for a variety of other factors seems to suggest that post-exit fate of military regimes in a conflict-prone environment are significantly different from those not in one.

regime leaders do not deteriorate markedly in a threatening security environment. The majority faction within the leadership has no reason to be less accommodating to demands by other factions within the ruling party (or those social forces outside of the party) during periods of high international tension. The key actors do not face shifts in the incentives that makes a coerced fall from power more likely. Therefore shifts in the threat level of the international environment do not alter the likelihood of a fall from mass protests, insurgencies, or coups.

H3: Military regimes under external security threats are less likely to be removed from office forcefully than those not under such threats.

H4: Personalist regimes and single party regimes under external security threats are neither more or less likely to be removed from office forcefully than those not under such threats.

### 3.4 Data

To test these hypotheses, this paper utilizes data from several sources. To capture a high-threat security environment, it draws from a dataset on “enduring rivalries,” defined as militarized disputes between two states over a given period of time.<sup>25</sup> The observation that militarized disputes tend to be concentrated within a small subset of the total number of possible dyads between states has led to the conceptualization of enduring rivalries, or dyads that experience repeated disputes over extended periods of time. Four different categories of interstate disputes, namely the threat of force, the display of force, limited use of force, and war are included in this dataset, capturing a wider range of disputes than a sole focus on wars.<sup>26</sup> Enduring rivalries have been operationalized as a certain frequency of militarized disputes in a dyad during a given duration of time. This

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<sup>25</sup>Diehl and Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>26</sup>Ghosn, Faten, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart Bremer, “The MID3 Data Set, 1993-2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* Vol. 21, No. 2, 2004.

necessarily entails a certain level of arbitrariness and there are various different ways scholars have decided on the threshold frequency for what constitutes an enduring rivalry, but one of the most commonly used definition is a dyad with (at least) 6 militarized disputes within a span of 20 years.<sup>27</sup> This paper utilizes this operationalization of enduring rivalries in testing the relationship between variation in the security environment and the form that domestic transitions of power take as well as the casualties that result from it. It posits that the level of tension captured by the existence of an "enduring rivalry" is such that it will have an effect on these outcomes.<sup>28</sup>

For authoritarian regimes, the GWF dataset offers the most comprehensive classification of authoritarian rule based on domestic institutions. These institutions influence power arrangements, decision making procedures, and allocation of state resources. The GWF dataset classifies all authoritarian regimes from 1945 to 2010 into different types among which the three most common types are military, personalist, and single party regimes. Other works have taken leaders' tenure in office as the base unit in assessing how conflict is related to violence during leadership change.<sup>29</sup> However, doing so without taking into consideration the type of institutions the leaders (as well as challengers to them) make decisions in can lead to biased inferences on how different factors affect how authoritarian regimes break down. The GWF dataset offers the advantage of being able to differentiate between leadership changes that are limited to changes in personnel without far-reaching changes to the broader structure of power, and those which are overhauls of the ruling system, thereby avoiding this source of potential bias. The GWF dataset also codes how a leader was removed allowing for examination of the factors that lead to violent removals from power during regime transitions.

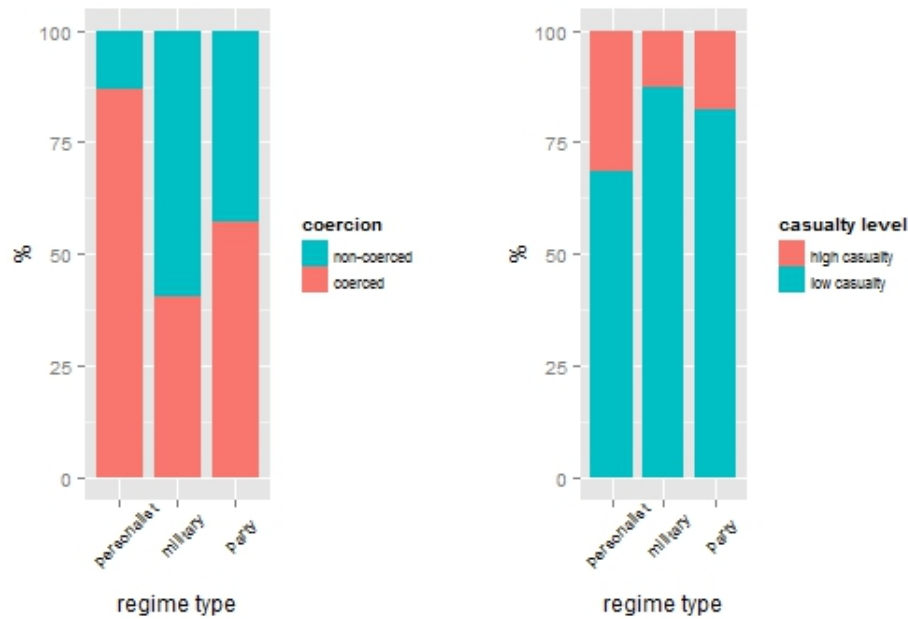
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<sup>27</sup>An additional condition is that the maximum gap year between MIDs cannot exceed 10 years.

<sup>28</sup>It is possible both that the hypothesized relationship could take a linear form, where the number of MIDs leads to commensurate shifts in the dependent variable, or a non-linear one, where a certain threshold of conflict intensity or number of MIDs (or some combination of the two) exists for the effect to take place. The uncertainty about the functional form of the relationship is why the number or the intensity of the MIDs by themselves may not be adequate tests of the relationship.

<sup>29</sup>H.E. Goemans, "Which Way Out? -The Manner and Consequences of Losing office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008.; Debs and Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No.3, 2010.





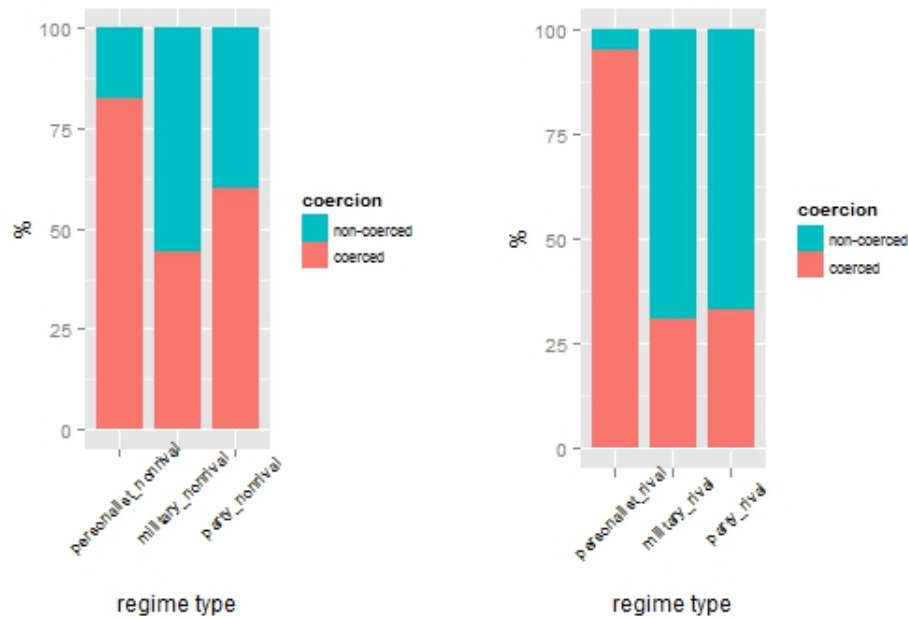
**Figure 3.1:** Mode of Collapse and Casualty Levels by Regime Type

### 3.5 Empirical Analysis

The aggregate data seem to be consistent with the hypotheses presented above. Figure 1 above plots the percentage of breakdowns by regime type. On the left side are the percentage of collapses that were coerced (the result of mass protests, military coups, or insurgency) by regime type. The right side displays the proportion of regime falls that were accompanied by over 25 casualties for each type of authoritarian regime. As the plots show, personalist regimes have a higher probability than military regimes or single party regimes of being coerced from power when the regime falls. Their ouster from power is also more likely to entail high numbers of casualties.<sup>30</sup> Personalist regimes are more than twice as likely as military regimes to undergo a coerced fall from power and to experience high levels of violence.

The conflict-prone international security environment also seems to be having different effects contingent on regime type, as hypothesized. Figure 2 plots the proportion of coerced collapses by regime type but divides them into whether each type of regime was in an enduring rivalry

<sup>30</sup>The next chapter offers a more detailed analysis of casualties resulting from authoritarian collapses.



**Figure 3.2:** Coerced Collapses by Regime Type, In Rivalry and Outside Rivalry

or not. The plots indicate that for military regimes, rivalry seems to be facilitating non-violent transitions. Whereas about 44% (15 of 34) of the breakdown of military regimes were forced by coups, insurgencies, or mass protests outside of a rivalry relationship about 31% (4 of 13) of military regime collapses faced the same fate within a rivalry relationship. Repeated external conflicts being associated with a dampening of violence internally is a pattern that is not replicated in the case of personalist regimes.<sup>31</sup>

However, it is difficult to draw reliable conclusions from solely the aggregate data. From Figure 2, it appears that single party regimes also undergo more orderly transitions within a high-threat security environment. Tables 1 and 2 present the results of a series of logistic regressions that test for the posited relationships while controlling for a number of factors that plausibly influence how regimes break down and the level of violence involved. A brief explanation of these control variables is available in the appendix. Splines are also included to account for potential temporal dependence. The results presented below have the regime-years of all failed authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 2010 as the base units of analysis. The dependent variable in table 1 is a binary

<sup>31</sup>Checking to see whether there is an imbalance in the proportion of coups versus other forms of coerced breakdown utilizing the Archigos dataset reveals that the percentages for coups are roughly similar between regime types.

variable denoting whether the regime transition was forced by a coup, insurgency, or mass uprising or not. The key points of interests from H3-H6 are 1) whether the type of authoritarian regime has an effect on the mode of authoritarian breakdown, and 2) whether this effect is contingent upon being party to a rivalry.

**Table 3.1:** Effects of Conflict on the Mode of Authoritarian Breakdown

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Real GDP	-0.774*** (0.217)	-0.791*** ( 0.215 )	0.565*** (0.158)	-0.610*** (0.158)
Real GDP Change	-0.059*** (0.012)	-0.056*** (0.012)	-0.049*** (0.010)	-0.047*** (0.011)
Personalist	0.623** (0.275)	0.586** (0.299)	0.589*** (0.223)	0.655*** (0.247)
Military	1.045** (0.491)	1.277** (0.508)	0.612* (0.337)	0.872** (0.366)
Rivalry	0.380 (0.343)	1.05 (0.848)	0.328 (0.309)	0.988** (0.389)
Cold War	-1.156*** (0.427)	-1.194** (0.427)	-0.808** (0.366)	-0.840** (0.365)
Alliance	0.592* (0.356)	0.694* (0.375)	0.393* (0.238)	0.522** (0.259)
Culpability	-1.944** (0.767)	-2.263*** (0.724)	-1.024* (0.559)	-1.220** (0.565)
Riv*Personalist	— —	-0.385 (.853)	— —	-0.519 (0.496)
Riv*Military	— —	-1.462* (0.954)	— —	-1.155* (0.634)
Regime Duration	0.009 (0.016)	0.012 (0.016)	1.025 (0.014)	0.027 (0.014)
Cubic Spline	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
n	1405	1405	1994	1994

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

Clustered standard errors by country.

Significance levels \*\*\* 1% \*\* 5% \* 10%

The results of the logit regressions on the mode of regime change are in table 1 above. The first column presents results for the base model that includes dummy variables for authoritarian regime types along with a number of control variables. Column two adds interaction terms between the

regime and the rivalry variable. Columns one and two runs the regression on only the “pure” types of authoritarian regimes and exclude the hybrid regimes. Columns three and four utilize the more expansive definition of the regime types, subsuming all the hybrid types into military, personalist, or single party regimes.<sup>32</sup> *A priori* what the consequences of including the hybrid regimes into the model are for inference is not clear. The increase the number of cases in the models increases statistical power, but capturing the effect that domestic regimes have may become more difficult if inclusion of the hybrid types mute or dilute the effects at work. As we see from the results below, these two effects seem to roughly cancel each other out.

The single party regime variable is not included in any of the regressions and the coefficients for the other regime type variable need to be interpreted with the single party regime as the point of reference. The hypotheses presented above predict that while military regimes will be less prone to violent breakdowns compared to personalist regimes, military regimes in a rivalry should be less likely to end in a violent manner compared to military regimes not in one. It also predicts that personalist regimes should not share this contingent character of the effect of a conflict-prone international environment. The exclusion of single party regimes provides the common baseline to test these hypotheses against.

The results of the regressions are largely consistent with the main hypotheses. The key prediction from the theory - that the rivalry variable interacted with the military regime variable should be negative - is broadly supported in both models. The interaction term between military regime and rivalry is negative and substantively significant at the 90% confidence level in all of the specifications. Relative to single party regimes, while military regimes are more likely to face a violent end to their rule in general, military regimes in a rivalry relationship are substantially less likely to fall as a result of uprisings, coups, or insurgencies. The relatively stable coefficient on the personalist regime variable suggests that it is not changes in single party regimes propensity for violent breakdowns that are driving these changes.

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<sup>32</sup>Slightly less than a quarter of regimes in the GWF dataset are coded as hybrids of two or all three of the regime types. In models three and four, personalist-single party and military-single party, as well as personalist-single party-military hybrids are included in the single party category. Military-personalist and independent military regimes are included in the expanded version of the military regime variable in these two models. Various different ways of aggregating the hybrid types do not affect the key findings in a substantive way.

The size of the effect of the interaction term is such that while military regimes are more likely to experience a violent collapse compared to single party regimes, those in rivalries are indistinguishable from single party regimes in terms of their propensity to be forced from office under the shadow of violence.<sup>33</sup> When holding the other variables at their mean values, a shift from a single party to a military regimes leads to an increase of 22-33% in the likelihood that the regime will be forced from power. However, a military regime in a rivalry is, depending on the specification of the model, 29% to 37% less likely to fall from power through a coup, insurgency, or mass uprising.

In all four of the model specifications, percent change in real GDP in the year of the regime's fall is statistically significant.<sup>34</sup> The results for log of real GDP is also highly statistically significant and robust to different specifications of the model. While previous work on the relationship between economic growth and authoritarian breakdown have stressed the stabilizing influence of growth on authoritarian regimes, the results show that more economic growth not only leads to more stable dictatorships but also to a lower likelihood of a violent fall from power.<sup>35</sup>

The Cold War period is statistically significant at either the  $p=0.05$  or  $p=0.01$  level in all four models, strongly suggesting that the international security environment that the Cold War provided had significant moderating effects on violence during regime breakdowns. This effect is independent from the conflicts which the rivalry variable captured. The rivalry variable by itself is statistically significant in only one of the four specifications. In none of the other specifications does it approach conventional standards of statistical significance, and while the direction of the

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<sup>33</sup>Due to the specifications of the model, the coefficients for military and personalist regimes are the joint effect of the each regime's propensity for breakdown as well its propensity for a violent breakdown. While the table results suggest personalist regimes are statistically and substantively more likely to experience a violent breakdown than single party regimes, personalist regimes are also more likely to breakdown in general. It is therefore possible that personalist regimes are less likely to collapse violently given a collapse compared to single party regimes. However, including predicted survival rates from a hazard model on the duration of authoritarian regimes into the models to control for the different survival probabilities produces coefficients in line with the hypotheses regarding the propensity for violence for each of the regime types. It also does not significantly change the results discussed below. Refer to Chapter 2 for the specifications of the hazard model.

<sup>34</sup>Neither lagging the GDP variable to include the previous year's GDP growth or including the lagged GDP growth with the GDP performance of the year of the breakdown substantively changes the results.

<sup>35</sup>Przeworski et al. *Democracy and Development, Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

effect is also consistently to lower the likelihood for violence across the different models, the size of the coefficient varies from substantively very large to largely insignificant.

In all the models in Table 1, as the coefficients and standard errors on the duration variable show, the duration of a regime has no statistically significant relationship with the manner in which it falls from power. This is the case even when the duration variable is interacted with each regime, suggesting that grievances do not accumulate over time and the longer a regime lasts the more likely it is to end in violence, nor increasing capacity over time on the part of authoritarian regimes to deal with challenges to their rule.

The culpability variable, which is a binary variable denoting whether the regime was present when the rivalry began, is also robust in terms of statistical significance across all four of the specifications. However, the direction of the effect is contrary to that suggested by previous research, which has argued that leaders that are in power during the initiation of conflicts tend to have their tenures curtailed because they are viewed as culpable for the conflicts by those that can hold them accountable.<sup>36</sup> However, this putative effect on leader tenure does not extend to curtailing the duration of regimes. In the above regressions, the results indicate that being in power at the beginning of a rivalry actually decreases the chances that an authoritarian leader will be ousted in a violent way or that casualties will result during the breakdown. This suggests that a tense security environment, while not extending a regime's hold on power, may nevertheless have stabilizing effects on domestic rule. The way in which it does so is not to decrease leader or regime turnover, as had been previously thought, but to lower the level of violence involved during transitions, both in terms of the way the transition occurs and the number of casualties involved in the process.

Inferring the effect that domestic authoritarian institutions have from these models can be problematic if the authoritarian regimes that have broken down have (unobservable) traits that may also be leading to the outcome of interest. This non-random "selection" of certain regimes could bias our estimates of the role that particular regimes or high levels of external tension have on the level of violence during transitions. For example, the theory above expects military regimes to not wield

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<sup>36</sup>Croco, Sarah E., and Jessica L. Weeks, "Willing and Able: Culpability, Vulnerability and Leaders Sensitivity to War Outcomes," Unpublished Manuscript.

violence even when falling from power when it is in a threatening security environment, but if it is weakness or frailty of a regime that is making them fall without the onset of violence, it is possible to attribute the non-violent breakdown to the type of regime when it is the frailty of the regime that is behind the outcome. However, it is not sufficient for a regime with particular traits to select into a rivalry for the findings to be thrown into question. Since the key point of interest in this paper is whether the same regime types have different effects contingent upon being part of a rivalry or not, it has to be the case in the example above that weaker military regimes were systematically becoming part of a conflict-prone international environment while not being subject to the relatively peaceful one. Only then would the intra-regime comparison be biased in a way that raises concerns for the findings above. Not only does this seem unlikely in a substantive sense, as I show in Chapter 2, weak military regimes seem not to become party to rivalries.<sup>37</sup> As an additional check for selection, I run the same analysis with regimes that did not select into rivalries but rather inherited them. This restricts the analysis to those regimes that did not “select into” rivalries but rather inherited them. If the results hold, we have additional reason to believe the effect is not due to selection into rivalries. The substantive and statistical results remain essentially the same. They do.

To ensure that particular modelling choices were not leading to the results, several robustness checks were carried out. To check that it is not particular specifications of the data that are leading to the findings. I alter the composition of hybrid types and examine whether the results from the models align with our expectations. For example, instead of putting a military-single party regime in the hybrid group, I put it in the “pure” group and see if the effect of military regimes is weakened. Such robustness tests do not weaken or contradict any of the substantive findings presented above.<sup>38</sup> Additional robustness checks, such as a two stage regression where I take the errors from first stage regression predicting participation in rivalry to control for selection effects, do not offer substantively different results.

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<sup>37</sup>If anything, it seems economically better performing military regimes are becoming party to rivalries, which actually helps our findings since economically strong regimes are in every specification of the model less likely to fall via a coerced manner or entail high numbers of casualties

<sup>38</sup>Results available upon request.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the manner in which a dictatorship collapses is not divorced from the security environment. It developed a theory of how an adverse security environment interacts with domestic authoritarian regimes to have heterogeneous effects on how regimes collapse and tested implications of the theory utilizing data on the fall of all authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 2010. Of particular interest were whether collapses are the result of non-institutional political processes, such as coups, mass protests, and armed insurrections, and how these outcomes are influenced by the security environment. It found that while the external security environment matters for the mode of authoritarian collapse, the effect is contingent upon the nature of politics within the authoritarian regimes. Perhaps counter-intuitively, external conflicts facilitate non-violent domestic transitions of power for military regimes. This is not the case with personalist and single party regimes, which exhibit similar propensities for violent breakdown regardless of the security environment.

Military regimes in a conflict prone environment were more likely than military regimes in a peaceful environment to experience an orderly breakdown and transition to the next regime - the process usually being negotiated and not resorting to non-institutional means such as insurgencies, or mass uprisings. The aversion to violence on the part of military regimes under a tense international environment is due, it was hypothesized, to the higher value that the military as an organization puts on the integrity of the armed forces within the shadow of repeated conflicts. The more dire consequences that a division within the military has within such an environment and the potential harm that clinging to power amidst widespread discontent would do to that unity moderates the actions of factions within the military and makes a negotiated transfer of power more likely. This finding goes against the prevailing wisdom that conflicts strengthen the military's hold on power, or that military regimes will be more willing to wield force because they are also the most repressive when in power.

Future research could test further implications of the theory. While this paper has taken participation in an enduring rivalry as the threshold measure to test for the effect of conflict, different levels of conflict could have varying effects on regime stability. The enduring rivalry measure



aggregates all actions by states that involve force but discriminating, for example, between states within rivalries that largely remain at the level of threats about the use of force versus those that actually experience it. Further research could test whether higher levels of conflict strengthen the effects on regime breakdown, contingent on regime type, outlined in this chapter. The interrelationship between a conflict-prone environment, the mode of breakdown and the nature of the subsequent regime or likelihood of a democratic transition could also be fruitful avenues for future research.

## <Appendix 1> Control Variables

1) GDP (Logged) : Level of development has been shown to be an important factor in the democratization literature and the log of GDP per capita is included as a control. All GDP data is from the Penn World Tables dataset, Version7.0.

2) Growth Rate: Trends in wealth have also been shown to affect regime stability.

3) Lagged Growth Rate: Since the economic performance from last year can have an effect well into this year, a 1 year lag of the growth rate is also included. Adding two year lags does not affect the substantive or statistical findings of the paper in a meaningful way.

4) Population (Logged) Size of the population may be related to the political stability of the state.

5) Region: This controls for any intricacies or traits that a region might have as part of its history or culture apart from those already included in as controls. Dummies for Latin America, East Asia, Middle East, Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa are included.

6) Foreign Imposition: Since foreign imposition of a new government after an invasion or a forced removal of a leader directly affects regime duration, such cases are taken into account. The data is from the GWF dataset.

7) Alliances: Alliances can affect the domestic stability of regimes by offering both security and also by guaranteeing that a certain political group stay in power. An example is Soviet position toward Communist Parties in Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

8) Cold War: The Cold War period is thought to have stabilized many authoritarian regimes in

ways that are not reduced to the Cold War alliances that were in place.

9) Culpability: Scholars have argued whether a regime is in power when a conflict starts has destabilizing consequences for the public puts the blame for the conflict on those in power at the time. This binary variable codes regimes by whether they were in power when a rivalry started.

## CHAPTER 4

# International Conflict and the Human Costs of Authoritarian Breakdown

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter noted how in the midst of World War I, Vladimir Lenin's saw in Russian involvement in war an opportunity for the Bolsheviks and the revolutionaries of Europe to "take advantage of the difficulties experienced by its governments... in order to overthrow them." Lenin not only argued that conflict abroad present a positive environment for a revolution at home, but that "revolutionary tactics were unfeasible unless they 'contribute to the defeat' of their own government." Revolutionary activity had to aim for the defeat of the government at war if it was to succeed. How exactly were revolutionaries to do this? It was to be done, through the "conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war."<sup>1</sup>

The October Revolution was successful in toppling the monarchy. Lenin's call for a civil war also became reality. It was a costly and violent domestic conflict by any measure, with the estimated death toll of military personnel reaching 750,000. Civilian casualty numbers were much higher.<sup>2</sup> However, as the transition of most of the eastern European states after the fall of the Berlin Wall demonstrates, many breakdowns of authoritarian rule are accompanied by very low levels of violence and human costs. Are collapses of authoritarian rule more likely to entail higher levels of violence when the state is mired in conflict abroad? Are there differences among authoritarian

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<sup>1</sup>V.I. Lenin, *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 21 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), pp 277.

<sup>2</sup>Urlanis, *Wars and Population* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971). Estimates of the total direct and indirect casualties from the civil war range from 7 to 12 million. See Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (New York: Pegasus Book, 2007).

forms of rule regarding the level of human costs during breakdown?

The hypothesis behind Lenin's call to action - that international conflict should lead to higher levels of violence during the collapse of authoritarianism - presents a challenge to research in international relations in at least three regards. First, it runs counter to most international relations research. Most of the literature that has investigated the domestic repercussions of international conflict have focused on the stabilizing effect that international conflict has. The theory of diversionary war, for example, posits that leaders have an incentive to initiate conflict when faced with domestic turmoil in order to evade political harm.<sup>3</sup> The theory implies that leaders are able to better weather high levels of discontent, and therefore a fall from power, when there are crises that involve enemies or threats to the state. Focusing on domestic coalitions, Solingen argues that in states that experience repeated conflicts, these "inward looking" coalitions gain more influence on policy, which in turn strengthens monopolies, protectionist tendencies, and military industrial complexes.<sup>4</sup> For example, repeated militarized disputes between countries can lead to a large standing army and increased expenditure on the domestic security apparatus, resulting in more influence for these bureaucracies and increased capacity on the part of the regime to quell revolts against it. In terms of the legitimacy of the ruling regime, Wendt argues that it is possible for stable ideational structures to emerge where the meaning of another state as an enemy is shared across a polity, imbuing that society with a common belief that aggressive policies taken against that state as being in the national interest, and thereby legitimate.<sup>5</sup> Repeated clashes or spikes in tension with other nations can breed ideological or cultural antagonism toward the rival state that makes it hard for the domestic opposition to the regime to offer, or even think of, alternative approaches to foreign policy, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of the system of beliefs in place.

Second, while an extensive literature on the causes of authoritarian collapse exist, only rarely

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<sup>3</sup>Jack Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988.; Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique" in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).; Tarar, "Diversionary Incentives and the Bargaining Approach to War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2006.

<sup>4</sup>Etel Solingen, *Regional Order at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup>Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

has the link between the international security environment and how such regimes collapse been drawn. For example, works on the causes of civil war or their consequences seldom take into account the relevance of the international environment for their argument or explore why a breakdown would result in variation in the intensity of violence.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, country specific works on civil wars have pointed to factors that influence the level of violence involved, such as the degree of control over a particular territory or the internal structure of the warring factions as key variables in the degree of violence against civilians.<sup>7</sup> However, they have not tested in a more general way whether these or other factors may be behind the costs that different civil wars, or authoritarian breakdowns, entail. Studies about violence in the form of repression under authoritarian rule have tackled the issue of what factors lead to more or less repression, particularly in the context of the strategies that authoritarian leaders use to stay in power, but by focusing on how these leaders stay in power, do not address why some breakdowns result in much more violence than others.<sup>8</sup> Again, the external environment does not play a role in these explanations for the repressive actions taken by the regime in these works. Institutional weakness, underdevelopment, economic performance, size of the country, arms-transfers, the political centrality and cohesiveness of the armed forces, the professionalism of the officer corp, and lack of political pluralism are some of the causes that research has argued cause military coups.<sup>9</sup> As Fearon notes, however, most works in civil-military relations have focused on domestic factors as the primary movers of

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<sup>6</sup>Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *International Organization*, Vol. 97, No.1, 2003; Fearon, "Why do some Civil Wars last so longer than others?", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004; Collier, Hoeffler and Soderbom, "On the Duration of Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2004.

<sup>7</sup>Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.); Weinstein, "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 100, No. 3, 2006.

<sup>8</sup>Milan Svolik, "Contracting on Violence: The Moral Hazard in Authoritarian Repression and Military Intervention in Politics," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* No. 57, No. 5. 2013.; Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, "A Dictator's Toolkit: Understanding how Co-optation affects repression in autocracies," *Journal of Peace Research*, Printed On-line March 20, 2014.; Escriba-Folch, "Repression, political threats, and survival under autocracy," *International Political Science Review*, Printed On-line July 5th, 2013.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Johnson, Robert Slater, Pat McGowan, "Explaining African Coups d'Etat, 1960-1982," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, 1983.; Egil Fossum, "Factors Influencing the Occurrence of Military Coups d'Etat in Latin America," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1967.; WR Thompson, "Regime Vulnerability and the Military Coup," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 7, No.4, 1975.; Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Yale University Press. 1968); Londregan and Poole, "Poverty, the Coup trap and the Seizure of Executive Power," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1990.

the military's relationship to other domestic actors.<sup>10</sup> More recent formal models have explored the interplay between the external level of threat, domestic political interests, and foreign policy, but as yet remains in its early stages and has not been tested in a general context.<sup>11</sup>

Lastly, Lenin proposed an explanation for the variation in the costs of domestic conflict during regime breakdowns. His logic that international conflict precipitates more domestic violence is one that could potentially contribute to explaining the variation in the costs incurred during the fall of authoritarian regimes. While the bargaining literature can explain the use of costly force during domestic conflicts, the explanation about the magnitude of the costs or casualties that conflicts entail relies on factors that are difficult to gauge unless it is revealed *ex post*, such as resolve or motivation. The failure to credibly commit has also been noted as a reason for the breakout of conflict within this literature, but cannot explain the sizeable differences in costs that result from the fall of authoritarianism, since it is not clear why some of them might be able to credibly commit while others not.<sup>12</sup>

By focusing on the institutional features of authoritarian regimes as the mediating factor in how international conflicts influences levels of violence during regime breakdown, this chapter seeks to explain why some transitions of authoritarian regimes involve costly force and entail high human costs (with many developing into civil-wars), while others do not. It proposes a theory on how a threatening international environment alters the politics within different types of authoritarian regimes translate to have different implications for violence during the collapse of the regime. By shedding light on how a state's external security environment influences how authoritarian regimes collapse this chapter can help better understand not just the internal politics of authoritarian regimes but also the (international) causes of the violence and casualties that result from the fall of

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<sup>10</sup>Huntington, who argued that threats to a country's security were an important factor in the state's civil-military relations, is a notable exception. Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>11</sup>McMahon and Slantchev, "The Guardianship Dilemma: Regime Security through and from the Armed Forces," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 109, No. 2, 2015.; Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni, "A Theory of Military Dictatorships," *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2010.

<sup>12</sup>Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, Vol. 49., No. 3, 1995.; Barbara Walter, "Bargaining Failures and Civil War," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2009.

dictatorships.

The implications go beyond the academic. Recent developments after the “Arab Spring” have demonstrated that the level of (in)stability that results during and after the fall that has ramifications for stakeholder states. Instability can also spread over national borders into internationalized civil conflicts and have destabilizing consequences long after the initial revolt against the regime and well beyond its place or origin.<sup>13</sup> Violence during the breakdown of a regime and its aftermath also have humanitarian and economic costs. Aside from the direct casualties, inflows of refugees fleeing violence in neighboring countries can also pose economic and social challenges to the receiving states, as well as become new sources of instability and conflict. Foreign policy decisions often hinge upon projections and assumptions about the future political landscape in the target country that may emerge as a result of a collapse of the regime, and a deeper appreciation of the dynamics and consequences of the mode of regime breakdown will be of interest for the decision makers of stake-holder states.

In the following section, an overview the institutional context of decision-making in different types of authoritarian regimes and how they influence the level of violence during their collapse follows. Section 3 discusses how a conflict prone international environment has heterogeneous effects on violence levels contingent on the regime type. It deduces the hypothesis that a threatening security environment facilitates a peaceful transition of power for military regimes while it does not for others. Sections 4 and 5 introduces the data and tests the hypotheses from previous sections. The final section summarizes and concludes.

## **4.2 Authoritarian Regime Breakdown**

To take into account the different interests of key actors within authoritarian regimes and the different “rules of the game” they operate under, this chapter takes authoritarian regimes, or the formal and informal institutions that govern the behavior of actors and influence outcomes as its unit of analysis. This is a departure from previous research that has either focused on the fall of leaders

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<sup>13</sup>Sarkees, Wayman, and Singer, “Inter-State, Intra-State, and Extra-State Wars: A Comprehensive Look at their Distribution over Time, 1816-1997” *International Studies Quarterly*, No. 47, Vol.1, 2003.



when analyzing violent falls from power, or focused on democratization and thereby aggregated different forms of authoritarian rule and not analyzed transitions between them. There are two main reasons for incorporating institutions into the analysis. First, methodologically, an analysis of how regimes break down (as opposed to how the rule of an individual dictator ends) can lead to a more accurate assessment of what factors can facilitate peaceful and orderly transitions of power. As leadership changes in the former USSR and the People's Republic of China demonstrate, many authoritarian regimes experience leadership changes frequently, if not regularly, as part of an institutionalized process. The propensity for such institutionalized leadership changes varies with the authoritarian regime type and not taking this into account when analyzing the causes of violent falls of leaders, for example, will be likely to lead to a biased inferences about the causes of violence during leadership change.<sup>14</sup> Analyzing regimes as the base unit avoids this source of potential bias.<sup>15</sup> Changes in the ruling institutional setting of a country are by definition an overhaul to the ruling coalition in the country and explaining the level of violence involved in the process will lead to a better understanding of the costs of changes to the basic political order of society.

Substantively, regimes as the base unit allows for inclusion of other strategic actors besides the leader in analysing what leads to the variation in the costs of regime breakdown. Below I argue that international tension alters the incentives that key actors face within different types of regimes in ways that have different implications for how authoritarian rule breaks down - at times in non-obvious ways. The inclusion of these different actors and varying preferences allows for such analysis. An exclusive focus on leaders under the assumption that simply seek to prolong their time in power does not.

How do the different preferences of actors in varying institutional contexts matter? Previous research has shown that regimes influence a range of political outcomes including their duration

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<sup>14</sup>H.E. Goemans, "Which Way Out? -The Manner and Consequences of Losing office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008.; Debs and Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No.3, 2010.

<sup>15</sup>If personalist regimes are more likely to initiate conflicts, and personalist regimes are more likely to experience a violent fall, not taking into account the distinctive politics within personalist regimes could bias effect of conflicts on violent falls in the positive direction.

and the manner in which they fall from power.<sup>16</sup> In military authoritarian regimes, the generals and officers tend to value the autonomy and unity of the military organization. They prize a professional military that is cohesive, both as a means to further the interest of the military and to best guarantee the security of the country. A break-up of the military into warring factions also carries huge costs. The leaders of a military are essentially involved in a “game of coordination,” preferring to act together whether it is in power or in the barracks to any alternative where they are split. The military prioritizing unity over division has direct implications for the stability of these regimes, for it means that they would prefer giving up power in unison rather than face a split within its ranks over remaining in power. That military officers are rarely persecuted after they cede power also makes the decision to give up power easier.<sup>17</sup> These features together make military regimes particularly prone to give up power and the reason why on average military regimes tend to last the shortest time in power.

Single party regimes such as the communist parties in the former Eastern Bloc tend to build relatively large and deep support coalitions and often have highly institutionalized procedures for decision-making, including those for leadership changes. As in military regimes, leaders in single party regimes also prefer to act in unison. The difference, however, is that in a single party regime the cadre prefer to cooperate together to remain in power over any option where they are out of power. In other words, regardless of whether they are the majority or minority faction, these party leaders have a single “dominant strategy” of staying in power together. Under single party rule it is better for the minority faction to be a junior partner in government rather than leading the opposition because of the influence and the benefits that being in government brings. For this type of regime to fall, a defection of a faction within the party large enough to form a coalition that can defeat the ruling party is usually needed. Since internal divisions detract from the ability of the regime to stay in power by making it more likely that defectors will join the opposition, accommodation and co-optation of (potential) internal opposition into the ruling apparatus is the

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<sup>16</sup>Geddes, *op. cit.*; Geddes, Wright and Frantz, “Autocratic Regimes and Transitions,” *Perspective on Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2014.

<sup>17</sup>Leaders of different types of authoritarian regimes face varying levels of costs once they lose power, ranging from death and persecution at the hands of protesters for many personalist leaders to a leadership role in the opposition with a real chance at a return to power in the case of some single party leaders.

norm. Few within the ruling party are willing to risk the spoils of rule in order to join the opposition in a risky and uncertain bid for power, and consequently single party regimes tend to be the most stable among authoritarian regime types.

Personalist regimes such as those led by Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi provide a different setting for decision making by key regime actors. Amongst the factions in personalist regimes, there does not exist the incentives for coordination as in military regimes, or a dominant strategy as in single party regimes. A high concentration of power in the hands of one person or a small group of close confidantes characterizes these regimes. This allows the leader to decide who gets to participate as an insider within his regime as well as the level of benefits that they receive. The faction that is left out of the leader's group must choose whether to accept the benefits that they are offered or to refuse and revolt against the leader's faction. When the excluded faction receives enough benefits from supporting the ruling coalition to outweigh the potential benefits from a challenge to the leader, the regime remains in power unchallenged. Because the costs of a failed challenge to personalist leaders are so high - possibly resulting in loss of life - these benefits from the status quo are normally enough to keep the regime together. However, although challenges to the leader are relatively rare, when they are driven from power, personalist leaders tend to have punishing fates awaiting them. Rarely do their falls from power end well, with many forced into exile, imprisoned, or killed. Incentives are thus high for these leaders to circumvent negotiations with opposition forces and attempt to maintain power when the regime is under threat.

The domestic institutional settings that these actors face lead to diverging predictions about the level of violence involved when they collapse. Leaders of personalist regimes should be reluctant to relinquish power due to the uncertainty and severity of the costs they face afterwards. Due to the high expected costs of a removal from power, they often bear down in the face of opposition, resisting negotiations for a transition of power. They are also more inclined to wield violence in an effort to remain in office. This can have a spiral effect: since personalist leaders are unlikely to negotiate an end to their time in office, the opposition is also more likely to resort to violence when attempting to drive them out of office. This set of conditions makes a peaceful transition of power very difficult. Therefore while personalist regimes tend to last longer than military regimes, they are more likely to be forced from office by popular revolts, insurgencies, or coups when they

do fall from power and to incur more casualties during this process.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, breakdown of military rule is likely to lead to a relatively peaceful transition of power. The military values the organizational integrity of the armed forces and challenges to the rule of a military regime can lead to polarization of opinion within the ranks regarding the appropriate response. Rather than face the prospect of such divisions and damage the cohesion of the military organization, leaders of these regimes often choose to negotiate with the opposition. That the military and their leaders are rarely persecuted or punished after leaving office facilitates peaceful transfers of power. Having little to fear from leaving office and much to lose from clinging to it amidst serious opposition, military leaders have little incentive to mobilize violence in order to maintain power. Therefore not only are military regimes more likely to cede power, they are also more likely to do so in an orderly and peaceful manner. Since they are more open to a negotiated ceding of power, the opposition also does not need to resort to forceful measures to unseat them.

While the leading members of single party regimes, much like personalist regime insiders, have large incentives to remain in power, they rarely face the dire fate that many personalist leaders face. Even after single party regimes lose their monopoly on power, their support base and party machine rarely implode and they often compete in multi-party elections afterwards. Sometimes they are even able to win back power after being unseated as the Institutional Revolutionary Party's victory in the most recent election in Mexico shows. Because they face lower costs and less uncertainty than personalist regimes over their futures after giving up power, single party regimes also are less likely than personalist regimes to experience violence during the fall of the regime.

The different institutional contexts in which the key actors of these regimes make decisions lead to the following hypotheses.

H1: Military regimes are more likely than personalist regimes to transition from power without heavy casualties.

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<sup>18</sup>Geddes, Frantz and Wright, *op. cit.*; Geddes, Frantz and Wright, "Military Rule," *Annual Review of Political Science*, No. 17, 2014.

H2: Single party regimes are more likely than personalist regimes to transition from power without heavy casualties.

### **4.3 International Conflict and Casualties during Authoritarian Breakdown**

The grim fates that personalist regime leaders face once they are ousted from office make them more willing to wield deadly force against challengers to their rule. Personalist leaders' aversion to stepping down often leads to attempts to force them out of power, through mass protests, insurgencies, or coups, which often reinforces the tendency for bloody transitions. A conflict-prone environment does not substantively change this dynamic. As the finding of Chapter 3 that conflict does not alter how personalist leaders exit office suggest, the post-exit fate of personalist leaders does not seem to change within a harsh international security environment -perhaps because it is so high to begin with. Hence it does not become easier (or harder) for them to give up power. Nor does it change the nature of their interaction with other key actors within the regime. Therefore an adverse shift in the security environment should not influence the propensity for violence when personalist regimes break down. By and large, they remain attached to their office due to the uncertainty of the fate that awaits them without it, and remain more willing than leaders of other regimes to order measures that can result in casualties.

Similarly for single party regimes, changes in the international environment do not alter the chances that costs in the form of human casualties will be incurred during the fall of the regime. The costs to losing power remain low compared to personalist regimes. The party structure, and therefore chances in elections, survives transitions to democracy. Leaders are often able compete in elections afterwards, and their party sometimes even returns to power. Single party leaders facing a challenge in a conflict-prone environment do not face a more dire fate after their fall, and have no added incentive to wield deadly force in an effort to stay in power. To put it another way, leaders of both personalist and single party regimes do not experience a change in the fates they can expect post-transition because of shifts in the security environment. They therefore have no reason to alter their behavior because of the threat level.

However, the higher value placed on unity of the armed forces under the threat of conflict does

have implications for the level of violence when military leaders exit office. A security scarce environment means that a split of the armed forces is more costly. Therefore the leadership will tend to not make decisions that polarize the military. Not only does this makes direct clashes between different factions less likely, facing a political crisis or discontent amongst the populace the military is more likely to relinquish power (usually through negotiations) before being forced to by a full blown insurgency or mass protests. Soldiers often have social ties to civilian protesters or even insurgents. Many may not view running the government as the soldier's role to begin with, and a repressive response to the opposition can turn factions within the military against each other, particularly when it there is the chance it can result in high numbers of casualties.<sup>19</sup> Such tensions within the ranks can, in a worst case scenario, split the military on opposing sides of a civil war. Therefore military regimes in a high-threat environment should be particularly averse to violence that can lead to high numbers of casualties, even when the alternative is losing power.

At the same time, the tense security environment makes the commitment problem easier to overcome. Any regime handing over power cannot be sure that it will be able to have its interests guaranteed in the post transition world. The new dictator, or the democratic elected government, may persecute the leaders of the previous regime, oppress their followers, reduce the resources and opportunities available to them, and take other measures to reduce, or even eliminate, the threat that it poses to the new regime. Knowing this, the regime may resist giving up power, and decide to use violence in an attempt to maintain control. However, the conflict prone environment actually makes it easier for the military to be reassured that they will not face serious harm to their interests once they are out of power and that they will continue to wield influence. The threatening security environment in essence makes a commitment or an agreement regarding the future status of the military in a post-transition world more credible. Thus a conflict-prone international environment reduces the likelihood that a military regime will make decisions that lead to heavy casualties, both by rendering a split within the military more costly and by making assurances regarding the military's role in the post-transition world more credible. While this argument has been made

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<sup>19</sup>One of the ways that some military leaders deal with this problem is to mobilize soldiers that are not from the same ethnic or regional group as the target that they wield violence against. Not all military leaders have this option though, and while taking such measures may make crackdowns more successful, they have limited utility in preventing divisions within the military.

in the context of democratizing autocracies,<sup>20</sup> there is no reason that it should only apply to the democratization process.

The possibility exists that a threatened military leader will attempt to make the regime's stay in power a *fait accompli* by cracking down on the opposition (trying to make a credible first move), betting that the other factions within the military will grudgingly go along and not risk a warring, divided military. However, given the lack of internal consensus on staying in power at the cost of mass violence, it would be more difficult to garner enough support within the brass to make a credible move in repressing opposition than to make a credible move to return to the barracks. The factions with less to lose, that is those that were less enthusiastic about governing in the first place and oppose the violence causing the casualties, present the more credible threat. Therefore on balance, it is likely that the higher costs to a divided military when a military regime is facing a crisis would tend to make a retreat from power more likely.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, perhaps counter-intuitively, a transfer of power should entail less casualties under the threat of international conflict for military regimes. The institutional setting where it is in the interests of the key military actors to act together, together with the higher costs of a divided military and the more credible guarantee of the military's status after the transition that a conflict-prone environment produces, facilitates negotiated returns to the barracks when discontent that can develop into mass protests or full-blown insurgencies threatens the unity of the military. High levels of international tension has the effect of moderating the use of force for the purpose of on the part of military leaders. This is an effect that is unique to military regimes.

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<sup>20</sup> Aguero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy: Post-Franco Spain in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995)

<sup>21</sup> A similar question is whether it is less likely for generals to lead a successful coup against a regime that was born from within its ranks within a threatening security environment. High costs to a divided military may make it harder for a coup plotter to garner support for a coup. However, this aversion to division can work the other way as well. Because consensus regarding a coup is hard to reach within the military, many coups take the form of a credible first move by a faction that forces the other factions to grudgingly go along or risk a factionalized, warring military. Hence high costs to division may make it more likely that a first move gets others to go along with the coup. These two effects under a high-threat security environment could also cancel each other out. Argentina 55-58 and Syria 51-54 are the only two military regimes that ended with coups among the 13 military regimes in a rivalry in the dataset. The small number of cases make drawing definitive conclusions difficult, but the ratio is roughly similar to military regimes not under rivalry, which experienced 7 coups out of 34 regime collapses. If anything, it seems that coups are less likely under a tense international environment.

H3 A conflict-prone security environment makes casualties during the fall of a regime less likely for military regimes.

H4 A conflict-prone security environment has no effect on the number of casualties during the fall of a regime for personalist and single party regimes.

#### 4.4 Data and Empirical Analysis

To test these hypotheses, I draw data from several sources. The GWF dataset offers both a comprehensive classification of authoritarian regimes from 1945 to 2010 as well as data on the casualties during regime breakdowns. The dataset offers the advantage of being able to differentiate between leadership changes that are limited to changes in personnel without far-reaching changes to the broader structure of power, and those which are overhauls of the ruling system. While other works have taken leaders' tenure in office as the base unit in assessing how conflict is related to violence during leadership change, the GWF dataset offers the advantage of being able to control for the possibility that the level of violence during the removal of authoritarian leaders could be correlated with regime type.<sup>22</sup> Not taking into consideration the type of institutions the leaders (as well as challengers to them) make decisions in can lead to biased inferences on how different factors affect how authoritarian regimes break down.

To capture a high-threat security environment, I also draw from a dataset on "enduring rivalries," defined as militarized disputes between two states over a given period of time.<sup>23</sup> The observation that militarized disputes tend to be concentrated within a small subset of the total number of possible dyads between states has led to the conceptualization of enduring rivalries, or dyads that

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<sup>22</sup>H.E. Goemans, "Which Way Out? -The Manner and Consequences of Losing office," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008.; Debs and Goemans, "Regime Type, the Fate of Leaders, and War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No.3, 2010.

<sup>23</sup>Diehl and Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).



experience repeated disputes over extended periods of time. Four different categories of interstate disputes, namely the threat of force, the display of force, limited use of force, and war are included in this dataset, capturing a wider range of disputes than a sole focus on wars.<sup>24</sup> Enduring rivalries have been operationalized as a certain frequency of militarized disputes in a dyad during a given duration of time. This necessarily entails a certain level of arbitrariness and there are various different ways scholars have decided on the threshold frequency for what constitutes an enduring rivalry, but one of the most commonly used definition is a dyad with (at least) 6 militarized disputes within a span of 20 years.<sup>25</sup> This paper utilizes this operationalization of enduring rivalries in testing the relationship between variation in the security environment and the form that domestic transitions of power take as well as the casualties that result from it. It posits that the level of tension captured by the existence of an "enduring rivalry" is such that it will have an effect on these outcomes.<sup>26</sup>

Figure 1 above plots the percentage of authoritarian collapse by regime type. On the left is the plot of the percentage of regime breakdowns that were the result of mass protests, military coups, or insurgencies by regime type. The right side displays the proportion of regime falls that were accompanied by over 25 casualties for each type of authoritarian regime. Personalist regimes have the highest proportion of forced regime collapses. Their ouster from power is also most likely to be coerced and entail high numbers of casualties. Conversely, the fall from power of military regime have the lowest proportion of collapses with high casualties.

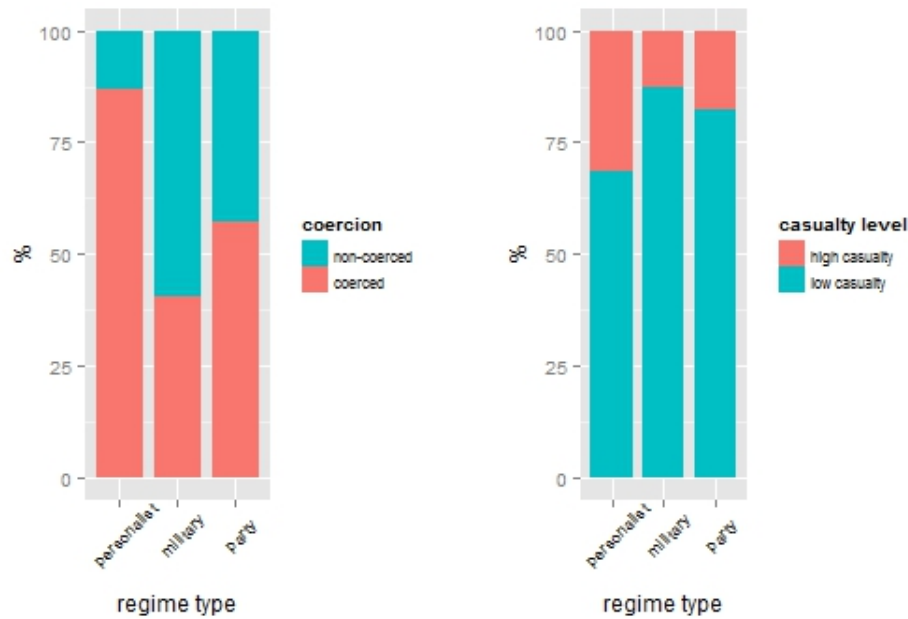
As these plots suggest, how regimes fall and the level of casualties resulting from it are correlated. With the dichotomous version of the casualties variable, where casualties are coded as high (1) if they surpass 25 and low (0) otherwise, the correlation coefficient is about 0.34, while it is about 0.63 between how the regime ends and the 0-4 point violence variable. In particular, non-

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<sup>24</sup>Ghosn, Faten, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart Bremer, "The MID3 Data Set, 1993-2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* Vol. 21, No. 2, 2004.

<sup>25</sup>An additional condition is that the maximum gap year between MIDs cannot exceed 10 years.

<sup>26</sup>It is possible both that the hypothesized relationship could take a linear form, where the number of MIDs leads to commensurate shifts in the dependent variable, or a non-linear one, where a certain threshold of conflict intensity or number of MIDs (or some combination of the two) exists for the effect to take place. The uncertainty about the functional form of the relationship is why the number or the intensity of the MIDs by themselves may not be adequate tests of the relationship.



**Figure 4.1:** Mode of Regime Collapse and Casualty Levels by Regime Type

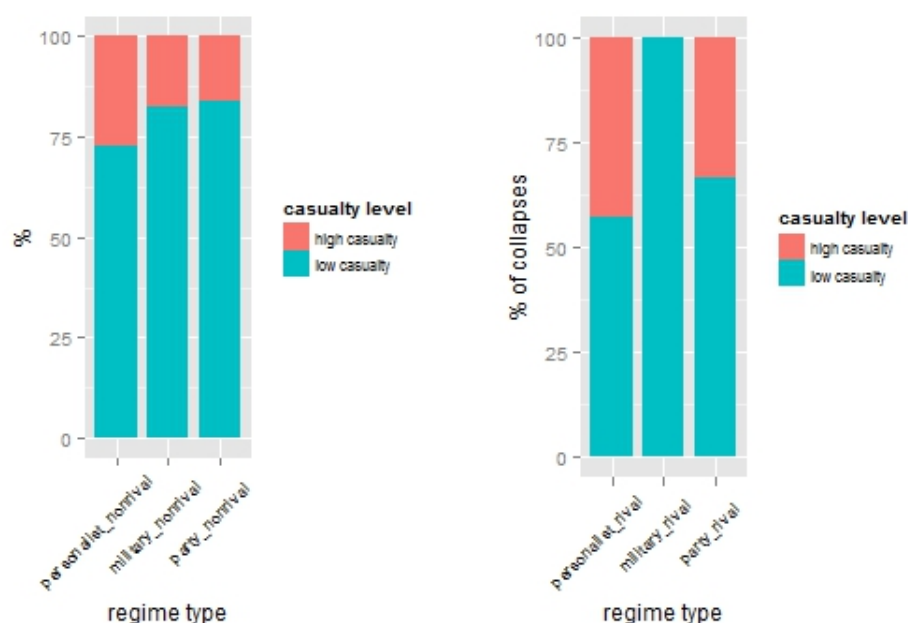
coerced regime transitions rarely lead to mass casualties. Of the 70 regimes that have fallen from 1945 to 2010 in the GWF dataset through non-coerced means, the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa in 1994 and Sri Lanka’s transition to democracy in the same year are the only cases where over 25 deaths have accompanied a non-coerced transition.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time however, the mode of authoritarian collapse does not determine the level of human costs the process entails. While personalist regimes were forced from power through coups, insurgencies, or mass protests over 80

Does domestic authoritarian institutions, together with the security environment, at least partially explain variation in casualty levels? The conflict-prone international security environment seems to be having different effects contingent on regime type, as hypothesized. Figure 2 plots the proportion of collapses with high casualties by regime type but disaggregates them by whether the regime was in an enduring rivalry or not. The plots indicate that for military regimes, rivalry seems to be facilitating non-violent transitions. Strikingly, being in an enduring rivalry perfectly predicts that the collapse of the regime will not result in a high number of casualties. All 13 of the

<sup>27</sup>Both of these regimes had between 25 and 1000 deaths during the transition.

cases of military regime breakdown within the dataset that are party to a rivalry did not experience more than 25 deaths during their fall. About 82% of military regime breakdowns not in a rivalry (28 of 34) resulted in less than 25 casualties. Repeated external conflicts being associated with a dampening of violence internally is a pattern that is not replicated in the case of personalist or single party regimes, where being party to an enduring rivalry seems to actually increase the level of casualties during regime breakdown.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 4.2:** Casualty Levels by Regime Type, In Rivalry and Outside Rivalry

However, it is difficult to draw reliable conclusions from solely the aggregate data. Tables 1 and 2 present the results of a series of ordered logistic regressions that test for the posited relationships while controlling for a number of variables that are also thought to influence levels of violence. The results presented below have the regime-years of all failed authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 2010 as the base units of analysis. The dependent variable in table 1 is an ordinal variable (from 0 to 4) that represents the level of violence involved in the breakdown process is the dependent variable in Table 2. <sup>29</sup> The key points of interests are 1) whether the type of authoritarian regime

<sup>28</sup>Checking to see whether there is an imbalance in the proportion of coups versus other forms of coerced breakdown utilizing the Archigos dataset reveals that the percentages for coups are roughly similar between regime types.

<sup>29</sup>No violence during transition is coded as 0, 1-25 deaths as a 1, 26-100 deaths as a 2, 101-1000 deaths as a 3, and

has an effect on the level of violence involved in the process, and 2) whether this effect is contingent upon being party to a rivalry.

The regressions control for factors that plausibly influence the level of violence involved. The level of development as well as the performance of the economy has been shown to have an influence on regime stability and the log of GDP per capita as well as percent gdp growth are included as a control.<sup>30</sup> Since the economic performance from last year can have an effect well into this year, a 1 year lag of the growth rate is also included.<sup>31</sup> Alliances can affect the domestic stability of regimes by offering both external security and also by guaranteeing the internal security of a particular coalition. An example is the tacit, and at times overt, guarantee the Soviets gave toward Communist Parties in Eastern Europe during the Cold War both externally through the Warsaw Pact and internally through intervention when ally communist parties were threatened. The Correlates of War dataset on formal alliances is used to control for this influence.<sup>32</sup> The Cold War period is also thought to have stabilized many authoritarian regimes in ways that are not reduced to the formal alliances, either through non-formal guarantees or through the political and pressures that the Cold War imposed on all countries of the world. A dummy variable for the Cold War period from 1945 to 1989 controls for this possibility. To take into account the possibility that the propensity for lethal violence breaking out is time dependent on the duration of the regime, years since a regime came to power is also part of the model as a control. Lastly, scholars have argued whether a regime is in power when a conflict starts has destabilizing consequences for the public puts the blame for the conflict on those in power at the time.<sup>33</sup> This binary variable codes

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over 1000 deaths as a 4.

<sup>30</sup>On democratic transitions from authoritarian rule and economic growth, refer to Haggard and Kaufmann, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).; Przeworski and Limongi, "Modernization: Theory and Facts, *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1989. On economic coups and economic performance, refer to Galetovic and Sanhuenza, "Citizens, Autocrats, and Plotters: A Model and New Evidence on Coup D'états," *Economics and Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2000.; Nam Kyu Kim, "Revisiting Economic Shocks and Coups," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Published Online, 2014.

<sup>31</sup>Adding two year lags does not affect the substantive or statistical findings reported below in a meaningful way. All GDP data is from the Penn World Tables dataset, Version 7.0.

<sup>32</sup>Douglas Gibling, *International military alliances, 1648-2008* Washington DC: CQ Press, 2009).

<sup>33</sup>Croco, Sarah E., and Jessica L. Weeks, "Willing and Able: Culpability, Vulnerability and Leaders Sensitivity to

regimes by whether they were in power when a rivalry started. Splines are also included to account for potential temporal dependence. Because countries have multiple authoritarian regimes during the period of analysis, robust standard errors are obtained by clustering the data by country.

**Table 4.1:** Effects of Conflict on Casualty Levels during Regime Breakdown

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Real GDP	-0.194 (0.192)	-0.206 ( 0.195 )	-0.102 (0.125)	-0.130 (0.128)
Real GDP Change	-0.062*** (0.016)	-0.056*** (0.016)	-0.053*** (0.015)	-0.052*** (0.014)
Personalist	0.404* (0.245)	0.475* (0.252)	0.403* (0.208)	0.514** (0.222)
Military	1.494*** (0.345)	1.636*** (0.342)	1.054*** (0.226)	1.241*** (0.248)
Rivalry	0.170 (0.318)	1.219 (0.820)	0.203 (0.232)	0.865*** (0.324)
Cold War	-1.294*** (0.279)	-1.284** (0.281)	-1.219*** (0.229)	-1.225*** (0.222)
Alliance	0.251 (0.335)	0.286 (0.342)	0.266 (0.224)	0.345** (0.228)
Culpability	-0.774 (0.651)	-1.265* (0.731)	-0.607* (0.360)	-0.811** (0.362)
Riv*Personalist	— —	-0.924 (.785)	— —	-0.638 (0.529)
Riv*Military	— —	-1.245 (0.782)	— —	-0.861** (0.418)
Regime Duration	-0.007 (0.012)	-0.004 (0.012)	0.004 (0.010)	0.027 (0.014)
Cubic Spline	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
n	1405	1405	1994	1994

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

Clustered standard errors by country.

Significance levels \*\*\* 1% \*\* 5% \* 10%

The results of the logit regressions on the mode of regime change are in table 1 above. The first column presents results for the base model that includes dummy variables for authoritarian regime types along with the control variables. Column two adds interaction terms between the

regime and the rivalry variable. Columns one and two runs the regression on only the “pure” types of authoritarian regimes and exclude the hybrid regimes. Columns three and four utilize the more expansive definition of the regime types, subsuming all the hybrid types into military, personalist, or single party regimes.<sup>34</sup> *A priori* what the consequences of including the hybrid regimes into the model are for inference is not clear. The increase the number of cases in the models increases statistical power, but capturing the effect that domestic regimes have may become more difficult if inclusion of the hybrid types mute or dilute the effects at work. As we see from the results below, these two effects seem to roughly cancel each other out.

The single party regime variable is not included in any of the regressions and the coefficients for the other regime type variable need to be interpreted with the single party regime as the point of reference. The hypotheses presented above predict that while military regimes will be less prone to breakdowns with high casualties compared to personalist regimes, military regimes in a rivalry should be less likely to end in a violent manner compared to military regimes not in one. It also predicts that personalist regimes should not share this contingent character of the effect of a conflict-prone international environment. The exclusion of single party regimes provides the common baseline to test these hypotheses against.

The results of the regressions are largely consistent with the main hypotheses. The key prediction from the theory - that the rivalry variable interacted with the military regime variable should be negative - is supported in both models in which the interaction term is included. The interaction term between military regime and rivalry is negative and substantively significant in both specifications. The coefficient is also statistically significant at the 95% confidence level in one of the models and has p-values of 0.11 in the other. Relative to single party regimes, while military regimes are more likely to face a violent end to their rule in general, military regimes in a rivalry relationship are substantially less likely to fall as a result of uprisings, coups, or insurgencies. The relatively stable coefficient on the personalist regime variable suggests that it is not changes in

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<sup>34</sup>Slightly less than a quarter of regimes in the GWF dataset are coded as hybrids of two or all three of the regime types. In models three and four, personalist-single party and military-single party, as well as personalist-single party-military hybrids are included in the single party category. Military-personalist and independent military regimes are included in the expanded version of the military regime variable in these two models. Various different ways of aggregating the hybrid types do not affect the key findings in a substantive way.

single party regimes propensity for violent breakdowns that are driving these changes.

The size of the effect of the interaction term is such that while military regimes are more likely to experience a high-casualty collapse compared to single party regimes, those in rivalries are indistinguishable from single party regimes in terms of their propensity to be suffer high levels of casualties.<sup>35</sup> A shift from a single party to a military regimes leads to, depending on the specification of the model, a 1.24 to 1.64 shift on the 0-4 casualty scale. This will take a collapse of 25-100 deaths to one that involves 101-1000, and depending on the other co-variates, a full blown civil war with over 1000 casualties. However, a military regime in a rivalry is statistically indistinguishable from a single party regime. Participation in rivalry has the effect of moderating the use of force within military regimes.

In all four of the model specifications, percent change in real GDP in the year of the regime's fall is statistically significant.<sup>36</sup> The results for log of real GDP is also highly statistically significant and robust to different specifications of the model. While previous work on the relationship between economic growth and authoritarian breakdown have stressed the stabilizing influence of growth on authoritarian regimes, the results show that more economic growth not only leads to more stable dictatorships but also to a lower likelihood of a violent fall from power.<sup>37</sup>

The Cold War period is statistically significant at either the  $p=0.05$  or  $p=0.01$  level in all four models, strongly suggesting that the international security environment that the Cold War provided had moderating effects on the use of lethal violence during regime breakdowns. The rivalry vari-

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<sup>35</sup>Due to the specifications of the model, the coefficients for military and personalist regimes are the joint effect of the each regime's propensity for breakdown as well its propensity for a breakdown with casualties. While the table results suggest personalist regimes are statistically and substantively more likely to experience a breakdown with casualties than single party regimes, personalist regimes are also more likely to breakdown in general. It is therefore possible that personalist regimes are less likely to collapse violently given a collapse compared to single party regimes. However, including predicted survival rates from a hazard model on the duration of authoritarian regimes into the models to control for the different survival probabilities produces coefficients in line with the hypotheses regarding the propensity for violence for each of the regime types. It also does not significantly change the results discussed below. Refer to Chapter 2 for the specifications of the hazard model.

<sup>36</sup>Neither lagging the GDP variable to include the previous year's GDP growth or including the lagged GDP growth with the GDP performance of the year of the breakdown substantively changes the results.

<sup>37</sup>Przeworski et al. *Democracy and Development, Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

able by itself is statistically significant in only one of the four specifications. In none of the other specifications does it approach conventional standards of statistical significance, and while the direction of the effect is also consistently to lower the likelihood for violence across the different models, the size of the coefficient varies from substantively very large to largely insignificant.

In all the models in Table 1, as the coefficients and standard errors on the duration variable show, the duration of a regime has no statistically significant relationship with the number of casualties involved. This is the case even when the duration variable is interacted with each regime, suggesting that grievances do not accumulate over time and the longer a regime lasts the more likely it is to end in violence, nor increasing capacity over time on the part of authoritarian regimes to deal with challenges to their rule.

Lastly, the culpability variable, which is a binary variable denoting whether the regime was present when the rivalry began, is also robust in terms of statistical significance across all four of the specifications save one.<sup>38</sup> However, the direction of the effect is contrary to that suggested by previous research, which has argued that leaders that are in power during the initiation of conflicts tend to have their tenures curtailed because they are viewed as culpable for the conflicts by those that can hold them accountable. However, this putative effect on leader tenure does not extend to curtailing the duration of regimes. In the above regressions, the results indicate that being in power at the beginning of a rivalry actually decreases the chances that an authoritarian leader will be ousted in a violent way or that casualties will result during the breakdown. This suggests that a tense security environment, while not extending a regime's hold on power, may nevertheless have stabilizing effects on domestic rule. The way in which it does so is not to decrease leader or regime turnover, as had been previously thought, but to lower the level of violence involved during transitions, both in terms of the way the transition occurs and the number of casualties involved in the process.

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<sup>38</sup>The p-value in the one specification where culpability fails to meet conventional statistical significance levels is 0.12



## 4.5 Robustness Checks

Inferring the effect that domestic authoritarian institutions have from these models can be problematic if the authoritarian regimes that have broken down have (unobservable) traits that may also be leading to the outcome of interest. This non-random “selection” of certain regimes could bias our estimates of the role that particular regimes or high levels of external tension have on the level of violence during transitions. For example, the theory above expects military regimes to not wield violence even when falling from power when it is in a threatening security environment, but if it is weakness or frailty of a regime that is making them fall without the onset of violence, it is possible to attribute the non-violent breakdown to the type of regime when it is the frailty of the regime that is behind the outcome. However, it is not sufficient for a regime with particular traits to select into a rivalry for the findings to be thrown into question. Since the key point of interest in this paper is whether the same regime types have different effects contingent upon being part of a rivalry or not, it has to be the case in the example above that weaker military regimes were systematically becoming part of a conflict-prone international environment while not being subject to the relatively peaceful one. Only then would the intra-regime comparison be biased in a way that raises concerns for the findings above. Not only does this seem unlikely in a substantive sense, as I show in Chapter 2, weak military regimes seem not to become party to rivalries.<sup>39</sup> As an additional check, I run the same analysis with regimes that did not select into rivalries but rather inherited them. This restricts the analysis to those regimes that did not “select into” rivalries but rather inherited them. If the results hold, we have additional reason to believe the effect is not due to selection into rivalries. The substantive and statistical results remain essentially the same. They do.

To ensure that particular modelling choices were not leading to the results, several robustness checks were carried out. To check that it is not particular specifications of the data that are leading to the findings. I alter the composition of hybrid types and examine whether the results from the models align with our expectations. For example, instead of putting a military-single party regime

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<sup>39</sup>If anything, it seems economically better performing military regimes are becoming party to rivalries, which actually helps our findings since economically strong regimes are in every specification of the model less likely to fall via a coerced manner or entail high numbers of casualties

in the hybrid group, I put it in the “pure” group and see if the effect of military regimes is weakened. Such robustness tests do not weaken or contradict any of the substantive findings presented above.

<sup>40</sup> Additional robustness checks, such as a two stage regression to control for selection effects, where I take the errors from first stage regression predicting participation in rivalry, do not offer substantively different results.

## 4.6 Conclusion

Why costly conflicts break out between groups when a negotiated outcome that is preferable to conflict for both sides has been an enduring question for scholars of conflict and peace. With human casualties as a measure of costs, this chapter has sought to explain why some of the authoritarian transitions between 1945 and 2010 occurred at no cost to human life while others occurred with hundreds if not thousands of casualties. It has argued that the number of people that die during the collapse of a dictatorship collapses is not divorced from the external security environment of the dictatorship. It developed a theory of how an adverse security environment interacts with domestic authoritarian regimes to have heterogeneous effects on the level of casualties during breakdowns and tested implications of the theory utilizing data on the fall of all authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 2010. It found that while the external security environment matters for the casualty levels during an authoritarian regime breakdown, the effect is contingent upon the nature of politics within the authoritarian regimes. Perhaps counter-intuitively, external conflicts facilitate non-violent domestic transitions of power for military regimes. This is not the case with personalist and single party regimes, which exhibit similar propensities for violent breakdown regardless of the security environment.

The aversion to violence on the part of military regimes under a tense international environment is due, it was hypothesized, to the higher value that the military as an organization puts on the integrity of the armed forces and the higher credibility of promises for an important role for the military in the post-transition period. The potential harm that clinging to power amidst widespread

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<sup>40</sup>Results available upon request.

discontent or wielding deadly force in an effort to retain power would do to that unity moderates the actions of the military and lowers the chances of force being used in ways that kill. Knowledge that because of the threatening security environment, the military is likely to have an important role after giving up power makes it easier for it to do so. This finding presents a caveat to the prevailing wisdom that military regimes will be more willing to wield force because they are also the most repressive when in power.<sup>41</sup> When the threat to their power is the highest, the military least likely to take repressive measures that kill when the external security environment is threatening. It also presents conditions under which the “commitment problem” does not lead to violence during a transition of power.

Future research could tackle the question of what effect the violence during transition has on character and durability of the subsequent regime. It could also test whether higher levels of international conflict strengthen the effects on casualties, contingent on regime type, outlined in this paper.

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<sup>41</sup>Hanna Fjelde, “Generals, Dictators, and Kings: Authoritarian Regimes and Civil Conflict 1973-2004,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2010.

## CHAPTER 5

### The North Korean Regime, Domestic Instability, and Conflict

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the late 1990s, facing growing pressure from those arguing that the 1994 Agreed Framework with the North Koreans was insufficient to address US interests, the Clinton administration tasked Secretary of State William Perry with a review of policy toward North Korea. The conclusions of this policy noted as a constraint to US influence the ability of the North Korean regime to remain in power despite the humanitarian crisis caused by famine and the significant drop in economic production during the mid-1990s. "Logic would suggest," stated the Perry Report, which summarized the findings of the review, "that the DPRK's evident problems would ultimately lead its regime to change. However, the team could find "no evidence that change is imminent."<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, as Obama recently noted, the "evident problems" the regime faced internally did not change North Korean behavior for the better. While recently making the case for lifting sanctions against Iran, he characterized North Korea as "the country that is most isolated in the world," and stated that, "it would be hard to argue that, by virtue of the fact that they can't feed their people, and that they are almost entirely cut off from global trade, that that somehow has lessened their capacity for mischief and trouble-making."<sup>2</sup> Sanctions taken to their limit in terms of the costs to the people, Obama was arguing, had not worked in changing North Korean behavior. By extension, it was not likely to work in the case of Iran and therefore a different approach was needed.

The North Korean regime's longevity and "mischief" amidst such deprivation is even more

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<sup>1</sup>William J. Perry, *Review of United States Policy toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations*, October 12, 1999.

<sup>2</sup>NPR, "Transcript: President Obama's Full NPR Interview On Iran Nuclear Deal," April 7th, 2015.

puzzling in light of the finding from previous chapters that international conflicts have destabilizing consequences for personalist regimes. The three generations of the Kims have been party to one of the longest running international rivalries with multiple states: Japan, South Korea, and the US have had repeated conflicts of varying degrees with North Korea since 1948. There are, however, no signs that such conflicts have had the destabilizing consequences it has had for other personalist regimes. Not only has the regime's longevity puzzled policymakers attempting to craft a response to its nuclear program and ballistic missile development, its duration is also an empirical anomaly among personalist regimes involved in long-running conflicts with other nations. What explains this deviation? This question can help better understand the North Korean 'anomaly' and thereby enhancing our understanding of authoritarian stability in general by elucidating the relationship between conflict, domestic policies such as repression/cooptation, and stability of rule.

Explaining North Korean longevity also matters for policy on Iran. The Obama administration's new approach toward the country involves lifting sanctions and increasing economic exchanges with it. If the Iranians were "engaged in international business, and there are foreign investors, and their economy becomes more integrated with the world economy," Obama argued, then in many ways it makes it harder for them to engage in behaviors that are contrary to international norms." Creating an interest in peaceful relations with the outside world would make it more difficult for the regime to take actions, such as international conflict, that would harm those interests. However, what Obama did not mention was that such economic engagement had been attempted with the North Korean regime, and had not met with success. China, the US, and Japan have all had varying degrees of economic exchanges with North Korea over the past 20 years. South Korea in particular initiated a sustained effort at economic engagement toward North Korea as part of its "sunshine policy" toward North Korea under two successive liberal governments from 1997-2007. The South Korean government promoted foreign investment and trade from other countries into North Korea and encouraging exchanges at all levels with the outside world. The aim of this policy was "simultaneously coaxing the North to expand engagement with the outside world(and) expose the closed North Korean society to international sunshine and promote internal reform." This would, in turn, lead to "ripple effects" and the "forging of vested interests" toward

the reform and opening process in North Korea.<sup>3</sup> The South Korean government's logic for pursuing the sunshine policy had much in common with Obama's rationale for lifting sanctions against Iran. However, why has this particular mechanism for changing its behavior not worked in the case of North Korea?

This chapter argues that not only the reason for the longevity of the North Korean regime, but also the failure of economic engagement to work has its roots in the nature of its intra-regime politics. The theory presented on the internal politics of personalist regimes in previous chapters attributes their stay in power to the ability of the regime to prevent challenges against it through some combination of the threat of repression and the promise of private benefits to regime insiders. The resilience of the regime suggests an unusual capacity for either or both of these measures. While much of the popular reporting on the country has focused on the unusual brutality of the regime, this chapter takes into account that economic exchanges with the outside world offer benefits which the regime leaders can divert to maintaining their grip on power. The regime's needs for survival gives it a strong incentive to do so, particularly during dire economic conditions. However, there is a downside to the benefits that personalist regimes can gain from trade and investment. At a certain point the economic exchanges require institutions to regulate and protect actors in order for it to reach higher levels of trade and investment. Institutionalization however, often means ceding control for actors in personalist regimes. Thus one of the mechanisms through which economic flows can foster an interest in more peaceful relations with the outside world, is precisely the same mechanism that harms the regime's survival strategy. This limits the institutionalization of economic exchanges, and therefore its scale.

The argument proceeds in three steps. It first tests for the possibility that North Korea's regime longevity is due to the conflicts that it has instigated. While in general, both theoretically and empirically, conflict does not benefit personalist regimes, North Korea could possess an ability to utilize conflict for domestic gain that other similar regimes do not. To examine whether the pattern of conflict on the Korean peninsula is consistent with this claim, I check whether the periods when the incentive for conflicts to stabilize domestic rule were highest - severe domestic hardship during

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<sup>3</sup>Chung-in Moon, *Kim Dae-jung government and Sunshine Policy: Promises and Challenges* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1999), p. 55.

famines since it took power - are associated with higher episodes of militarized conflicts. Second, I scrutinize available data on surveys of private actors involved in economic exchanges with North Koreans to gauge whether the outcomes that suggest economic engagement is having its intended effect are observable. Lastly, to provide insight into why the outlined mechanisms of economic engagement are not working, I draw on interviews with actors engaged in direct economic interactions with North Koreans. Particular attention is paid to the obstacles to institutionalization they have faced.

## 5.2 North Korea and International Conflict

According to theories that have posited a positive relationship between conflict and regime stability, the North Korean regime's relatively long duration in power is, at least in part, a direct consequence of the the conflicts that it has taken part in. North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un, for example, "may have been stoking fears of a foreign threat primarily to dampen political unrest at home."<sup>4</sup> According to this logic, conflicts serve to strengthen its hold on power.<sup>5</sup> While earlier chapters found that personalist regimes such as those headed by the Kims do not benefit from repeated conflicts and hence *a posteriori* do not have the incentive to instigate them during domestic crisis, the North Korean case could be an outlier or an exception.

An extension of the logic that conflict benefits domestic stability is that conflict becomes most likely when the regime perceives high levels of instability internally. To deal with the problem that instability is largely unobservable in North Korea, I take the period of the famines that North Korea experienced as a proxy for domestic crisis and examine whether such periods coincide with more frequent or serious episodes of international conflict. Since famines cause great hardship to the populace but at the same time are at least partially the result of unpredictable fluctuations in the weather, using it as our measure of instability can alleviate concerns that rather than instability

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<sup>4</sup>Sheila Miyoshi Jager, "Domestic Politics, Pyongyang Style," *New York Times*, March 14, 2013.

<sup>5</sup>Jack Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1988.; Levy, "The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique" in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).; Tarar, "Diversionary Incentives and the Bargaining Approach to War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2006.

causing belligerent behavior, it is conflict that is causing domestic instability. That most of the urban residents in North Korea relied largely on the state for the provision of food makes this assumption that systemic shortages of food will cause higher levels of instability more plausible. As Haggard and Nolan noted about the famine in the 1990s, “the most fundamental component of the socialist social compact - the ability of the government to guarantee adequate food - broke down.” It is hard to see how this breakdown, when combined with the “systemic nature of the crisis,” would not lead to a political crisis of some sort.<sup>6</sup>

Due to the opacity of the North Korean regime, there is a debate about the level of human costs that resulted from the famines and the exact causes behind it.<sup>7</sup> However, there is broad consensus that the country has experienced at least three periods of famine since the establishment of the Democratic People’s Republic in 1948. In 1954-55, the destruction of the country by the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, and the harsh collection campaign for grains by the state to deal with increasing urbanization caused famines in the countryside. In 1970-73, agricultural productivity lagged behind population growth, and this combined with bad weather and increased mobilization of the countryside into the military caused another shortage of food. The famine of 1994 to 1998 has been well documented in the international press.<sup>8</sup>

To gauge whether such periods coincide with increased external conflicts, data is gathered from two sources. The dataset on Militarized Inter-State Disputes (MIDs) codes four different categories of interstate disputes, namely the threat of force, the display of force, limited use of force, and full blown wars. While the dataset captures a wider range of disputes than a sole focus on wars, there are other measures that North Korea has taken to raise the level of tension with other countries.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, *Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid, and Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p.76.

<sup>7</sup>Haggard and Nolan, *ibid.*; Andrew Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Peace, 2001).; Daniel Goodkind and Lorraine West, “The North Korean Famine and its Demographic Impact, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2001.

<sup>8</sup>Suk Lee, *Food Shortages and Economic Institutions in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea*, Ph.D. diss., Dept of Economics, University of Warwick, U.K., 2003

<sup>9</sup>Ghosn, Faten, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart Bremer, “The MID3 Data Set, 1993-2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* Vol. 21, No. 2, 2004.



These include infiltration of armed saboteurs and spies, hijackings, kidnappings, and terrorism (including assassinations and bombings). These acts, while not involving the use or the threat of military force, can ramp up tensions between countries. The most dramatic example of this was the attempted assassination of two South Korean presidents by Northern agents (both of which were unsuccessful), once in Burma and the other in Seoul, and the tensions they caused. Actions that are not taken by the formal military but other agents of the state in such an irregular form of violence by the North Koreans are coded into a separate category called “provocations.” Data for this category of actions were coded from a report from the *Congressional Research Service* after cross checking with three South Korean newspapers.<sup>10</sup>

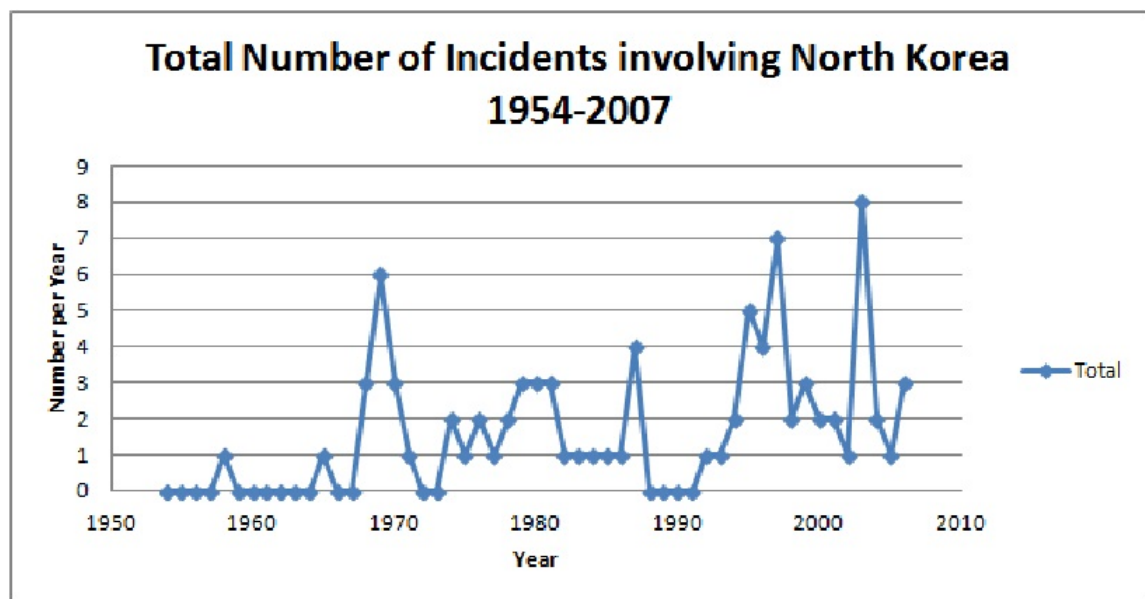
For each year since 1954, the year after the Korean War ended, the frequency of militarized disputes and provocations are recorded. In the case of militarized disputes, the severity of the incident is also coded according to whether force was solely threatened, there were maneuvers or show of military force, and whether there was the actual use of military force. The MIDs dataset also differentiates between the limited use of force and wars with high casualties, but no wars have occurred on the Korean peninsula since the end of the Korean War.

In coding the different ways through which violence can lead to heightened levels of tension between states, some coding choices had to be made. First, as part of the skirmishes on the west coast of the peninsula that have lead to clashes resulting in casualties on both sides twice in the last 20 years, numerous warning shots have been fired (mostly by the South Korean side) as part of standard procedures of engagement against North Korean ships venturing too far South. While such warning shots technically could be classified as a use of limited force within the classification of MIDs, it is coded as a military maneuver in that the intent - to show off capability and to signal willingness to put to use the actual force - is the same as in other shows of military force. As for provocations, while there have been a number of alledged kidnappings on the border between China and North Korea of a number of South Korean nationals, I have left these out for the circumstances in the border areas do not make it a clear cut case of action intended by the North Korean regime to provoke South Korea or any other country. Kidnappings in South Korea and

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<sup>10</sup>Dick Nanto, “North Korea: Chronology of Provocations: 1950-1953,” *Congressional Research Service*, March 18th, 2003. The three are the *Chosun Ilbo*, *Donga Ilbo*, and the *Hankyoreh*.

in Japan are much clearer cases and hence are coded as such.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, North Korean military infiltrations and espionage operations in the South periodically lead them to being discovered by South Korean forces and the soldiers involved becoming captured or killed. Several submarines have been detected in South Korean waters after malfunctions. While North Korean submarines being discovered in South Korean waters or an espionage ring being uncovered by the National Security Agency certainly raises the level of tension in South Korea, it is hard to see that there is an intent to become captured and hence these are not coded as provocations.



**Figure 5.1:** Total number of violent incidents involving North Korea, 1954-2006

Above are the number of both the militarized disputes and lower-level provocations that North Korea has been involved in added together for the period from 1954 to 2007. As is consistent with the popular image of North Korea, only 18 years out of the total of 54 years covered in this dataset that did not have at least one of these two types of incidents. The average was 1.6 incidents per year, and the high was 8 in 2003, at the height of the second nuclear crisis.

While there were fewer incidents during the early years after the division of the country after the Korean War, there doesn't appear to be a secular trend in the number of incidents afterwards.

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<sup>11</sup>Classifying all of the border area kidnappings as a provocation does not change the substance of the analysis below.

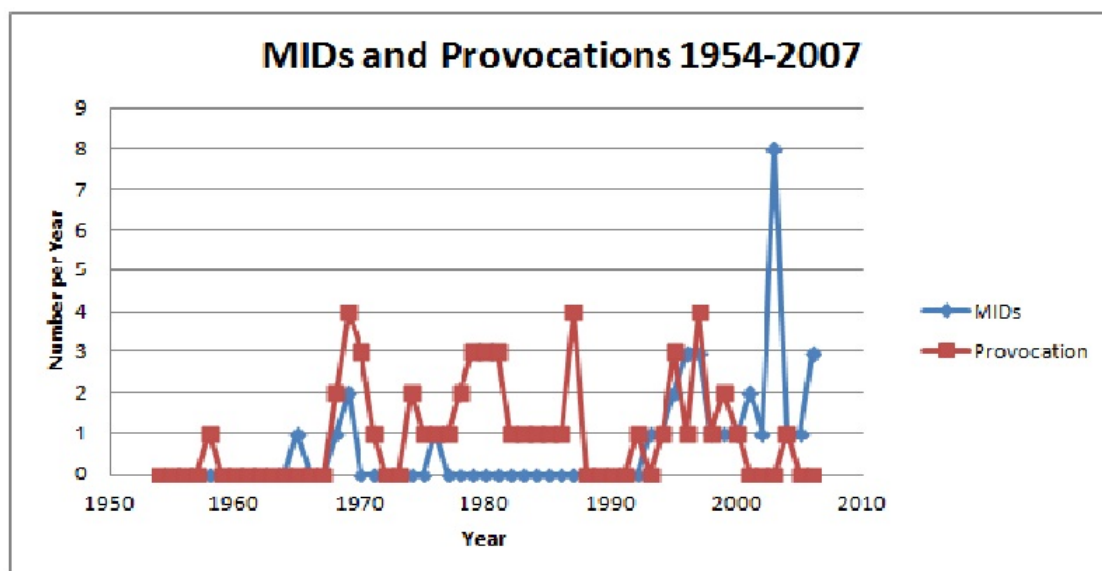
Neither does there appear to be a general relationship between the outside shocks, whether it was the Korean War in the case of the 1954-55 famine or the bad weather precipitating the 1970-73 and 1994-98 famine, that lead to destabilization and the external behavior of the regime. During 1954-55, there are no incidents of either kind. The 1970-73 period actually saw a decrease in the number of incidents with the onset of the famine, as the number of incidents went from 6 in 1969 to 3 in 1970, and then to one incident in 1971. No incidents are recorded in the remaining period of the famine. The late 1960s were a period of particular belligerence on the part of the North Koreans, as both the capture of the USS Pueblo and the attempt to assassinate the South Korean President Park Chung-Hee through an armed infiltration by North Korean special operatives took place in 1968. The onset of the famine actually seems to have coincided with a moderation of such behavior.

Only in the latest episode of the famine does the data seem consistent with the hypothesis that internal destabilization leads to aggressive external behavior. While there is some debate about the exact timing that widespread food shortages began to emerge in North Korea, after steady decreases in food distribution by the state in the early 1990s, by 1994 there were acute shortages across the country. In 1995 North Korea put out its first official plea for aid to the international community after summer floods exacerbated the food situation. The shortage would last at least until the harvest of 1998. Roughly consistent with this timeline, after 4 years of no incidents between 1988-91, there is one incident in both 1992 and 1993, followed by 2 in 1994, and then a spike to 6 in 1995. Five incidents are recorded in 1996-97, before a downturn in 1998 to 2 incidents. Both the timing of the upturn and the downturn seem to roughly coincide with the onset of the food shortages and then its alleviation.

Not surprisingly, given these inconsistent patterns between domestic food shortages and foreign policy behavior, t-tests for whether the mean number of incidents during famine periods diverges from the mean from non-famine periods turns up a null result. However, it could be argued that conflict is used as a tool for enhancing domestic stability only when the domestic threat level is very high and that the severity of the 1990s famine necessitated the use of force by the North Korean regime. There are several reasons however, to remain skeptical of this explanation.

First, after a series of negotiations and crises, the North Koreans agreed on the Geneva Agreed

Framework regarding its nuclear program in October of 1994, choosing to deescalate the crisis over its nuclear program precisely as the food crisis was turning tragically serious. The North Koreans during the famine seemed to implement the Agreed Framework faithfully. Thus the most important source of friction between North Korea and other countries was not an issue during throughout the worst of the famine.



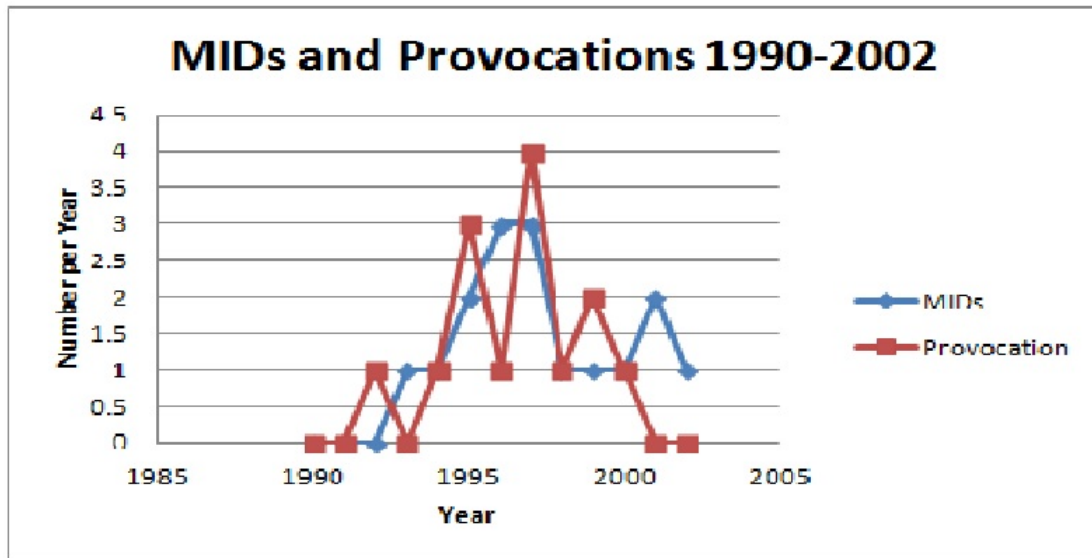
**Figure 5.2:** MIDs and provocations involving North Korea, 1954-2006

Second, while it is possible that after the agreement on the nuclear issue the North Koreans chose other means to raise the level of the tension with the outside world in order to stabilize domestic rule, disaggregating the data to divide the militarized disputes and the low-level provocations tells a more complicated story. The data over time is presented above in Figure 2. What is notable is that the militarized disputes and the lower-level provocations, over time, do not move in conjunction. The North Koreans do not seem to be using different forms of violence indiscriminately. The late 1960s are characterized by the joint increase in both MIDs as well as irregular forms of violence. However, the following 20 years are followed by a near-absence of interstate militarized disputes, while irregular forms of provocations by the North Korean regime are fairly commonplace year after year. After a short absence of any form of violence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the episodes of both forms of violence begin to rise during the mid 1990s, only

for the two to diverge again after 2000 when MIDs become the dominant form of violence used by the regime. A regression between the frequency of the two uses of violence does not reveal a statistically significant relationship.

Figure 3 below takes a closer look at the famine period of the 1990s. Looking at the frequency of MIDs over time, it appears that after a fairly long period (16 years) in which the North Koreans had been relatively at peace with the outside world, they began to instigate multiple military conflicts per year during the famine. However, looking at the actual substance of these disputes as well as the data on lower-level provocations tells a different story. In late 1993 and early 1994, amidst the first North Korean nuclear crisis, North Korean officials issued threats of “reunifying the fatherland with guns” and that “Seoul will turn into a sea of fire,” in case of a war. These threats were taken very seriously in Korea, the latter comment in particular drawing extensive attention by the government and media. There were two militarized disputes in 1995, the year after the Agreed Framework was signed at Geneva and the number of MIDs rose to 3 each in 1996 and 1997. While all these were either military maneuvers or disputes that involved the use of force, five of them were limited troop movements south of the Military Demarcation Line into the southern part of the DMZ while the other three involved North Korean naval patrol boats venturing into South Korean waters. Actual shots were fired in 3 incidents during this period. Two out of them resulted in at least one casualty. Three South Korean fishermen were killed by shots fired from a North Korean naval boat off the western coast of the peninsula, and a North Korean soldier was killed after entering Southern territory in the DMZ on foot. Although the death of the three fishermen in particular generated a popular backlash in the South, from the North Korean perspective these were hardly the type of conflicts that could rally a country around the leader or to divert attention away from hunger. There is also no evidence that they attempted to use these incidents for domestic political mobilization.

Not only were the MIDs during the famine period of relatively low intensity, much of the spike in the total number of incidents in Figure 1 during the famine were not MIDs but lower level provocations. During 1994-98, 9 such incidents were recorded. They included an abduction attempt, forced detention of the captain of a Southern ship, seizure of a separate ship, kidnappings, several threats to attack Southern media, the assassination of a Southern diplomat, and the murder of



**Figure 5.3:** MIDS and provocations involving North Korea, 1990-2003

a prominent defector. Whatever the goal of such provocations are, whether it be to coerce, to draw attention to an issue, or as a bargaining chip in future negotiations, it is hard to see how from the Northern regime's perspective such actions contribute to stabilizing domestic politics. Limiting both the MIDs and the provocations at low intensity levels doesn't seem to suggest a regime's waning domestic authority.

Examining the period of the three famines since the establishment of the North Korean state, the political instability resulting from them do not seem to correlate with a general increase in international conflicts. Despite the crisis of authority and legitimacy that comes with mass hunger in the context of a social system in which the provision of food was the responsibility of the state, the three periods of famine in the country respectively coincide with no conflicts, a downswing in conflicts, and an upswing in them. However, even when the conflicts and provocations increase in tandem as it did during the famine of the 1990s, the intensity of the conflicts and the level of the tension caused by them do not seem to suggest that the goal of stabilizing domestic rule is driving the use of violence. The military maneuvers that get classified as militarized disputes are small in scale. The use of force is limited in character, rarely going further than warning shots aimed at border transgressions. Even when 3 civilian casualties on the South Korean side, and 1 casualty

on the North Korean side took place as a result of military action during the famine period, these incidents did not escalate further nor were they politicized domestically by North Korea.

The low-intensity military disputes took place in tandem with, or were preceded by, low-grade provocations not involving the military such as the abduction and detention of foreign nationals, assassinations, and threats against the South Korean media. While the aggregate data shows a big rise in the number of violent incidents involving North Korea coinciding with the onset of the worst period of the 1990s famine, a closer look at the nature of the militarized disputes and analysis of the low-grade provocations shows a period of continuous low intensity military incidents, and irregular means of violence against civilians and non-military organizations. This period of a high number of low intensity MIDs and provocations could be attributed to several possible causes. It could be due to internal indecision about strategy after the end of the first nuclear crisis. The pattern of limiting militarized disputes and irregular means of violence below a certain level during this period, and then raising the intensity of solely the military disputes during the next few years during the second nuclear crisis is also consistent with a learning process where North Korea is shifting strategies in response to whether they achieved its goals or not, irrespective of the famine. At the very least, the pattern of violence used by North Korea is consistent with other explanations for its behavior and it is hard to draw the conclusion that there is a strong relationship between domestic instability and North Korean foreign policy.

### **5.3 Economic Engagement with North Korea**

If the North Korean regime does not have a preference for conflict due to the political benefits it provides in terms of domestic stability, it is hard to attribute the relative longevity of the regime to the conflicts that it has been involved in. This is consistent with the general finding in previous chapters that personalist regimes do not seem to benefit from being involved in repeated conflicts. If the regime does not instigate conflicts for domestic political purposes, then one of the potential obstacles for economic engagement's success is removed. Those advocating for more economic engagement with North Korea (as well as Iran) argue that market forces create incentives for actors in North Korea to create more stable structures/institutions for more economic exchanges. As trading

partners interact and benefits accrue over time, the logic goes, the North Korean side would begin to trade more publicly, with less corruption, with more predictability, with a longer time horizon, and with more recourse to dispute resolution. This is because such measures allow for more trade and investment, and increases the benefits from these transactions. These practices and institutions fostering further exchanges renders actions that harm those interests, such as international conflict, more costly.

However, intra-regime politics within personalist regimes discussed in previous chapters suggests that the institutionalization mechanism of economic engagement is unlikely to work in the case of personalist regimes because the very survival of these regimes depends, in large part, on maintaining the private nature of the benefits from economic exchanges in order to divert them for the interests of the regime (leader). While increasing economic exchanges can benefit personalist regimes by increasing the resources available for them, the institutionalization of economic activity for leaders of personalist regimes means giving up the discretion and personal control over the benefits of trade and investment. Thus in terms of regime stability, there is a trade-off between the higher levels of economic exchanges that can benefit the ruling coalition, and the decreasing autonomy from institutionalization that such increases call for.

There are several ways this trade-off can be managed. At one extreme is autarky, which the North Koreans were forced into with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the cutting of aid by the Chinese and Russians in the early 1990s. The regime in this case, shuts itself off (or is shut out) from trade. Another way is to largely limit trade to goods that can be managed under direct control by the state. Resources that can easily controlled by the state, either because they require heavy investment in a designated site for extraction or are not easily divertible for private gain by middle-actors, minimize the trade-off for the state: it can retain control even with increasing levels of trade. The North Koreans seem to be doing this, with public corporations or state owned enterprises headed by party cadre in the mining industries. However, as part of the response to the 1990s famine, and then to the opportunities for commerce available to the country thereafter the regime has relented to cross-border private commerce taking place. This has led to hundreds of firms (mostly in China and South Korea) being involved in trade or investment in North Korea in industries that do not allow for the same levels of control. In this context trade takes place but it



is unlikely to lead to a ceding of control by the regime. To put it another way, only the level and scale of trade that does not require substantive institutionalization is likely to take place.

Under such conditions, the actors involved in trade or investment in North Korea should be aware of the lack of development on the institutional side. Do we observe such outcomes? The proliferation of firms has allowed for gathering of data regarding whether economic exchanges are having the effect that engagement intends. In particular, Haggard and Nolan have attempted the most systematic analysis to date about the effects of international trade and investment with regards to North Korea through surveys of businesses involved in transactions with the North, focusing on signs that are indicative of economic exchanges leading to institutionalization of economic transactions. The measures they survey these businesses on include responses to regarding dispute resolution mechanisms, the level of credit extension, and financial settlement terms. Institutionalization points to the development of formal or informal means for resolving disputes regarding business transactions. As trust develops and risk reaches a manageable level, credit should be extended. Even without the extension of credit, financial settlements could be settled on looser terms, for example with payments taking place at time of delivery instead on ordering. This would be consistent with a lower level of risk on transactions perceived by the actors, whether from some type of formal or informal institution developing, or from the multiple iterations that had taken place previously.

However, although there were some important differences amongst the Chinese and Koreans on a number of responses on the surveys, they both showed no signs that the businesses surveyed perceived any meaningful development of institutions. One of the striking findings from the surveys is that despite variation in the industries, scale of commerce, and duration of business with North Korea, the investors/traders consistently pointed out the lack of increased institutionalization of commerce and investment over time across these measures. Spot trading, and payment on order or reception of goods remained the norm. Credit extension was very rare as were loose settlement terms. When a dispute arose, investors and traders could only rely on personal connections. The exceptions were those trading or producing in the Kaesong Industrial Complex, where by joint agreement between the South and North Korean government certain dispute resolution procedures were in place, and also where Southern management has been able to bring its business practices

in with some restrictions.

## 5.4 Interviews

These results are consistent with the theoretical expectation that under personalist rule, the political logic of maintaining influence and control over the trade and investment process takes priority for these regimes over the economic logic of institutionalization. However, what are the political obstacles to the institutionalization of economic activity? The theory on personalist regimes suggests that regimes will attempt to take advantage of the benefits that economic exchanges can bring, while minimizing the loss of control over the process that institutionalization can entail. While this doesn't preclude profit-making from exchanges with the North Koreans, it is likely that investors and traders will not be able benefit from institutions that develop to minimize risk, increase transparency, and make repeated interactions more likely. Actors will be expected to think in terms of maximizing short term gain, often at the expense of potentially higher long term profits and there will be few available means to mitigate the risks of a business environment of high uncertainty and unpredictability. Regardless of the time they have been operating inside North Korea, they are not likely to see large scale changes to this environment.

Moreover, while uncertainty regarding the business environment itself is common in many developing countries, what sets apart personalist regimes is that an important source of this uncertainty is intra-regime politics. Great autonomy of decision-making, and the subordination of a higher degree of policy to the preferences of the ruler translates into a greater degree of political intervention in economic affairs. Economically sound decisions should often be subverted due to the political calculations of the personalist regime's insiders and their followers.

For insight into the actual content of the obstacles to institutionalization, I conducted interviews of investors and traders with experience inside North Korea in the three Chinese provinces bordering North Korea. The interviews not only provide additional evidence on whether market forces are creating in North Korea to more stable structures/institutions for market exchanges, but insight into what the obstacles behind such institutionalization are. The time period for the interviews was during two weeks in the three provinces of Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang during

late March and early April of 2013. These are the three provinces that border North Korea and where trade with the country is concentrated. The interviews were held in the cities of Dalian, Dandong, Shenyang, Yanbian, and Changchun (in that order). Below, I analyze the content of the interviews with two Korean and two Chinese businessmen of ethnic Korean decent.<sup>12</sup> Koreans and ethnic Koreans in China make up the majority of the business owners that trades with North Korea. Ethnic Korean trade offices or Korean resident associations were contacted for contacts regarding businesses active in North Korea prior to the visit.

The interviews were held about a month after North Korea's third nuclear test. Tensions were high around the region and a new round of sanctions were being discussed between the main parties involved. There were some restrictions on foreigners in the border areas, particularly near the city of Yanbian.<sup>13</sup> It had been almost three years since the 5.24 sanction measures implemented after the sinking of the Cheonan naval ship had, among other measures, prohibited South Koreans from trading directly with North Korea, cut off government aid, and removed the non-tariff status on products originating from North Korea. Thus, the businessmen that had been interviewed were those that had weathered not just the difficulties of doing business in a poor, unregulated, and not easily accessible market, but in the case of the South Koreans, several years of sanctions imposed by their government. Businesses inside the Kaesong Industrial Complex, just across the border with South Korea about an hour away from Seoul, were the only ones that were exempted from the 5.24 measures, and were not interviewed on this occasion.

During the interviews, in addition to questions about the main outcomes that would be consistent with growing institutionalization of economic exchanges, a number of questions regarding the source of the obstacles to furthering of economic exchanges were asked. Below some basic info on the four interviewees are listed. Some asked to remain anonymous and below I identify them by the letter which their information is listed next to.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Academics, various trade association personnel, traders or business owners with experience with North Korea, and a reporter covering North Korea-China trade were interviewed.

<sup>13</sup>One of the reporters there that I had interviewed was, several days after the interview, detained for 24 hours before being released after a trip to the border Hunchun area

<sup>14</sup>This was another feature of all those interviewed in which the possibility of publicizing the company came up.

The mean number of years for these men were doing business with the North Koreans was 12.5 years. According to surveys by Haggard and Nolan, the median number of years businesses had been involved in North Korea were 5 years both for the South Korean firms and the Chinese firms. All four individuals had been involved in business longer than most of the Chinese or South Korean entities involved in economic exchanges with North Korea. The fact that they had been able to remain in business so long, whether through luck or skill, gives more weight to their views regarding trade with their North Korean counterparts. Not only had they remain economically viable within an environment that had driven many others out, because of their longer than average time in business and more frequent transactions with the North Koreans they could base their opinions on more experience.

A: Clothing and Food Processing, Dandong, Korean, 10 years.

B: Minerals, Metals, and other natural resources, Dandong, Korean, 19 years.

C: Seafood, Agricultural products, and Clothing, Yanbian, Chinese (ethnic Korean), 10 years

D: Machinery and Fertilizer, Changchun, Chinese (ethnic Korean), 11 years

The basic traits of these four businesses are consistent with what is known about the general characteristics of firms doing business with North Korea. Aside from those operating within the Kaesong Industrial Complex, the majority of Korean firms are involved in trade of two kinds. First, many businesses ship inputs into North Korea for assembly in North Korean factories and then reship out the final product for export to other countries. Interviewee A was involved in this type of trade. The second is the more traditional form of exporting or importing that does ship goods in and out of Korea in exchange for money or other goods. Interviewee B had been engaged in this type of trade.

In the case of the Chinese, there is a higher presence of firms with some type of relationship with either the Chinese government, provincial governments, or state-owned-enterprises. This is

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Both businesses expressed an aversion to press regarding their company. Asked why, one of them replied based on experience that drawing public attention to a particular transaction tended to make the North Korean side “very uncomfortable.”

reflected in the experience of interviewee D, whose career started as an officer in the People's Liberation Army stationed near the border with North Korea. Later, he would utilize his close contacts within the provincial government for his trade with North Korea. Interviewee C was a standard private importer and exporter.

The content of the interviews are also broadly consistent with the expectations regarding personalist regimes. When asked to characterize their trading business with North Korea and their counterparts they responded that it was a "casino," (interviewee C) and that their North Korean counterparts as either "frauds" (interviewee C) or "thieves" (interviewee D). This may seem surprising given that these were relatively successful businesses. On the other hand, they could have lasted longer than most in their dealings with North Korea because they dealt with their counterparts under these assumptions.

Asked to identify why the North Korean side "had no credibility" (interviewee C), and why one could "not trust them while doing business with them," (Interviewee B) there were a number of common reasons cited. First was the lack of continuity and predictability with regards to the person or the trading company they were dealing with. Counterparts could change without notice and the agreements that had been in place be invalidated at any time. The length of time, or the number of transactions that had taken previously with a particular partner didn't seem to matter. Even if you had been involved in business with a particular counterpart "for 15 to 20 years," stated interviewee B, the one with the most experience doing business with the North Koreans, they could be "*told*" to "give it (the business) to someone else." All they would get in return, according to interviewee C, was the "word that the person (in charge) had changed and that would be it." On the follow up question as to why the North Koreans would take such measures even when it went against their business interests, interviewee B replied that trust was important for the North Korean side too but that for their counterparts the "trust of the party took priority." The "directive from the General (Kim Jong-il)" was most important and once it came, agreements regarding business could be annulled as it became "merged with other businesses or given to someone else to manage."

Second, even when an agreement was in place with a particular counterpart, the interviewees couldn't be sure whether it would be honored. Interviewee A and B both cited multiple commitments to different buyers that the North Koreans made and then didn't honor. At times, the reason

that the agreement couldn't be honored would be the regime's political calendar. Interviewee A gave the example of the workers and machinery at the factory where his orders were fulfilled at times being mobilized for domestic political events and this job being given priority over other orders. For example, if the party decided on supplying new school uniforms to students to commemorate an important political event, the orders from A would get pushed back until the school uniforms were finished. Due to the nature of the clothing industry, in which meeting deadlines tailored to seasonal and fashion trends was important, this was a source of "many difficulties." Interviewee B also cited examples of multiple agreements that couldn't be honored being an issue with the North Koreans.

Lastly, a more fundamental reason two of the traders pointed to was that, with the North Koreans, even the most basic benchmarks for measuring and quantifying tradeable goods were not consistent across transactions. Interviewee D highlighted the arbitrary nature of the transactions that took place in the barter trade that characterized much of cross border trade between North Korea and China. He pointed to the lack of "rules" and lamented that "a system hadn't caught hold" yet and characterized what was going on as "random trading." North Korean traders would "use mass as the pricing unit when it was favorable to them and weight when it was more advantageous," changing the standards "day by day." Interviewee C reiterated the same point more pithily, stating that the North Koreans had "different rulers (measurements) over there."

Such behavior and traits on the North Korean side are characteristic of a short time horizon and at same time forces upon those businesses dealing with them to adopt the same horizon as well. The lack of formal enforcement mechanisms for agreements, or other institutions that can provide predictability or consistency in their absence made this inevitable when a sudden change of personnel or a directive from above and a sudden stop to the business could not be ruled out. Even if there was stability in the relationship with the counterpart, there were no legal or dispute resolution measures if the other side violated the terms of one or refused to abide by a unified and consistent basis for measurement of goods. It was only interviewee D, with more direct political relations between the provincial government and the North Korean side, that was able to count on some type of stability and predictability in his dealings with the North.

Responding to the question whether during the time they had dealt with North Korea, there had

been improvements in the level of predictability or level of trust in their dealings with the North Koreans, all unequivocally stated that the North Korea side had not changed during the time that they had dealt with them. Among the main reasons the interviewees pointed to for these institutions not developing and the continued prioritizing of short term gains at the cost of long term benefits was that commercial needs were being subjugated to political needs. Factories could be mobilized for political commitments to the population, personell changed and trading companies reorganized for internal political needs.

Such lack of change on the North Korean side did not necessarily preclude, however, a willingness to do business with the North. Of the four, only C was actively planning to phase out trade with the North Koreans. Interviewee A was pessimistic about his business with North Korea but the reason was the sanctions imposed by the Southern government. His business had taken a direct hit with the 5.24 measures when he could no longer import clothing made in North Korea into South Korea without tariffs nor deal directly with North Korean counterparts to export to other countries.<sup>15</sup> He remained of the opinion that despite all the problems with doing business in North Korea outlined above, the labor costs and the skill-level of the North Korean workers made it a viable business opportunity if the sanctions were lifted. Interviewee B saw no change in the short-term regarding the scale of his dealings with the North. Only interviewee D, the only one with previous experience and contacts within the Jilin provincial government, was planning to expand his ventures within North Korea. He conceded though the special nature of his position, stating that in the past he had attempted the barter trade in the Dandong region (the form that most of trade between the China and North Korea take) and found dealing with the North Koreans in that setting to be impossible and had given up.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

While those advocating for more economic engagement with North Korea argue that market forces can create incentives for actors in North Korea to create more stable structures/institutions for

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<sup>15</sup>He characterized himself as on a “sinking boat, with no choice but to keep going.”

further economic exchanges, the theory presented here suggests that this is unlikely in the case of long-lasting personalist regimes. The reason is not because the North Korean regime has an inherent interest in prolonging or instigating conflict in the interests of domestic stability. Rather, famines caused by external shocks such as adverse weather or war that would plausibly lead to domestic instability, in general do not lead to higher frequencies of high-intensity conflict that would rally the population in support of the regime or divert attention away from the hunger. Rather, it is because the very survival of these regimes depends (and has depended), in large part, on maintaining the private nature of the benefits from economic exchanges with the outside world in order to divert them for the interests of the regime (leader).

Consistent with the claim that the logic of regime survival takes priority for these regimes in international trade, one of the consistent findings from surveys and interviews of businesses and investors dealing with North Korea is that despite variation in the industries and length of commerce, the investors/traders uniformly pointed to the lack of increased institutionalization of commerce and investment over time. Moreover, interviews of such traders pointed to arbitrary changes regarding the personnel of partner trading companies and the terms of the orders or investments at the behest of the regime as a source of added uncertainty. Extreme prioritization of short term gains was how the North Koreans responded under such conditions, to the extent that even basic units of measurements were subject to manipulation and negotiation.

However, the continued willingness of most of the businesses interviewed to trade with the North Koreans indicates that the regime has not closed off all profit making opportunities for foreign traders and investors. Along with its ability to terrorize the domestic populace, balancing the need to limit the loss of control over the benefits of trade from the institutions that increasing transactions call for with the need to nevertheless keep the benefits from trade and investment flows at a certain level may partially explain the regime's longevity in power. This presents a dilemma for advocates of economic engagement toward North Korea, for it means that economic exchanges are unlikely to reach the level of institutionalization need for it to moderate its behavior, while it may be contributing to the regime's staying power.



## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusion

The causes of conflict and the conditions for peace between nations remains an important question for the field of international relations. From the costs of conflict, the nature of the interaction and the interests at stake, as well as the level of trust between states, scholars have attempted to clarify the factors that lead to peace and the obstacles to it.<sup>1</sup> However, these may be secondary questions if there are domestic political interests that benefit from conflict. Whether concerns about domestic stability drive foreign policy decisions regarding conflict, therefore, is a critical question to address regarding the question of peace and war between nations.

This dissertation has addressed the argument that there may not be room for cooperation in relations with (and in between) states with authoritarian systems of rule because conflicts may strengthen their hold on power. To this end, chapters 2 through 4 respectively raised the question of 1) whether authoritarian regime benefit in terms of their duration in power from conflict, 2) if not, whether conflicts stabilize domestic politics by moderating the violence involved during regime transitions (in terms of how they fall), and also 3) whether this means that conflicts stabilize domestic politics by decreasing the human costs during the fall of authoritarian regimes.

It has found that conflict does not, in general, benefit authoritarian rulers in terms of their duration in power. An adverse security environment actually makes personalist regimes more vulnerable to internal challenges and decreases their time in power. For military and single party regimes the security environment has no effect on their longevity. The lack of benefits that authoritarian forms of rule derive from conflicts in terms of their hold on power suggests that there is

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<sup>1</sup>James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, Vol. 49., No. 3, 1995.; Arthur A. Stein, *Why Nations Cooperate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).; Deborah Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

no inherent interest in instigating, prolonging, or escalating conflict for these regime. Therefore “strategies of engagement” aimed at arriving at a negotiated solution to outstanding differences should not be precluded from a state’s foreign policy options toward an authoritarian regime.

For military regimes, however, conflict stabilizes domestic politics in a way that had not been systematically examined previously. The experience of international conflicts moderates the use of violence by relevant actors under military rule, thereby resulting in orderly and peaceful transitions of power that are (usually) negotiated and do not involve non-institutional means such as insurgencies or mass uprisings. A conflict-prone external environment increases the incentives for the military to act in unison and when facing discontent at the regime, it was hypothesized, military leaders are more likely to choose a return to the barracks when facing the prospects of mass protests or armed insurgencies in a tense security environment. This is because potential divisions within the military over the response to the unrest become more costly.

Similarly, within a threatening security environment, the threat that wielding deadly force in an effort to retain power poses to the unity of the armed forces moderates the actions of the military and lowers the chances of force being used in ways that kill. Thus casualty levels are lower within a conflict-prone security environment for military regimes compared to those that are not. Such an effect of the security environment, whether it is in the mode of regime breakdown or the level of casualties during the breakdown, are not found in other forms of authoritarian regimes.

A case study of North Korea’s conflict behavior since the establishment of the regime explored implications of the findings from previous chapters. Although its longevity makes it an outlier in terms of personalist regimes in conflict-ridden security environments, examining its conflict behavior during periods of famine - when the benefits from a conflict would be highest in terms of domestic stability - did not suggest that the regime was attempting to utilize conflicts for domestic political purposes. If anything, it showed a moderation during such periods compared to previous and subsequent periods. This behavior is consistent with the findings from Chapter 2 that personalist regimes do not benefit from conflicts abroad. That one of the longest-surviving personalist regimes has not utilized conflicts to extend its time in power gives added weight to the argument that such regimes do not calculate that there is something to gain from conflicts. Through surveys of businessmen involved in trade with North Korea, the chapter also attempted to assess alternative

ways through which the regime might bolster its position in power: by providing private benefits from international trade for its supporters. Why this bodes ill for the proponents of economic engagement with the regime is explored in the chapter as well.

These findings present a set of difficult choices for policymakers. While conflict is not inevitable with any type of authoritarian regime, a set of trade-offs exists for most regimes. The nature and content of such trade-offs depends on the type of regime. For those countries involved in long-running disputes with a personalist authoritarian regime, a policy of sustained pressure that risk conflicts may lead to a shorter duration in power for the regime. However, when personalist regimes fall, the breakdown tends to be violent and entail the highest amount of casualties. This has potentially adverse long-running consequences regarding the stability of the political order. Therefore a policy of pressure may, in effect, be hastening mass casualties and long-term instability.

Military regimes in a conflict-prone environment, on the other hand, are much more likely to transition peacefully given the collapse of the regime. High levels of casualties and long-term instability are less likely under a high-threat security environment. Therefore, counter-intuitively, a relaxation of tensions actually leads to a higher chance that the process of regime change will be violent and bloody. At the same time, external conflicts do not have the effect of making a fall for the regime more likely that they do for personalist regimes. For single party regimes, there seems to be no effect that a conflict-prone environment has either on regime longevity or the level of turbulence involved during regime transitions.

Besides shedding light on how domestic politics interacts with the security environment and a number of trade-offs that policy toward authoritarian regimes face, the dissertation also opens up new avenues of research. While the dissertation has analyzed what the implications of the security environment are for how long the regime lasts and how violent the transition process will be when that regime falls, it does not address the question what effect the conflict environment has on the nature of subsequent regimes that rise to power afterwards. Is it more likely to be a democracy or another authoritarian regime? How stable will the regime that follows the fall be? What effect does a violent transition have on the character of subsequent regimes? These are all questions that are pertinent not just for the academic literature on authoritarian rule and democratization, but for

policy as well.

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