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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4pb7x4kq>

### Journal

Journal of Global Security Studies, 7(4)

### ISSN

2057-3170

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### Publication Date

2022-10-31

### DOI

10.1093/jogss/ogac026

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# Slow Rolls, Shoulder-Taps, and Coups: Building a Research Program in Military Dissent Across Regime Types

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## Abstract

This article advances a research program in military dissent, contributing to growing scholarly interest in the subject. It first outlines a variety of “tactics of dissent,” discriminating among them according to the pathway through which they shape political leaders’ decisions and the related audiences and objectives of the method. These sets of tactics are domestic politics, bureaucratic, coercive, and organizational. The article illustrates these tactics with examples from across advanced democracies, developing democracies and autocracies, and with lengthier treatments of Brazil, Egypt, and the U.S. In so doing, the article helps bridge subfield divides in the study of civil-military relations, arguing that neglecting these tactics truncates variation in the character and intensity of dissent within and across regime types. In addition, it outlines several questions to guide future research, including efforts to better understand the metrics and drivers of dissent, the efficacy of these tactics in undermining civilian initiatives and their larger consequences for democracy and civil-military relations.

## Resumen

Este artículo desarrolla un programa de investigación sobre la disidencia militar, contribuyendo al creciente interés académico en el tema. En primer lugar, delinea una variedad de «tácticas de disidencia», discriminándolas según la vía a través de la cual conforman las decisiones de los líderes políticos, así como sus respectivas audiencias y los objetivos del método. Estos conjuntos de tácticas incluyen la política interna, así como tácticas burocráticas, coercitivas y organizativas. Estas tácticas se ilustran con ejemplos de distintas democracias avanzadas, democracias en desarrollo y autocracias, y con un foco más extenso en Brasil, Egipto y los Estados Unidos. De esta forma, el artículo ayuda a salvar la distancia de las divisiones de subcampo en el estudio de las relaciones entre civiles y militares, argumentando que el hecho de pasar por alto estas tácticas restringe la variación en el carácter de la intensidad de la disidencia dentro y entre los tipos de régimen. Además, delinea varias cuestiones para orientar la investigación futura, incluidos los esfuerzos para comprender mejor los parámetros y los impulsores de la disidencia, la eficacia de estas tácticas para socavar las iniciativas civiles y sus consecuencias más amplias para la democracia y las relaciones entre civiles y militares.

## Résumé

Le présent article s’inscrit dans un programme de recherche sur la dissidence militaire, en apportant sa contribution à l’intérêt grandissant du monde scientifique pour le sujet. Il résume tout d’abord plusieurs « tactiques de dissidence » en les différenciant suivant le mode par lequel elles influencent les décisions des dirigeants politiques, ainsi que les destinataires et les objectifs correspondants

de la méthode. Ces ensembles de tactiques sont la politique nationale, la bureaucratie, la force et l'organisation. Cet article illustre ces tactiques avec des exemples tirés de démocraties avancées, de démocraties en voie de développement et d'autocraties, avec des développements plus longs sur le Brésil, l'Égypte et les États-Unis. Il aide ainsi à combler les fractures entre les sous-domaines dans l'étude des relations entre civils et militaires, en soutenant que le fait de négliger ces tactiques méconnaît la variation du caractère d'intensité de la dissidence au sein et à travers les types de régime. Par ailleurs, il esquisse plusieurs questions afin d'orienter les recherches futures, en s'efforçant notamment de mieux comprendre les indicateurs et les facteurs de dissidence, l'efficacité de ces tactiques pour contrecarrer les initiatives civiles et, plus largement, leurs conséquences pour la démocratie et les relations entre civils et militaires.

**Keywords:** military dissent, coups, military tactics, coercion

**Palabras clave:** Disidencia militar, golpes de estado, tácticas militares, coercion

**Mots clés:** dissidence militaire, coups d'État, tactiques militaires, force

## Introduction

In June 2020, President Donald Trump captured headlines when he floated the idea of deploying 10,000 active-duty military forces to confront social justice protests taking place across the United States. In response, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Mark Milley and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper contacted lawmakers to voice their concerns about the military being used in a politicized fashion. Ultimately, after Esper openly voiced skepticism about the need for active-duty forces to police protests, Trump retreated and the troops were not sent (Brooks and Robinson 2020). Similarly, in Chile, during 2019 mass protests, military leaders sought to clarify statements by the president implying that he would order the military to repress protests, setting the agenda for what it would and would not do (Pion-Berlin and Ivey 2021). In Tunisia, during the Arab Spring, the military refused to do more than protect infrastructure and carry out tasks outlined in the Constitution, thereby signaling its opposition to executing repression on behalf of the regime (Jebnoun 2014; Bou Nassif 2021). Remarkably, in none of these cases does it appear that the political leader expressly issued—and the military overtly defied—an order that it use force against protesters. In fact, by using other means of dissent, the military altered the political situation in a manner that negated the need for it to overtly defy such an order.

While these examples focus on military resistance to repressing mass protests, they illustrate a broader point about the character of military dissent: only sometimes does it manifest in overt insubordination in the form of a refusal to follow an explicit order, or worse, in a coercive threat against the state. Indeed, in this article, we argue that military dissent has a variety of empirical incarna-

tions, which we term tactics of dissent. We divide these tactics into four categories, discriminating them according to the mechanisms through which they shape political leaders' decisions or outcomes. These are domestic politics, bureaucratic, coercive, and organizational (described below).

To illustrate the typology, we provide examples from across different regime types. We then provide more focused illustrations of how four tactics have been employed in the contemporary U.S., Brazil, and Egypt. These incidents further reinforce the point that diverse tactics of dissent are employed by the military in a single state or regime, as well as underscore the similarity of measures that are commonly employed across them.

This article makes three main contributions to the study of military dissent. First, it seeks to provide an expansive typology of the variety of potential tactics, while embedding them in the larger analytical logic through which they operate to exert pressure or impose costs on political leaders. Recent years, as we review below, have seen growing interest in understanding the most egregious forms of dissent, such as coups (Singh 2014; Harkness 2018; De Bruin 2020; Powell and Thyne 2011), and military defection (Pion-Berlin, Esparza and Grisham 2014; Lee 2015; Brooks 2018). Yet, these forms of dissent are commonly treated as discrete expressions and are largely studied in isolation, rather than considered as components of a repertoire of tactics. Scholars have also begun to study alternative, often less spectacular tactics of dissent (Beliakova 2021; Hundman 2021; Pion-Berlin and Ivey 2021). Even so, they tend to focus on a subset of methods, whereas this article's typology aims to be comprehensive in scope.

Second, the article seeks to help bridge subfield divides within the study of civil-military relations (Brooks 2019). Today, some scholars specialize in the study of non-democracies and primarily emphasize the military's coercive capacity to upend regimes through coups and the like. Others focus primarily on established or developing democracies. They tend to emphasize how the military draws influence from sources other than its coercive capacity to obstruct civilian control or influence policy, through behind the scenes bargaining over prerogatives, bureaucratic maneuvering or forays into domestic politics. In reality, though, as we illustrate in this article, all these tools of dissent are available and occur across three main regime types: advanced democracies, developing democracies, and autocracies.

Finally, we seek to help advance a larger research program on military dissent. In building this research program, we hope to encourage future scholars to bridge subfield divides and explore commonalities and differences in the patterns of dissent that occur across regime types.

The first section of this article reviews the current scholarship on military dissent and disobedience. It discusses the four tactical approaches, illustrating their use with country examples, followed by more detailed case analyses of Brazil, Egypt, and the U.S. A penultimate section discusses lessons for growing a research program on military dissent followed by a concluding summary.

## Military Dissent in the Scholarly Literature

Perhaps the most long-standing and intensively studied expression of military dissent is the military coup, which became a major topic of interest beginning in the 1960s (Thompson 1973; Nordlinger 1977; Finer 1988). Scholarly attention, however, subsequently waned, concomitant with the waves of democratization that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. In the last decade, the study of coups has experienced a revival with new large-n empirical work and field research (De Bruin 2020; Powell and Thyne 2011; Singh 2014; Harkness 2018). This research has yielded many important insights; coups are important phenomena to study, given the dramatic effect they have on regime durability. Nevertheless, scholars at times reduce the military's power to its coercive ability, especially in autocracies, neglecting the other sources of power militaries enjoy and the tactics they employ to exploit it when contesting political decisions or challenging their leadership. Focusing only on coups as the empirical expression of opposition to political leaders truncates variation in the sources and character of military dissent; it can lead to a significant undercount

of actual acts of dissent and their potential consequences (Croissant et al. 2010; Brooks 2019; Pion-Berlin & Ivey 2021).

In democracies, scholars have more commonly focused on challenges to civilian control, rather than on violent efforts to displace the government. Here there has been more appreciation of the sources of military power as originating in factors other than its coercive resources. A growing body of scholarship explores the implications of a military's social esteem and how that effects, via elite cues, public opinion about the use of force and other policy issues (Golby, Feaver and Dropp 2018; Robinson 2018; Krebs and Ralston 2020). Since the 1990s scholars of the U.S. have explored how military leaders make public statements that increase the domestic costs leaders bear for contravening military advice (Kohn 1994). Brooks (2009) has outlined a variety of forms of political activism by the military in democracies. Another body of comparative scholarship has explored how the military's residual influence following democratization shapes the institutions of civilian control (Pion-Berlin 1997; Stepan 1988). Yet, while important, these scholars have been focused on particular issues and expressions of military power in their empirical analyses.

More recently, Hundman (2021) has offered an important advancement by discriminating among different forms of dissent, and theorizing about how individual characteristics and interpersonal relationships can yield the refinement of orders, or exit from the military. He also highlights the importance of how obedience is expressed, noting that, if grudgingly undertaken versus positively embraced, compliance can have pernicious consequences. Hundman's innovative theory, however, mostly focuses on the methods of dissent available to individuals, while we offer a more expansive typology of dissent tactics available to military leaders and organizations. Also, while Beliakova (2021) offers a typology of challenges to civilian control, her categories tend to combine several tactics, without fully discriminating among them, while also neglecting other methods upon which militaries rely.

Another body of scholarship, including Feaver (2003) draws from principal-agent theory, to emphasize dissent in the form of "shirking" by obstructing implementation of civilian directives or influencing civilian decision-making. Historically based analyses, such as Krepinevich's (1986) study of military resistance to the adoption of counterinsurgency methods in the 1960s during the U.S. Vietnam War, speak to the efficacy of such tactics of resistance. More colloquially, observers today refer to incidents of slow-rolling, foot-dragging, or what Phil Carter (2017) calls "respectful disobedience" to capture incidents in which the military has pushed

back on civilian policy initiatives. Yet here too efforts to parse these bureaucratic tactics remain limited, with only a generalized characterization of the variety of these mechanisms. For example, slow-rolling (efforts to delay implementation) can occur through different means of dissent (Hundman 2021). Similarly, studies that explore bureaucratic maneuvering, political activism, and the military's domestic use of coercive power (coups), remain largely disconnected and divided among those who study democracies and non-democracies. These phenomena are often treated as discrete domains, with less emphasis on how they might interact, complement, or substitute for one another.

This point is worth emphasizing to see the potential value of a more comprehensive treatment of dissent. By focusing only on one form, scholars may undercount the frequency in which militaries push back on civilian initiatives. They may observe that civil-military relations are quiescent, when in fact dissent is being channeled and shaping outcomes through alternative mechanisms, potentially leading to a miscoding of important events. In the case of Tunisia in 2011, for example, scholars have assumed that because the military did not overtly defy an order to fire on protesters, it remained loyal during the regime crisis (Pachon 2014). However, this interpretation, based on overt insubordination as the metric for dissent, misses the ways that the Tunisian military resisted efforts to implicate it in a repressive response (Jebnoun 2014; Brooks 2022); in addition, it neglects the military's use of its coercive resources to prevent the Ben Ali regime from rehabilitating itself and resuming office (Brooks and White 2022). In other words, as this example illustrates, without a fuller appreciation of the character of dissent and how it varies, scholars may overlook the variety and frequency of its incidence—with potentially profound implications for how they understand world events.

### Tactics of Dissent: Definitions and Examples

In this article, we use the term “military dissent” to refer to military leaders' efforts to resist political leaders' initiatives related to the missions, deployments, activities, resources, or organization of the military. Tactics of dissent are the specific mechanisms through which resistance is expressed; they are *how* military leaders engage in resistance.

As mentioned, there are four sets of tactics we have identified. The first set derives from the military's attempt to influence a domestic audience, directed at shaping cit-

izens' opinions in general, or at mobilizing or building alliances with specific groups at elite and mass levels. The objective is to indirectly increase the costs to a political leader of pursuing a policy or military operation. The second set of tactics derive from the military's bureaucratic roles and capacity: its ability to exploit information asymmetries and use its role as implementer of civilian initiatives to either directly shape political leaders' decisions or to obstruct their preferred outcomes. The third category originates in the military's material and human resources, in the form of its direct control of troops, weapons, and equipment and the coercive capacity that follows from them; these tactics comprise military decisions to use or to withhold the use of force in opposition to political leaders and their goals. A final set of tactics derives from military leaders' administration of the military organization, access to institutional processes, and overall authority to influence preferences within the military and build internal constituencies in opposition to political leaders' initiatives. Much as the first set of domestic political tactics seeks to mobilize opposition within society, these organizational tactics seek to build resistance within the military. Specific mechanisms and goals are enumerated for each tactic, as shown in table 1.

We ground our typology in these mechanisms in part to illuminate the character of dissent tactics, but also to facilitate future theory building, consistent with the goal of expanding a research program on military dissent. Understanding how a particular set of tactics operates to produce pressure on political leaders' decisions and outcomes may enable future theorizing about the conditions under which they might be selected by military leaders, and when they prove efficacious, or not. We return to these issues in our discussion in the penultimate section below.

Before proceeding, three clarifications are warranted about the scope and character of the typology. First, we conceive of military dissent as aimed primarily at a segment of the political leadership, which is often a chief executive, but opponents within a legislature or influential elites in society can also be targets. Second, we emphasize the role of military leaders as the central agents of dissent who often presume to act on behalf of some segment of the military, if not for the organization as a whole. Even so, we acknowledge that military dissent can also occur within the ranks; lower-ranking officers can employ some of the tactics we outline to challenge the senior military leadership (Albrecht and Ohl 2016; Bou Nassif 2021; Hundman 2021). Third, while the typology is intended to be comprehensive, it is not necessarily exhaustive. Scholars might in the future identify additional

**Table 1.** Military dissent tactics, mechanisms, goals, and cases

<i>Type of tactic</i>	<i>Tactic mechanism</i>	<i>Tactic goal</i>	<i>Where tactic used</i>
Domestic political: Making public statements: rebukes, clarifications, revelations	Public outreach to influence general citizenry	Raise public issue salience; indirectly increase costs to a leader for pursuing a policy; enhance public accountability	AD: U.S., Great Britain, DD: Chile, Colombia, Brazil, A: Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan
Alliance building and pressure politics: lobbying, shoulder tapping	Public outreach to influence specific groups	Use allies to enhance leverage over political leaders	AD: U.S., DD: Chile, Brazil, A: Egypt
Bureaucratic: Concealing, manipulating, obstructing or delaying inside the executive bureaucracy	Exploit information asymmetries and bureaucratic position	Affect policy advice and decision-making, implementation; set policy agendas	AD: U.S., Britain, India, DD: Senegal, A: Russia
Coercive: Exploiting control over material and human resources	Use or withhold the use of force	Challenge, obstruct political leaders and their decisions	AD: France, U.S., India, DD: Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, A: Tunisia, Egypt, Georgia
Organizational: Administering the military organization	Manipulate incentives, make statements to troops	Forge unity, repair divisions to better influence political leaders and their decisions	AD: U.S., DD: Argentina, A: Egypt, Iran, Tunisia

AD = Advanced Democracy; DD = Developing Democracy; A = Autocracy

tactics and mechanisms. Still, we anticipate that the four categories and constituent tactics are encompassing of a broad array of military dissent across three major regime types. See [table 1](#) for a summary.

### Domestic Political Tactics

The first set of tactics works by shaping the domestic political costs and risks that political leaders experience when pursuing a particular policy or action; they do so by endeavoring to influence public opinion, or by mobilizing elites or societal groups to exert pressure on legislators or the executive branch.

There are several tactics that rely on these domestic political mechanisms to exert pressure on politicians and policymakers. First, military leaders can make public appeals or statements that take exception to official policy or political leaders' assertions, thereby potentially increasing the cost of pursuing a policy. These statements can cause them to reverse course if they believe that the public would punish them at the ballot box for defying military opinion, or if the dissent causes defections by other elites or societal groups essential to retaining office or seeing through legislative priorities. Leaders can also anticipate the costs that might accrue from military dissent and conform their actions to military preferences in advance.

Public statements of dissent vary empirically. They may be tantamount to direct rebukes of a country's president or the commander-in-chief, and explicit criticism of his or her policy or strategic choices. These rebukes may occur through interviews, comments or leaks to the press, or opinion writing. They may be narrowly focused on specific policy debates on a discrete issue related to armed conflict or foreign policy or may encompass more expansive commentary on policy issues beyond the military domain, or on the character of political leaders more broadly. For example, a prominent former British Army Chief of Staff, Richard Dannant has made waves for his political commentary about policy issues ([Sturcke 2009](#)). These comments may also consist of direct broadsides against a leader ([Trotta 2019](#); [Brooks and Robinson 2020](#)). Examples include then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell's public statements opposing U.S. intervention in the Bosnian civil-war during the 1992 presidential campaign season, in which Bill Clinton was running on a platform that was sympathetic to intervention ([Kohn 1994](#)). Similarly, in 2006, half a dozen retired generals publicly called for the resignation of President George W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld over his handling of the Iraqi War, particularly his dismissal of the views of military skeptics ([Desch 2007](#)). After World War I, Army Brigadier General Billy Mitchell

engaged in an extensive publicity campaign aimed at opponents to establishing the Air Force as a separate service (Brooks 2009, 218).

Military leaders themselves may also threaten to resign as a way of rebuking the leadership skills or policies of a political leader (Shields 2017). The British military reaction to the 1914 Home Rule law passed by the parliament that granted Ireland self government illustrates the tactic. The government was prepared to use force to implement the measure, but the commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade and seventy-five officers threatened to resign rather than comply, and the government retreated (Sweetman 1986).

Alternatively, military leaders may not go so far as to admonish their political leaders or directly criticize their policies, but instead attempt to clarify or reinterpret their remarks. These clarificatory statements signal to the public the military's stance on a particular issue and therefore set the agenda as to what the military is and is not prepared to do. As mentioned, in Chile, mass demonstrations took place in 2019, sparked by an increase in metro fares while reflecting a deeper underlying malaise over the neo-liberal economic model. President Sebastián Piñera declared Chile to be "at war with a powerful enemy" against "delinquents," and ordered police and troops to confront the demonstrators. Such harsh rhetoric had not been used since the Pinochet dictatorship, conjuring up frightening reminders among voters of state terror. But the day after the President's remarks, Army Commander General Javier Iturriaga, clarified, "the truth is, I am not at war with anyone" (Pion-Berlin and Ivey 2021). This clarification eased public fears and led to Chile's civilian defense minister to in essence undercut the president's remarks by instructing troops to remain calm and not fire on protesters.

Third, militaries can "blow the whistle" by issuing an alert to the public or to other civilian principals about dangerous, or potentially criminal conduct undertaken by them. Revelations to the media of wrongdoing can constrain a president who is sensitive to voter and legislative concerns about unethical behavior, commission of human rights abuses, or foreign policy mistakes. In Colombia, for example, the military co-operated with journalists to reveal a troubling defense policy that would have awarded bonuses based on the number of enemy combatants killed. This echoed a previous plan where, the armed forces, unable to inflict a sufficient number of casualties on actual insurgents lured non-combatants with the promise of work, executed them, and dressed them as enemy combatants. Military whistleblowing produced quick results, forcing the administration to publicly acknowledge the policy's existence, fol-

lowed by its reversal of the policy entirely (Pion-Berlin and Ivey 2021).

A fourth tactic involves mobilizing societal constituencies or shoulder-tapping political elites (Brooks 2009). These efforts involve overt solicitations and liaisons with key leaders of social movements or societal groups, or at elite levels, the heads of political parties and lawmakers to catalyze opposition to a particular policy or civilian decision.

For example, for decades, the Chilean military, wishing to preserve its influence following the transition to democracy, forged alliances with that country's two principal right-wing political parties, Renovación Nacional and Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI). Together with their political party allies, they exerted enough pressure behind the scenes to stymie the center-left parties from passing legislation that would have scrapped the Copper law—an automatic transfer of copper export revenues into military coffers worth hundreds of millions of dollars annually (Grimes and Pion-Berlin 2019).

In Brazil, the armed forces are legally entitled to lobby the Congress and have done so since the return of Brazilian democracy in 1985. They appoint congressional liaisons who have offices inside the congressional building and who attempt to persuade legislators to support their interests. They are, according to Maria Helena de Castro Santos (2004), playing by the same democratic rules of the game as civilian lobbyists. In an example of shoulder tapping, General Eduardo Villas Bôas, former army commander testified before Congress to pressure for legislation to transfer human rights cases arising from public security missions, from civilian to military courts (Vieria 2017). In October 2017, the army got its wish as then-President Michel Temer signed the bill into law, altering the military penal code.

### Bureaucratic Maneuvering

A second set of mechanisms originate in the military's bureaucratic and institutional roles in formulating and implementing decisions related to the use of force and the military's organizational character. Specifically, these bureaucratic maneuvers depend on the information asymmetries that originate from the military's expertise in armed conflict, as well as leaders' insight into the state of the military institution and direct access to information *via* their daily administration of the military, as well as practical roles in translating high-level decisions into discrete policies.

One tactic involves actively and intentionally concealing information. Because militaries are closed institutions with a near monopoly on certain kinds of evidence, which

complicates monitoring, they have opportunities to conceal or shape the dissemination of information from civilians in order to affect policy outcomes. In peacetime, the military enjoys informational advantages about the health and activities of the organization. In war zones, they can hide information about mistakes, setbacks, or they can make unsubstantiated claims that they are succeeding. This concealment constitutes dissent, if, for example, it pushes back on skeptics of the wartime effort, prolongs the war effort, or skews the debate about strategy and political aims in the war. Thus, during the First World War, British military general Douglas Haig was known to be especially evasive and to misrepresent developments and failures in major large-scale offensives on the Western Front in meetings with politicians on the War Policy Committee (Brooks 2008).

In the U.S., similarly, some reports suggest that the Pentagon has not revealed that army and navy special operations units continue to provide training to surrogate forces abroad, despite evidence those forces have been involved in ongoing atrocities in countries such as Colombia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. Such training would constitute concealment from the Congress, which is responsible for oversight on such operations. It would also be in violation of the Leahy Law, which prohibits military assistance to foreign security forces that have engaged in human rights abuses (Turse 2021).

Second, in addition to active concealment, militaries may delay or obstruct information flow. Typical of most authoritarian states that still have parliaments, Russia's military is not subject to credible, legislative oversight (Barany 2007). The relevant defense committees have been dominated by Putin's United Russia party and chaired by high-ranking armed forces officials themselves. Budgets are concealed under secrecy provisions, and national defense budgets in Russia have the highest secrecy levels of all departments. The military cites national security as the basis for the concealment, and if civilian parliamentarians want access to classified material, they have to sign a secrecy act, which allows them to view such material *only* if they agree to have their foreign travel restricted. Most decide to forgo the committee assignment.

In addition, one way of shaping the decision-making context is to finesse which options are presented to leaders or how they are evaluated in the strategic assessment process. For example, during his 2009 review of the war in Afghanistan, President Obama sought to have fully developed counterterrorism options presented to him. Then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, head of U.S. Central Command, General David Petraeus, and head of NATO forces in

Afghanistan, Stanley McChrystal, resisted providing a fully fleshed counterterrorism option during the deliberations, instead privileging an intensified counterinsurgency option (Brooks 2020).

Military personnel may also slow implementation by seeking internal clarification about the legality or meaning of different orders, or they may refine orders, altering how they are executed, without overtly challenging their premise (Hundman 2021). Dan Maurer (2020) describes how when faced with an order that is legally or ethically questionable, military leaders may seek detailed justifications, as a means of legal dissent. They can also use the law as a rhetorical shield in legislative debates for missions they oppose, as the U.S. military did in the 1990s when it opposed involvement in the U.S.'s so-called "War on Drugs" (Hodges 2018).

A final tactic relies on the role of the military bureaucracy in implementing policy decisions. An intriguing example of dissent along these lines occurred in Senegal, when the military sought to resist President Abdoulaye Wade's efforts to politicize the military in the 2000s. In order to advance personal allies, Wade created a list of officers he favored for general officer and presented it to the military. Rather than challenge him directly, however, the armed forces simply removed several of the names. Subsequently, when Wade did succeed in promoting some of his favorites, the military selected them for non-combat jobs and positioned them for compulsory retirement after short tenures (Matisek 2019, 69–70).

### Using Or Withholding Coercive Force

A third set of tactics originates in the military's physical resources and specifically access to troops, weapons, and equipment. In this case, the military uses its proximate control and role as implementer of use of force decisions to challenge political decisions, by either utilizing its coercive capacity, or refraining from doing so in various ways.

Coups are the most familiar and extreme form of resistance that relies on physical resources, as soldiers are commanded to storm a presidential palace and remove the incumbent. Though coups are commonly associated with developing democracies or dictatorships, they have been attempted in advanced democracies as well. France, during the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, was the victim of a coup attempt in 1961. A group of officers conspired to thwart de Gaulle's intent on withdrawing French troops from Algeria in order to end France's colonial foothold in northern Africa. The plot failed as the president made an impassioned speech denouncing the conspirators and rallying loyal troops and citizens alike to successfully thwart the coup (Horne 1977). More



recently, several retired French generals signed a public letter to Prime Minister Macron warning that “fantastic partisans” were sparking a civil war in France and intimating a coup might be necessary; a second follow-up letter included the anonymous endorsement of some active duty officers (French Generals, 2021).

Coups, which were common back in the 1960s and 1970s, have become rarer over time (Powell and Thyne 2011). Even so, a history of coup-making can allow militaries to credibly threaten intervention as a way of inducing politicians to adopt policies they approve of without having to actually deploy their forces, or simply obliquely and menacingly refer to the “cost” of violating military preferences. In Brazil, a key general issued a veiled threat about the prospects of a return to rule by the leftist Workers Party should former President Lula be allowed to run again in 2018. The high court then ruled against Lula, who was imprisoned and barred from campaigning (Brooks 2018).

Alternatively, the military can refrain from using its store of physical capacity. Militaries, for example, can directly refuse to use their forces to enforce order in the face of mass protests or civil disturbances, or signal in advance that they would disobey orders should they be issued. Similarly, in an intrastate or interstate war, military personnel can refuse orders to deploy or to advance in military operations. Specific tactics that can be used in efforts to resist the employment of coercive force in war can range from direct insubordination and defiance of orders by senior leaders on behalf of the organization to military personnel engaging in desertion, fratricide, and sabotage as a means of withholding their individual contributions to a war. During the Vietnam War, for example, incidents of these kind within the U.S. armed forces numbered in the hundreds across all service branches (Military History Now 2013).

Military dissent over the repression of protests has received renewed interest following mass demonstrations in the former Soviet Republics, the Middle Eastern States, and most recently in South America. It occurred in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), and Ukraine (2004) in what were known as the color revolutions, during the Arab uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia (2011), and in the South American countries of Argentina (2001), Ecuador (2005), and Bolivia (2019). In Georgia (which was a competitive authoritarian regime at the time; Levitsky and Way (2010) the fate of President Eduard Shevardnadze was sealed by the refusal of the army, police, and presidential guards to suppress mass demonstrations that were sparked by allegations of electoral fraud. Protesters met no resistance from police who stepped aside as they stormed the parliament, forcing Shevardnadze to flee while the army stayed

in the barracks (Fairbanks 2004; Jones 2009). And in democratic Bolivia, 2019, huge protests erupted when the Organization of American States found irregularities in the computing of votes during presidential elections, enough to cast doubt on the validity of the results. President Morales asked the military to step in to quell the uprising, and it refused. When Morales then suggested he might be a candidate in new elections, the military advised him to step aside, which he did (Pion-Berlin and Acacio 2022). In fact, in nearly every case where a president (and his government) has fallen from power as a consequence of a civilian uprising, the armed forces had refused his pleas for assistance by remaining quartered or on the sidelines (Pion-Berlin 2016).

Finally, military personnel may also engage in tactics whereby they interpret rules and regulations in a manner that slows or distorts implementation of a political leaders’ intent with respect to the use of force. In 1999, the U.S. JCS dragged its feet for weeks in sending supplies to NATO to stymie Clinton’s preference for ground operations against Serbia (Desch 2007). In the midst of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, military officials pushed back on the implementation of orders to provide equipment to assist in a UN effort, by quibbling over the cost of transporting the vehicles and who would fund it (Gordon 1994). In the 1970s, the Indian military avoided being complicit in Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s efforts to impose an emergency to stifle opposition by reverting to rules that narrowly interpreted its role as an external, war fighting force (Ramkumar 2021).

Similarly, when called to use force to disperse mass protests, sometimes militaries manage to steer between the Scylla of overt insubordination and the Charybdis of human-rights violations, by engaging in conditional compliance where they delay or adjust how they implement orders to engage in repression (Pion-Berlin and Acacio 2020). For instance, in Argentina in 1987, troops slowed down their approach to an army base that mutinous soldiers had taken over, thereby registering a protest to orders from above to crush the rebellion (Norden 1995). Conditional compliance also occurred in democratic Ecuador in October 2019 when massive indigenous protests erupted against austerity measures and the cancellation of governmental fuel subsidies. In response, President Leonid Moreno declared a state of exception and a curfew in major cities, ordering security forces to reestablish order. The military deployed as ordered but revised its tactics to avoid head-on collisions with protesters. Soldiers limited themselves to supporting roles, such as securing the perimeter in commercial areas and roads, while leaving the bulk of the repression to the police (Pion-Berlin and Acacio 2020).

### Building Resistance in the Military Organization

A final set of tactics arises from military leaders' direct administration of the military organization and their authority and status within the chain of command. Military leaders can exploit their status and institutional position to marshal resistance internally within the military to civilian policies and decisions. Unifying the ranks in opposition to a leader may enable military leaders to condition civilian choices and exercise a silent veto over their platforms and initiatives; presidents or prime ministers may be reluctant to alienate a major branch of the government and therefore conform their policies and priorities in advance to forestall it. In addition, building an internal constituency can fuel other forms of dissent, rendering bureaucratic tactics, such as slow-rolling, more appealing to military subordinates, or enabling a military leader to present the military as united in public appeals intended to influence popular debate.

A central tactic here involves military leaders' working internally to use their contacts and offices to reach out to subordinates and build coalitions or factions within the military ranks and officer corps to oppose civilian initiatives. Military leaders may tap particular commanders or officers to convey senior leadership opinion and influence their subordinates. For example, the Indian military has long benefitted from the 1958 Armed Forces Special Powers Act which grants it authority to maintain public order by taking police like coercive measures (shoot, kill, and arrest without warrant) in regions experiencing upheaval, without fear of prosecution. A government committee recommended the Act's repeal in 2004 over reports of human rights abuses at the hands of soldiers. Sustained army resistance spearheaded by military leaders proved persuasive in convincing political leaders not to pursue the repeal (Mukherjee 2020).

A second tactic relies on military leaders' hierarchical position and control of key resources to create incentives for subordinates to align themselves with the senior leadership's stance. Through their command, appointments, demotions, promotions, assignments, and the administration of perquisites and private benefits in the officer corps, military leaders can manipulate internal incentives. In the 1960s, Egypt's military chief, Abdel Hakim Amer, for example, structured the allocation of benefits to the officer corps in order to build a cohort of supporters within it; this included providing access to difficult to acquire imported goods, homes, cars, and the like. Amer similarly used his control of land reclamation projects and role as head of the Supreme Council of Private Organizations as vehicles for rewarding allies (Beattie 1994: 125–126). He then mobilized internal military constituencies to push back on President Gamal

Abdel Nasser's approach to managing tensions in the crisis that preceded the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (Brooks 2008).

Public, clarificatory statements to the force, such as speeches to military audiences or unclassified memos issued from top commands, are another tactic leaders can use to galvanize opinion within the military. Such statements can lend assurance to subordinates that the high command has their back; that they will not force them to comply with presidential or ministerial directives that they strongly oppose. They can also signal to the rank and file the preferences or intentions of the military leadership and shape or consolidate opinion and thereby cause them to fall in line behind it. The stature of these leaders and the hierarchical nature of military organizations helps to encourage conformity with senior leaders' preferences.

On the day before Ben Ali left Tunisia in January 2011, for example, Army chief Rachid Ammar countered efforts by the regime to sow doubt within the military with false statements that the military had withdrawn from Tunis, by ordering troops to "announce their presence and display a posture of strength in the capital" (Jebnoun 2014, 205). Through such measures, Ammar exploited his position to signal the leadership's dissenting position to the lower ranks in the regime crisis and consolidate opposition to using military resources to repress protests.

While senior military leaders may have particular advantages in shaping opinion, resistance can also coalesce within the lower ranks and condition the incentives of senior leaders. Troops may engage in mutinies, in which they openly defy their senior military leadership, or challenge the chain of command in an effort to resist some civilian initiative (Dwyer 2018). In 1783 in the United States, for example, in events that became known as the Newburgh Conspiracy, a cohort of officers plotted an internal conspiracy to challenge Congress, motivated by grievances about missed pay. The mutiny was only neutralized after George Washington intervened to address the men and dissuade them from the action (Kohn 1975). After World War II, more than twenty thousand U.S. troops marched in Manila and in Honolulu demanding that they be sent home contrary to President Truman's plans to keep 2.5 million men mobilized following the war (Wiener 2021).

The inability to unify the ranks behind the senior leadership may also constrain military leaders and affect their willingness to engage in dissent, such as during mass protests (Geddes 1996; Siebold 2007; Barany 2016). This was true in the lead up to the Iranian revolution of 1979 (Barany 2016). The NCO's and draftees were underpaid and poorly treated and had no incentive to defend

**Table 2.** Dissent tactics in Brazil, Egypt, and the U.S.

	Brazil	Egypt	U.S.
Public statements	✓	✓	✓
Alliance building	✓	✓	✓
Refining/Preempting coercive orders	✓	✓	✓
Implementation delays and obstruction	✓	✓	✓

the Shah by firing on Khomeini protesters. In 1985, the Sudanese Army Chief of Staff announced via broadcast that the armed forces would stand with the people. But rather than actually aligning with the opposition, he was signaling to his subordinates that he stood by them, and then reneged on his pledge to support the regime once he realized he could not command the troops to repress (Bou Nassif 2021, 14).

Military leaders can justify dissent by referencing concerns about cohesion when the initiatives are unpopular within the ranks. For instance, Argentine President Fernando De la Rúa (1999–2001) was forced to step down half way through his term on December 20, 2001, amid widespread demonstrations, uncontrolled rioting, and looting (Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2010). The president's first line of defense, the police, were incapable of containing the unrest. But when he asked the military to step in, it refused, as many in the ranks anticipated that the costs of repression would be high, since courts were renewing their prosecution of officers for human rights offenses.

## Illustrating Dissent Across Regime Types

To illustrate the common repertoire of military dissent tactics across regime types, below we show how each category of dissent is present in the contemporary civil-military relations of three states: Brazil, the United States, and Egypt, representing a developing democracy, an advanced democracy, and an autocracy, respectively. The brief examples demonstrate the presence of four types of dissent as shown in table 2.

### Public Statements

#### Brazil

Brazilian generals are unafraid to publicly voice displeasure with executive preferences and did so with respect to President Bolsonaro's efforts to stifle state and local government efforts to enforce COVID health restrictions. Governors and mayors were implementing lockdown and social distancing measures during the worst of the pandemic, while the president was minimizing the in-

herent dangers of the virus, calling it "a little flu." The president then tried to use the military to stop the health measures, but met resistance that took the form of public rebukes (Hunter and Vega 2021). General Carlos dos Santos Cruz, a member of Bolsonaro's cabinet prior to a falling out with the President's sons, argued: "The idea of putting the armed forces in the middle of a dispute between branches of the state, authorities, and political interests is completely out of place. It is a lack of respect for the armed forces" (Pion-Berlin and Ivey 2021). The army commander publicly defended wearing masks and social distancing, in contrast to the presidential discourse. Wendy Hunter and Diego Vega (2021, 14) have argued, "Bolsonaro tried to extract more political support from the armed forces than they wanted to give."

#### U.S.

The military engaged in public statements on several occasions during President Trump's tenure in office, including with respect to his stance in the country's wars. When Trump threatened to precipitously withdraw from Syria, the military commander in charge of the fight against the militant group ISIS, General Votel, signaled publicly that he opposed such a decision (Starr 2019). In addition, during protests of far-right movements, including anti-government and white supremacist groups in Charlottesville in 2017, Trump made several laudatory claims about the participants. In this instance, the service chiefs did not rebuke Trump or his policy openly, although they did offer clarificatory statements about the military's anti-racist stance (Phillips 2017). After the attack on the Capitol in January 2021, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the combatant commanders issued an unusual clarificatory memo in which they publicly affirmed that they took an oath to serve and defend the Constitution (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2021). This is notable because the oath explicitly states that the military is loyal to the Constitution and not to a person or party—hence it clarifies a commitment to democratic processes and not personally to Donald Trump.

#### Egypt

Following the ouster of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, the Egyptian military regularly relied on clarificatory statements about its positions on transition steps to signal Egypt's citizens and intra-military audiences about how any political liberalization would proceed (Roll 2018). In addition, the military used statements to make clear that it would retain significant influence in any democratizing process, that it would seek expanded

prerogatives in any future regime and that these would be enshrined in the constitution. In March 2011 the generals, for example, unilaterally issued a declaration granting the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces the prerogative to convene a constituent assembly to write a new Constitution, ensuring one would be in place before a new president was elected (Stilt 2012). In the fall of 2011, in what became known as the Selmi document, the military floated a blueprint for the prerogatives that should appear in that constitution (Brown 2011). The military similarly issued rebukes of Morsi to indicate that it would not tolerate the president sidelining the secular opposition and imperiling stability, such as when Morsi claimed vast powers over the government in November 2012 (Egypt Military Warns 2012).

## Alliance Building

### Brazil

President Dilma Rousseff (2010–2016) assembled a truth commission to look into military human rights violations during the long dictatorship (1964–1985). After the release of that commission's report in December 2014, the military became more publicly political, abandoning the principle of non-partisanship by searching for alliances with opposition parties and military friendly candidates to defend their interests (Godoy 2021). The military felt betrayed by the report, which they perceived as casting most blame on themselves for the repression during the dictatorship, while ignoring abuses committed by the left. On April 3, 2018 Army Commander General Eduardo Villas Bôas, in a tweet, pressured the Supreme Court not to grant former left wing Worker Party President Lula a release from prison so that he could again campaign for the presidency that year. That opened up the flood gates, as Bôas' remarks gave cover to other officers who abandoned all pretense of political neutrality and hopped on the band wagon of far right candidate Jair Bolsonaro, himself a former army captain who had praised the military regime's repressive actions. The officers posted opinions about the candidates, shared memes, and republished texts from Bolsonaro that were critical of the PT in an overt effort to build support for their candidate.

### U.S.

A prominent example of shoulder-tapping in the U.S. occurred in the early 1990s, when military officers sought out members of Congress to mobilize opposition to then President Bill Clinton's desire to allow openly gay soldiers to serve in the military. Initially, Congress was relatively quiet about the issue. That changed after Pentagon

leaders started coordinating with Senator Sam Nunn and others, who helped spearhead opposition to the change in policy. In addition, military leaders started reaching out to the press to voice their opposition. An inflammatory video called "The Gay Agenda" was circulated by military officials to members of Congress, while a spokesperson for the Marine commandant confirmed that he had shared it with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Brooks 2009, 224). Ultimately, these efforts to mobilize opposition resulted in the adoption of the so-called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy (Kohn 1993).

### Egypt

In Egypt, during Morsi's presidency, the military used its domestic political influence and capacity to build coalitions with societal groups to marshal dissent against the president. Military leaders made behind the scenes connections with a key societal group, Tamarod, protesting the government of President Mohamed Morsi, reportedly transferring funds to their account while helping them to organize the mass uprising (Kirkpatrick 2015). By bolstering the numbers of those participating in the protests, military leaders fostered the appearance of public approval for their overthrow of the Morsi government. The military also sought to incite opposition indirectly and enable this coalition building by provoking food and fuel shortages during Morsi's tenure (Ottoway 2017, 176; Hubbard and David Kirkpatrick 2013). Ultimately, the military pointed to this social mobilization as evidence that they were acting on behalf of the popular will, rather than engaging in a coup to remove the president from power.

## Refining and Preempting Coercive Orders

### Brazil

At various points, Brazil's commanders have adjusted deployment maneuvers to refrain from the use of coercion, to avoid head-on collisions with targets that could point culpability in their direction. Prosecution of human rights offenses is less probable (though not impossible) in military courts. Still, the armed forces take no chances, and when ordered to deploy domestically to fight crime, have become increasingly averse to going into favelas with full force to rout out drug gangs. Instead, they withhold their coercive power by securing the perimeters of these neighborhoods, instructing their troops to refrain from violence altogether, while letting police officers carry out most of the actual street patrols (Pion-Berlin and Acacio 2020). This withholding of coercive military power can constitute dissent where it impedes the implementation of

anti-crime policies, since the government may need more direct military assistance when police prove ineffectual, as they so often do.

## U.S.

The Trump presidency once again illustrates military push back in the U.S., in this case, to involving its forces in confronting domestic protests. In June 2020, Trump sought to use active-duty forces against social justice protests that were taking place across the country in June 2020 in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd by police officers. He floated the possibility of ordering up to 10,000 to the streets to do so. Trump threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act, which would have allowed him to send them without the governors' consent. The Pentagon's civilian and military leadership opposed using active-duty forces to support law enforcement, and there was significant military dissent, albeit in forms that might not be conventionally recognized as such. Secretary of Defense Esper and Chairman of the JCS Mark Milley initially appeared ready to comply to placate Trump, bringing troops armed with bayonets to the D.C. region. They, however, then sought to refine Trump's (potential) order by arguing that in the event law enforcement needed support, it should come from the National Guard—not the regular active-duty military (Seligman 2020). They urged governors to send Guard troops under state control to D.C. Meanwhile, General Mark Milley and Esper both called lawmakers to alert them to the situation and help mobilize intra-elite push-back to Trump's action. Then, on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, with the uniformed military behind him, Esper stated that he thought invoking the Insurrection Act was unwarranted (Hennigan and Walcott 2020).

## Egypt

The military in Egypt also pushed back on repressing mass protests in 2011. At the time, the military leadership did not oppose Mubarak in principle and certainly did not favor the reformist calls of the protesters, but the uprising and the threat it posed to the military's economic interests and political stability meant it would be difficult for the president to maintain the prerogatives and satiate the interests of the military. In addition, Mubarak did not have an easy way of compensating the military for the risk to the military's internal cohesion, including from rank and file opposed to firing on Egypt's citizens (Bou Nassif 2021, 174), and the risk to its popular esteem that would follow massive repression required of such a large cross-section of society then protesting Mubarak's rule (Brooks 2022). These factors upended the bargain

that had for three decades accommodated the military to Mubarak's rule. Five days after the start of the January 2011 uprising in Egypt, military leaders announced on TV and in Tahrir Square that they would not use force against protesters, thereby ultimately precipitating Mubarak's ouster on February 11.

## Policy Implementation Delays and Obstruction

### Brazil

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994–2002) announced his intention to create a ministry of defense as early as his campaign and continuing in his first years in office. He faced considerable resistance from the armed forces, which had grown accustomed to commanding their own ministries, one for each service branch, granting them cabinet status, and more direct access to the president. The entire process was marked by gradualism and restraint, and midway through 1996, the MOD proposal was according to Alsina Jr. (2003:64), “mired in a swamp of corporate [military] resistance.” According to Alsina Jr., the military services were dragging their heels, delaying the coordination of a common position in response to the proposal in part because the three services could not agree with each other regarding the importance of moving forward. The navy and air force put up the most resistance fearing the army would dominate the new ministry. Foot dragging continued until 1999 when the ministry finally came into being.

### U.S.

The military used established procedure to dissent against potentially disruptive policy changes favored by the White House under Donald Trump. For example, they sought to maintain President Obama's policy on allowing transgender troops to serve with conditions while legal processes played out, rather than eagerly embrace Trump's desired ban on their service. As Phillip Carter (2017) described it, “Pentagon leaders delayed implementation of Trump's tweet, seeking clarification, and then set in motion the slow, grinding machinery of bureaucracy and litigation.”

Similarly, the military pushed back on Trump's initiatives to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria. As early as the first week of April 2018, President Trump told military leaders to plan for the withdrawal of all troops from Syria, on the grounds that ISIS had been defeated (Ryan and Dawsey 2018). Secretary Jim Mattis reportedly slow-rolled the decision, by telling Trump that some withdrawals were already underway (Ward 2018). In

September 2018, Mattis stated that the job of preventing the return of ISIS was not complete, an effort bolstered by National Security Adviser, John Bolton who argued for further delay saying on the grounds that the withdrawal hinged on fulfilling conditions (Sanger, Weiland and Schmitt 2019). These leaders were reflecting opinion within the military that a precipitous withdrawal would be damaging to the mission and put the U.S., Kurdish allies at risk (Lamothe 2019).

## Egypt

In Egypt, the military sought to obstruct President Morsi's effort to redefine military and security policy in a more pan-Islamic direction. When, for example, Morsi gave a speech in June 2013 stating that his support for Syrian rebels battling the Bashar Al-Assad regime, the military countered that "the Egyptian army will not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. It will not be dragged or be used in any of the regional struggles" (Hendawi 2013). The military was also angered at Morsi's approach to the Sinai, and especially his failure to avenge the deaths of Egypt's soldiers killed by militants, as well as what was perceived to be an overly conciliatory approach to Hamas and to favoring mediation over military solutions with militants (Aziz 2013). Consequently, when Morsi ordered his Defense Minister General Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi to meet with the head of Hamas, Sisi declined to do so (Hendawi 2013). In April 2013, Morsi similarly alarmed the military during a visit with leaders of Sudan's Islamist government, in which he signaled he might be flexible in settling a long-standing border dispute. Sisi sought to check that initiative, sending his chief of staff to Khartoum upon Morsi's return to "make it crystal clear to the Sudanese that the Egyptian armed forces will never surrender" the land (Hendawi 2013).

## Toward a Research Program in Military Dissent

In this section, we outline several directions for future research on military dissent, focusing on four issues.

### Metrics and Characteristics of Dissent

First, scholars might spend more effort categorizing and operationalizing tactics of dissent, and then compiling details of their incidence. For example, scholars have sought to analyze the number and character of opinion pieces written by U.S. military leaders in recent decades that dissent from civilian leadership's favored policies (Erickson 2021). Others have categorized instances of mutinies (Dwyer 2018), acts of military repression against protesters or civilians, while efforts to

quantify coups are long-standing (Powell and Thyne 2011). Yet, much remains to be known about the frequency and character of military dissent across and within different regimes, especially with regard to the many incarnations outlined above.

In addition, conceptually a next step would be to understand the relationship among the tactics we outline and how they may be interdependent on one another. For instance, in Peru, the military relied on its material power, balking at presidential requests to aggressively counter the insurgent group Sendero Luminoso as a source of leverage in talks with the president, until new rules of engagement could be written. As a result of those negotiations, President Alan Garcia (2006–2011) finally agreed to sponsor legislation which rewrote the rules of engagement to grant soldiers more discretion in fighting the insurgents (Jaskoski 2013).

### Drivers of Dissent

Second, researchers might seek to theorize about when military leaders are likely to select different tactics of dissent. For example, given their roots in domestic politics, the choice of those tactics likely depends on the military's popularity, or pre-existing ties to societal groups and legislators. Today confidence in the military is generally high across Western Europe and the United States, while trust in other private and public institutions remains considerably less (Johnson 2018). Surveys in many countries in Latin America also reveal that the military remains extremely popular, even while confidence in other political institutions and elections has steadily declined (Flores-Macia and Zarkin 2019). Militaries may also be better able to leverage societal support when there are large military bases in politically salient communities, large arms industries or mobilized veterans groups. In the United States, broader cultural phenomena mean the military is glorified at sporting events, in fashion and in film (Brooks, Golby and Urben 2021). In places where these factors are observed, public appeals, alliance building, and shoulder-tapping might be more common.

Similarly, scholars might explore when the asymmetries of information and expertise essential to bureaucratic tactics are more pronounced. In contexts where monitoring is more costly, or punishing non-compliance is complicated, military leaders might be more likely to engage in slow-rolling and other tactics.

In addition, scholars might examine the factors that shape the military and its leaders' willingness to engage in dissent in the first place—independent of the domestic, bureaucratic, material, or organizational power they enjoy to do so. Just because the military

retains the power to dissent, its leaders may not actually choose to exploit it. For example, one possibility is that the military's normative construct about its appropriate relationship to politics deters it from expressing dissent. Some in the U.S. military adhere to Huntingtonian norms, in which remaining "apolitical" is a central tenet; they may consequently decline to exploit the institution's popularity to make public statements in dissent to decisions they oppose. The normative construct, however, may also facilitate some public advocacy in opposition to civilians by creating blind spots, whereby the military leaders fail to recognize that they are engaging in political behavior (Brooks 2020). Tactics that rely upon the coercive power of the military, and especially coups, are usually off-limits in established democracies where militaries are socialized to remain outside of politics, or where their role conceptions inhibit it (Harig, Jenne and Ruffa 2021). But the same could hold true for autocracies. Brian Taylor (2003) recounts how the Russian military's role beliefs has shaped its leaders' unwillingness to use its coercive power and deterred coups in its recent history.

### Efficacy of Dissent

Scholars might also seek to explore questions related to the efficacy of tactics of dissent: what factors determine the potential that they actually shape civilians' decision-making calculus and lead them to avoid or abandon actions the military opposes? Here, too, existing scholarship suggests potential reasons. One key factor relates to the unity observed among civilians. This is the corollary to the importance of divisions in the military: whereas divisions within the military may reduce the power to dissent, divisions within the civilian elite or society enhance it. These can be induced by institutional structures or can be just the result of the constellation of preferences over ideological or policy issues among civilian elites (Avant 1994; Kinney 2019). Another factor relates to the strategic context a leader finds herself in. A leader that has lost the public's confidence and exhausted her political capital with masses and elites alike, may have to fall back on the military for critical support to prop up the regime. In that scenario, the military has added leverage, and its dissent will carry more weight. The more decisive military action is to resolving a grave crisis, the more likely officers' dissent will have an impact on outcomes, either favorable to the incumbent or not (Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas 2010).

### Consequences of Dissent

Finally, scholars might try to understand the consequences of dissent for various outcomes: authoritarian-

ism and democracy, civil-military relations, and military innovation and effectiveness. As the scholarly literature on innovation demonstrates, for example, dissent by individuals in the form of "military mavericks" can have positive outcomes in spurring change (Hundman 2021). Similarly, dissent in the form of public rebukes of politicians' anti-democratic actions can help check democratic backsliding (Lee 2020). By informing the public of alternative views within the military, and providing insight based on their distinctive expertise about military activity or strategy, statements of clarification, advocacy, or rebukes of civilian leadership's policies can enhance public oversight and accountability of civilian decisions. In these examples, dissent is motivated and substantiated by sound insights and pro-democratic sensibilities. Dissent that lacks these properties could in other circumstances have adverse effects, serving to stifle innovation, advance non-democratic practices, or foster within the public ill-considered or wrong perspectives about armed conflict.

Relatedly, scholars might consider larger normative and theoretical questions about the relationship between dissent, military power, and civilian control. For example, while rebukes could represent opening moves by officers in a more robust effort to undercut civilian control across all policy domains, they need not be, even in the developing world. In Chile, the general's clarification of orders in 2019, discussed above, did not accrue any political power for the military. In many parts of the world under different regimes, commanders carefully calibrate their rhetoric in public statements to achieve some specific goal without challenging the overall authority of the executive. Nevertheless, by increasing the domestic political costs of pursuing some options, these actions could indirectly circumscribe executive authority over the issue or domain in question. Ultimately, it may be best to evaluate the implications of dissent in terms of tradeoffs—how might acts of dissent be assessed in light of their potentially competing consequences for civilian control, democracy, and ensuring good policy outcomes, and success in war?

### Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive typology of military dissent making two key points. First, the article demonstrates the variety of protest and underscores that it goes well beyond the most overt manifestations of coups and insubordination. Opposition can be overt, public, and violent, but it can also be subtle, private, indirect, and non-violent.

Second, the article shows that tactics are not exclusive to one regime type. Forms of dissent found in the

advanced democratic world can also be found in developing democracies and more authoritarian states. Dissent should thus be seen as comprising a common repertoire of actions available to militaries throughout the world. This invites scholars to explore types of military opposition hitherto neglected because they were once thought to be absent or perhaps unimportant, given the assumption that other forms were more paramount to a particular nation or political system.

Though the aforementioned insights are significant, they are intended as a first step towards building a more expansive research program on military dissent and its consequences.

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