

Coup-proofing in the shadow of intervention: Alliances, moral hazard, and violence in authoritarian regimes

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Abstract

How does the anticipation of external support affect dictators' domestic political behavior? Despite recent advances in the study of authoritarian regimes, we lack a convincing explanation for why these leaders often consolidate power in ways which heighten the risk of violence and endanger the regime, contrary to what we would expect. Adapting the moral hazard framework from the alliance literature, I argue that the anticipation of military support from allies lowers the potential costs of regime purges, decreasing dictators' incentive to govern inclusively. This encourages more aggressive power consolidation, which generates a higher risk of retaliatory violence. Using new data on elite purges in authoritarian regimes, I find that defense alliances increase the propensity of dictators to consolidate power. In addition, these types of alliances lead to purges of more powerful elites which, in turn, increase the likelihood of post-purge retaliatory violence against the incumbent. By contrast, other types of external support which entail less commitment do not have these effects. I provide an overview of the origins of the 1998-99 civil war in Guinea-Bissau to complement the novel empirical results and to illustrate the causal logic of the argument in the context of West African alliance politics.

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Introduction

The civil war in South Sudan originated from a power struggle between president Salva Kiir and his vice president, Riek Machar. Kiir feared that Machar and his followers were plotting a coup, and so in July 2013, Kiir fired his entire cabinet, including Machar and his bodyguards, replacing them with loyalists. Although Kiir had removed the immediate danger of a coup, Machar quickly mobilized his armed supporters and, in December, launched a rebellion aimed at removing the president (Roessler, 2016, 1-5).

Almost immediately, the Ugandan military—South Sudan’s closest ally on the continent (Copnall, 2014, 207)—intervened to support Kiir’s regime against Machar. By some estimates, forces loyal to Kiir—including the Ugandan contingent—numbered only 5,000, while Machar had the backing of 25,000 rebels (Matsiko, 2014). The Ugandan forces were largely responsible for retaking major towns, such as Bor and Malakal, from the rebels, and for holding Juba, the capital (Kulish, 2014). It was primarily due to the superior quality and firepower of the US-trained UPDF troops that Machar’s rebels were unable to overrun the capital city and remove Kiir from power.

Machar had made no effort to hide his ambition prior to the purge, and undoubtedly posed a real threat to Kiir. Even though Kiir may have feared a coup by Machar, however, he must have known Machar and his supporters were ready to rebel and would attempt to remove him violently in the ensuing war. Further, given the size of the rival army, it was far from guaranteed that Kiir could survive a war in power. This raises the question: Would Kiir have purged Machar when he did had he not believed he could count on active military support from Uganda?

Why do leaders often attempt to consolidate power by purging powerful officials from their regimes, even when doing so causes instability which then directly threatens their hold on power? The fact that regime purges are designed specifically to *eliminate* threats to the leader’s power renders this question even more puzzling. Recent research has offered answers to this question by arguing that leaders consolidate power when elites are weak (e.g., (Sudduth,

2017*b*)), or that they may in fact welcome a heightened risk of a civil war in exchange for a reduction in the risk of a coup (e.g., Roessler (2011); Powell (2014)). But while the probability of removal in a civil war may be lower than that of a coup, the risk is non-trivial and carries the potential to be more violent (e.g., Goemans (2008)). As former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe recently discovered, furthermore, this mode of power consolidation can increase the short-term probability of a retaliatory coup as well.

The risk of retaliatory violence is especially high if the purged figures are politically powerful, or if elites as a group are mobilized. Moreover, leaders have the option to forestall coups using less exclusionary methods, such as the distribution of patronage (e.g., Arriola (2009)) or through the formation of credible power-sharing institutions (e.g., Gandhi and Przeworski (2007); Boix and Svobik (2013); Roessler and Ohls (2018); Frantz and Stein (2017)). The leader would be myopic if, when consolidating power, he did not take into account the likelihood of violence ensuing, as well as his probability of surviving it. The question therefore remains: why would a leader choose to purge his regime and provoke violence when less destabilizing options are available? In this paper, I draw upon arguments from alliance politics to provide an explanation for this puzzle.

Beginning from the assumption that all dictators want to consolidate power over their regimes to the extent possible, I argue that the prospect of supportive external intervention generates a moral hazard in which the incumbent consolidates power more aggressively. Under normal circumstances, dictators are risk-averse and opt to purge their regimes when elites are weak and the likelihood of backlash is low (Sudduth, 2017*b,a*). A foreign military alliance, however, serves as a form of insurance. The prospect of outside help decreases the perceived costs associated with a purge, and cultivates in the leader the belief that he may be able to survive whatever violence ensues with the help of his ally. This allows the leader to purge elites more aggressively than he normally would, inviting instability and decreasing his incentive to govern inclusively. Using a range of alliance and external support indicators, I find that the existence of prior defense

agreements pledging future support increases the likelihood of purges in authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, dictators with these agreements are more likely to purge their regimes when the threat of backlash is *high*. This finding adds a significant caveat to our knowledge about the timing of authoritarian power consolidation. Results also indicate that defense alliances significantly increase the likelihood that purges will be followed by violent retaliation, suggesting that leaders do in fact purge more aggressively when they anticipate external support. I explore the events surrounding the outbreak of the 1998-1999 civil war in Guinea-Bissau in order to further substantiate the empirical findings and elucidate the causal mechanisms. This conflict originated in a domestic power struggle between President João Bernardo Vieira and his Army Chief of Staff and erstwhile ally, General Ansumane Mané. This case provides a compelling example of the role that external military allies can play in an autocratic leader's assessment of the costs and benefits of purging his regime of powerful but potentially threatening figures.

Why purge? Authoritarian politics, coup-proofing, and power consolidation

The most common means of losing office for a dictator—and thus his greatest fear—is removal via coup at the hands of regime insiders (Svolik, 2009). Autocrats employ a variety of tactics—collectively referred to as “coup-proofing”—to insulate themselves from this threat. The most important of these for the purposes of this paper are the leader's efforts to consolidate power over his ruling coalition. This notion echoes early research and commentary on leaders' incentive to minimize winning coalitions in order to share power with as small a group as possible (e.g., Machiavelli (1992); Riker (1962)).

Recent literature on authoritarian politics builds upon the observation that these regimes are founded upon a power struggle between the dictator on the one hand, and his coalition and/or military on the other (Svolik, 2009; McMahon and Slantchev, 2015). This conflict centers around a dictator's desire to gain more power for himself, and to marginalize those in his ruling

coalition. Those in the coalition, in turn, wish to remain essential to regime survival. To do this, they attempt to monitor and constrain the leader's actions, with the implicit threat of removal if the leader attempts to overreach. Thus, the leader must be either secretive, concealing his attempts to acquire more power, or prescient, consolidating power when elites do not have the ability to threaten removal or rebellion. In the stylized understanding of this contest, the dictator's ideal world is one in which the intra-regime power balance is such that his coalition can no longer credibly threaten him with violence ("established dictatorships" in Svobik's terminology). In these contexts, dictators may rule for decades in office without ever experiencing a coup attempt. The path to this ideal end state, however, requires multiple risky power grabs, usually occurring over an extended period of time.

Power consolidation itself is a broad strategy comprised of a variety of tactics, one of which is the purge. Here, military officials or other figures are removed from the regime in a way that diminishes their future ability to threaten to the leader. This can involve simply firing the official in question, arresting him, forcing him into exile, or having him assassinated. Paradoxically, as Svobik, Roessler (2011), and Sudduth (2017*b*) note, attempts by the leader to consolidate power can, themselves, raise the short-term risk of a violent backlash at the hands of elites aiming to unseat him. While the most powerful regime officials pose the greatest threat to the leader from within the regime, it is these same officials that are the most dangerous to eliminate, as they are most able to threaten the leader with violence from outside the regime as well. The post-purge retaliatory backlash can be carried out either by the same elites who were purged, their allies, or by others within the regime who fear that they may be next on the leader's list. These purged elites and their supporters may coordinate to attempt a coup or launch a rebellion against the leader who ousted them or their allies. This roughly describes events in Iraq between 2012 and 2014. Fearing a violent overthrow, Iraqi president Nouri al-Maliki targeted powerful Sunni regime officials and tribal leaders for arrest. This prompted a wave of anti-regime protests and mass repression, culminating in the rebirth of the Islamic State (Dodge, 2012). Roessler (2011)

shows empirical evidence for this in his examination of ethnic power consolidation in Africa, where leaders who purge regime rivals in order to avoid coups are increasing the risk of civil war.¹ Dictators who wish to avoid a violent backlash in the wake of a purge must therefore be cautious but prescient, removing potential threats quickly, *before* they become too powerful. As Sudduth (2017b) and Sudduth (2017a) show, cautious leaders will attempt to consolidate power when these potentially threatening figures are relatively weak, *before* they are able to amass enough support to mount a coup or organize a rebellion against the regime after being purged. By purging weak figures or those without an independent support base, the leader can insulate himself against threats from insiders while simultaneously avoiding backlash.

When to purge? External support and the domestic moral hazard

As the discussion above makes clear, purges are inherently risky. The leader gambles that the alienated regime factions will not mobilize against him, and that if they do, he will be able to overcome them and remain in power. Roessler (2011) argues that leaders in fact welcome such conflict, as long as the the purge reduces the danger of being overthrown from within. These leaders would be myopic, however, if they did not consider their likelihood of surviving the ensuing violence. The outcomes of rebellions, coups, and other sorts of violence that may result from a purge are uncertain, and remaining in office—even alive—is far from guaranteed. Therefore, I argue that it would only be rational for a leader to purge his regime if he were confident in his ability to survive the aftermath, and to pay the cost of doing so. The prospect of support from an external ally may cause a leader to purge in situations in which the likelihood of retaliatory violence is higher, which would normally deter him from doing so. It is in this way that foreign military alliances can have the paradoxical effect of increasing the likelihood

¹Powell (2014) also shows that leaders rationally trade coups for civil war, but the mechanism—deliberate weakening of the military, facilitating an exogenous rebellion—is distinct from Roessler's, in which rebellion is endogenous to the purge.

of domestic instability.

Without an external ally, the leader would need to incur the associated costs of a purge himself by, for instance, fighting off rebels or coup plotters himself using his own resources and perhaps risking violent removal or death. The anticipation of potential support from an external power, in contrast, will shift the leader's perception of these costs downward. This alters the intra-regime balance of power, leading to the moral hazard identified long ago by Snyder and Diesing (1977) and others in the alliance literature (Altfeld and de Mesquita, 1979; Snyder, 1984; Smith, 1995). The problem arises in situations of extended deterrence in which the defender seeks to protect a client state, or protégé, in a potential war with a third party. The defender has incentive to issue strong statements of support and public promises to come to the protégé's defense if the third party attacks in order to ease the protégé's fears of abandonment and to maintain the credibility of the alliance. The drawback of these promises is that they risk unintentionally emboldening the protégé to initiate a war that he would not have in the absence of the alliance. Snyder (1984) calls this "entrapment": A moral hazard in which an overconfident protégé initiates a war with a third party that he would not have otherwise, under the assumption that the defender will come to his aid and bear a significant portion of the costs of the conflict. By over-committing to a protégé, the defender risks being dragged into a conflict that he was hoping to avoid by forming the alliance in the first place. A well-known recent manifestation of this is Georgia's attack on a Russian enclave in South Ossetia in 2008 because it anticipated military assistance from the United States (Driscoll and Maliniak, 2017).

The application of the canonical alliance dilemma to authoritarian domestic politics is relatively straightforward, although there are several additional implications. First, external patronage increases the leader's value for holding office. The provision of foreign aid, military, and political support—which often accompany military alliances—increases the leader's opportunities for rent-seeking and personal aggrandizement, making him more cautious about sharing power. If the payoff for holding office is greater, moreover, the incentive to seize power among

the leader's coalition and regime opponents also increases (e.g., Grossman (2003)), further exacerbating the security dilemma between the leader and his coalition (Svolik, 2009; Roessler, 2011). The presence of an external ally could also make the leader more wary of other potential challengers that the ally could empower or select to replace him, giving the leader added incentive to eliminate legitimate challengers. Prior to the Vietnam war, for instance, US officials found Ngo Dinh Diem to be less than ideal as the leader of South Vietnam, and actively sought alternatives even while supporting him. Diem knew this, and thus attempted to eliminate potential replacements (Catton, 2002). Similarly, Hosni Mubarak attempted to crush all serious non-Islamist political challengers—the most prominent of which was Ayman Nour in 2005—partly out of fear that the US might channel its support to a more liberal figure if one became too prominent. By doing this, Mubarak was consistently able to present to his allies the juxtaposition between himself and the Muslim Brotherhood (Brownlee, 2012).

Second, a common practice related to purges is the regular rotation and reshuffling of the military officer corps and leaders of security organizations. The purpose of this is to prevent any single commander from forming tight bonds with subordinates and gaining too large a following (Quinlivan, 1999). When leaders do this, however, the quality of the armed forces suffers for two reasons. First, prioritizing loyalty over merit in the promotion of officers necessarily degrades the competence and leadership of these units, impairing combat capability. In fact, competent officers are often the ones targeted, as they are the most capable of threatening the leader (Talmadge, 2015). Second, such reshuffling also reduces morale among soldiers, who may be less willing to fight when a popular officer is replaced by less competent loyalist (Pilster and Böhmelt, 2011). Realizing this, incumbents may be less willing to purge their militaries, as weaker and less motivated armed forces may make them more vulnerable to attack, either by another state or by internal armed opposition. The expectation of external support, however, can reduce the likelihood of an attack or invasion, enabling the leader to purge with less concern about the consequences for military strength. In fact, Song and Wright (2018) attribute Kim

Il-Sung's ability to consolidate power over his party and military to Soviet and Chinese support.

The general effect of the prospect of external support is that it shifts the leader's estimates of the potential costs involved in regime purges *downward*. As discussed above, the risk incurred by leaders when they eliminate officials from their regimes can be considerable, particularly if the targeted officials are high-ranking or enjoy support within the armed forces. Powerful officials who have been marginalized can mobilize their supporters and launch rebellions or coups aimed at removing the leader and recapturing power, as Roessler (2011) shows. A leader who does not anticipate intervention on his behalf may be forced to accept the risk of a coup by leaving more powerful, threatening officials in place. Removing such figures would entail unacceptable risk of a costly conflict, and thus the leader may seek alternative means of avoiding a coup, such as the use of patronage or greater power-sharing concessions. In fact, an innovative recent paper shows that when African leaders face powerful political rivals, they are more likely to be deterred from purging them. They prefer instead to form and abide by powersharing agreements, as governing through exclusion becomes too costly (Roessler and Ohls, 2018).

The presence of a military ally boosts the leader's estimates of the likelihood that he can survive whatever fallout occurs in the wake of a purge. At the same time, the leader's anticipated costs of doing so *decrease*. The alliance serves as a credible commitment to the leader that he will receive support in the event of conflict (e.g., Morrow (2000); Leeds (2003)), thus giving him the impression that he may only have to bear part of the costs of any ensuing retaliation. This support may take the form of political backing, weapons, money, or even direct intervention by the external power to fight the leader's opponents on his behalf. The moral hazard induces greater risk-acceptance, which causes the leader to purge when the likelihood of violence is high, knowingly flirting with the possibility of violent retaliation. In the event that an ousted regime figure decides to mobilize and fight, the leader can simply appeal to the ally that his regime is at risk and that the alliance is in jeopardy. The leader may also believe that the presence of the ally would deter marginalized factions from attempting a retaliatory coup. After

all, the ally has invested in the alliance ostensibly because the alliance is in its strategic interest. The dictator can thus make a compelling argument to his ally that in order for him to continue fulfilling his obligations under the alliance, the ally must assist in eliminating his domestic opponents. In the wake of the 2012-2013 purges in Iraq, Maliki appealed directly to the United States for assistance in quelling the resulting violence. In claiming that the unrest threatened his regime and thus whatever progress the US had made over the years, Maliki gambled that the US would want to protect its multi-trillion dollar investment in the Iraqi regime.

Since purges elevate the likelihood of anti-regime instability, we should expect to observe them more frequently when the leader anticipates external support from an ally:

Hypothesis 1. *All else equal, dictators who expect external support are more likely to purge their regimes.*

Existing research on autocratic power consolidation (i.e., Sudduth (2017b,a)) suggests that dictators typically have small and fleeting windows of opportunity in which to safely purge their regimes. These include periods when elites are relatively weak and disorganized and thus pose less of a threat to the leader during or after the purge. Paradoxically, it is precisely when elites pose the greatest threat to the leader from within the regime that they are the most dangerous to purge. Therefore, under normal circumstances, leaders must take advantage of these opportunities when they present themselves, as a purge at the wrong time may result in violent retaliation. Leaders who believe they can draw upon external support should feel less constrained, however, and are more likely to purge their regimes when elites are relatively powerful and most capable of violence.

Hypothesis 2. *Dictators who expect external support are more likely to purge their regimes when elites are relatively strong.*

As the above hypotheses suggest, dictators who anticipate material support are likely to purge more frequently and when elites are better organized and more capable of inflicting violence. Such purges produce marginalized factions who have both the incentive and ability to

challenge the regime in order to punish the leader and reclaim their positions. This intuition leads to my third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *Purges by dictators who expect external support are more likely to lead to violence than purges carried out by leaders who do not expect such support.*

Note two important things about the assumptions underpinning this argument. First, it is not necessary to assume that external support for the leader actually materializes; rather, it is simply the leader's *expectation* that he will receive support that drives the argument. In fact, such misperception is common. Leaders often misinterpret statements made by officials in other countries, advice from sycophantic subordinates can distort dictators' perceptions, and leaders may simply gamble incorrectly about how invested their allies are in their survival. While the US continued to provide military assistance to Maliki during the initial resurgence of the Islamic State insurgency, the fact that they did not intervene—and eventually pushed him from power—is not particularly relevant. After all, Maliki was not wrong about how heavily the US was invested in stabilizing the Iraqi regime; he was only wrong about how much blame they would assign *him* for the renewed insurgency, and thus how unenthusiastic their support would be. The State Department had in fact been advising the White House since 2010 to withdraw support from Maliki because of his divisiveness. Yet, they continued to support him for four years beyond that point (Rohde et al., 2014).

One might also point out that the preferences of the ally could have a constraining effect on the leader's behavior, particularly if the ally is democratic and prefers to punish an incumbent who consolidates power. Neither theory nor empirical reality support this, for two reasons. First, the intra-alliance dynamic is plagued by classic principal-agent problems. Information asymmetries prevent one ally from fully understanding the dynamics of political intrigue within the other. As a result, it is typically difficult for outside observers to differentiate violent power grabs from a leader attempting to defend against rebels. Often, the ally will side with the incumbent by default. As the case of Guinea-Bissau will demonstrate, the leader can paint the purged

officials as the true agents of destabilization. Subsequent violence initiated against the regime by the purged officials will reinforce this claim in the eyes of the ally. Second, and most importantly, even if the ally is able to identify wrongdoing on the part of the incumbent, the ally's own strategic interests—which ostensibly caused the alliance to form in the first place—hinder its ability to credibly threaten to punish him or withdraw support. Paradoxically, the greater the ally's strategic interest in the incumbent, the weaker its leverage over the incumbent's behavior. For instance, long-standing counterinsurgency doctrine prescribes making strong, unambiguous public statements of support for allies facing instability. Lest a partner country fear abandonment, the U.S. Army's counterinsurgency field manual states that “Constant reaffirmations of commitment, backed by deeds, can overcome that perception and bolster faith in the steadfastness of U.S. support” (Department of the Army, 2006, 1-24). Even if they do prefer the incumbent to govern more inclusively, allies may avoid pressing the issue, as any reforms may cause the incumbent to fall and be replaced by a less desirable ally. Diplomat U. Alexis Johnson noted, in reference to American efforts in South Vietnam, that “the measures we advocate may strike at the very foundations of...a country's social structure and domestic economy on which rests the basis of a government's control” (quoted in Shafer (1988)).

Data & empirical analysis

Purges

To test my argument, I use newly available data from Sudduth (2017*b*) on elite purges in non-democratic countries between 1969 and 2003 as the basis of my primary dependent variable. While purges can and do occur in democracies (Turkey and Burundi are recent examples), the violent foundations of authoritarian regimes make them ideal to test this argument Svoboda (2009, 2012).

Note that only purges of security officials are included in the data. This offers an excellent way to test the argument, as the heads of security organizations, military officers, and soldiers

are capable of posing an immediate and existential threat to the leader's survival in office. They are most capable of inflicting violence against the leader, and thus are prime targets for purges by leaders seeking to consolidate power.

Elite strength

Testing hypothesis 2 necessitates capturing the level of threat faced by the leader from other elites. To do this, I estimate a logit model in which the dependent variable is *successful coup* (a thorough description of the contents and results of this model are presented in the appendix). Based on this estimation, I then calculate 1) the annual predicted probabilities of successful coup occurrence; 2) the country means of these probabilities; and 3) the annual deviations from the country means in each year ($Elite\ strength = Pr(successful\ coup)_{it} - \overline{Pr(successful\ coup)_i}$). More positive deviations are assumed to mean that elites are strong relative to the leader, and the probability of a violent response to a purge is likely. Likewise, negative deviations indicate relatively weak elites; here, the risk of post-purge retaliatory violence should be lower. The purpose of this measure is to capture how much higher or lower the current, temporary coup threat is, relative to the average level of coup threat normally experienced by a leader in that country. Countries vary widely in their susceptibility to coups, and calculating deviations from country means allows the measure to account for this. Controlling for each country's mean probability of experiencing a successful coup also accomplishes this (see appendix). The distribution of these deviations is shown in Figure 1, while Figure 2 contains examples of how elite strength varies over the course of leaders' time in office. The dotted line indicates the country mean of the probability of a successful coup, while the solid line indicates the yearly probability. The space between the dotted and solid line represent annual deviations from country means: the larger the space above the dotted line, the higher the probability of a successful coup relative to the mean, while larger spaces below indicate lower relative probabilities.

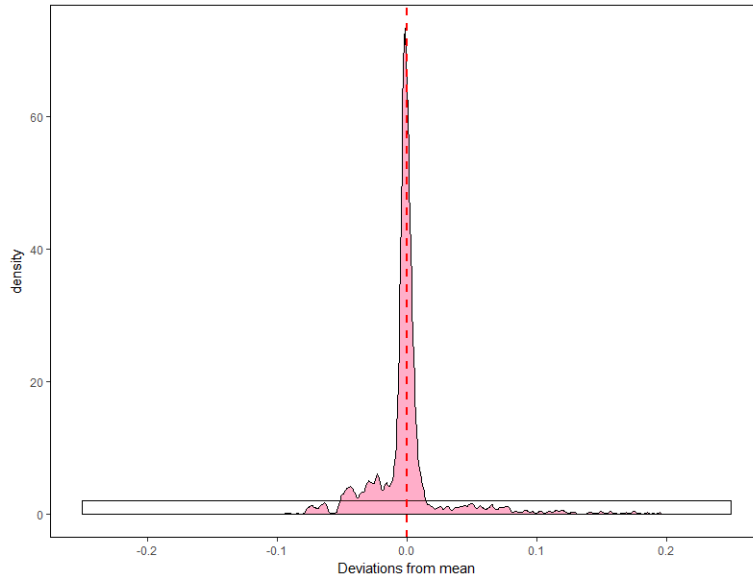


Figure 1: Deviations from country means of Pr(successful coup)

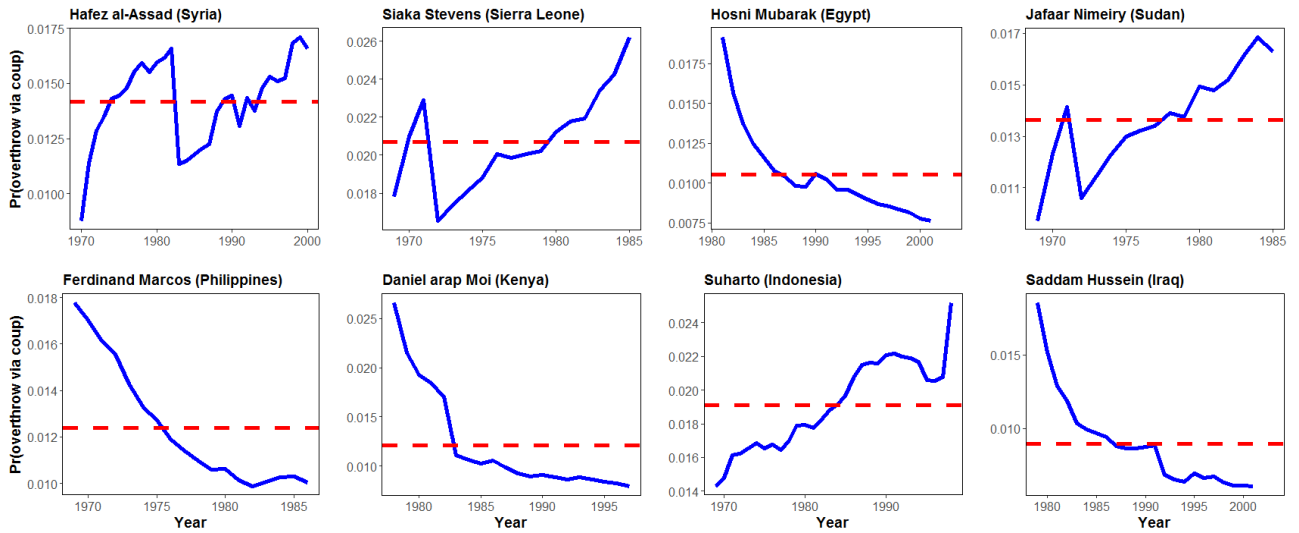


Figure 2: Examples of deviations from country-means of Pr(successful coup)

Post-purge retaliatory violence

For the other outcome variable—whether or not a purge results in a violent response—I include instances of 1) civil conflicts and 2) coups occurring in the wake of a purge.

Civil wars

To code purge-related civil wars, I refer to the UCDP conflict onset and incidence data (Gleditsch et al., 2002; Allansson, Melander and Themnér, 2017) to record instances of *civil conflict* occurring within three years of a purge. By reading through the actor descriptions in the UCDP data, the purge case descriptions from Sudduth (2017b), and narratives of the civil wars themselves where available, I was able to determine for each purge whether it could be directly connected to a proximate civil war onset. I classified civil wars as stemming from a purge if Side B (as coded by UCDP actor description) consisted primarily of members of the military, members of the same ethnic group, or ethnic or political allies of the officials who were purged. For instance, Liberian president Samuel Doe purged his regime several times throughout the late 1980s, primarily targeting northern Gio and Mano ethnic groups as revenge for the 1985 coup attempt. This led directly to the 1989 civil war—spearheaded by the northern-dominated National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)—that would ultimately topple the Doe regime a year later (Roessler, 2016). Likewise, Panamanian president Manuel Noriega’s 1988 purge of top military and intelligence officials could be considered a precipitant of the subsequent military rebellion led by Moisés Giroldi, which appeared in the UCDP data as a civil war the following year. By contrast, Syrian president Hafez al-Assad in 1978 replaced Major General Naji Jamil—who was then head of several security organizations—due to incompetence. The following year, the Muslim Brotherhood uprising began in earnest and enters the data as a civil war onset. This would not meet my definition of a retaliatory civil war, however, as the rebellion did not primarily consist of purged elites or their allies. Each purge is coded according to whether or not it can be considered to have led to a civil war within three years of its occurrence.

Coups

Another common response to leaders' power consolidation efforts is a coup, an example of which occurred recently in Zimbabwe. Shortly after president Robert Mugabe fired his powerful vice president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, supporters of the vice president within the military intervened, ultimately forcing Mugabe to resign (Dzirutwe, Brock and Cropley, 2017). For data on coup attempts, I borrow from Aksoy, Carter and Wright (2015), whose data contain information on coups d'états in authoritarian regimes throughout this time period. For each purge, I then determine whether or not a coup attempt occurred within three years². In contrast to my approach to coding retaliatory civil wars, I assume that *all* post-purge coup attempts are retaliatory. Both coups and purges, by definition, involve members of the regime. Coup attempts which occur in the wake of a purge can nearly always be considered, at least partially, to be responses to recent purges. These can be either corrective (to reclaim power from the leader) or preventive (to forestall further power grabs).

Often, coups and purges occur during the same year. Fortunately, the data indicate whether or not a purge event occurred in response to a failed coup, which allows me to avoid conflating these failed coup attempts with same-year retaliatory coups. To the extent possible, I also verify the dates of purges and coups in the case descriptions of each. Rebellions or coups are occasionally precipitated by multiple purges within the previous three years. In these rare cases, each purge is coded as resulting in retaliatory violence, since each one is the result of a discrete decision by the dictator.

External support

I use to several different measures to capture external support. Recent research on alliance politics concludes that states seek to avoid the abandonment-entrapment dilemma with maneuvers such as the insertion of careful but ambiguous wording in the alliance documents themselves

²See appendix Figures 21 and 22 for robustness checks using a shorter time window for coups.

(Benson, 2012; Benson and Clinton, 2016); by opting instead to provide military aid or arms transfers and foregoing formal alliances altogether (Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka and Cooper, 2016); or by signaling support in other ways (McManus and Nieman, 2017; D’Orazio, 2016). In other words, they seek to calibrate their actions carefully in order to avoid over-committing. Utilizing several different forms and degrees of support thus enables me to conduct a more complete test of the moral hazard argument.

Defense alliances

First, I take from the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) data³ information regarding whether or not a country was a member of an alliance during a particular year. I then account for variation within these alliances. In particular, *defense alliances* formally specify in the text of the agreement that signatories will come to one another’s defense with *active* military support in the event of an attack. The type of attack is often left unspecified, which makes it well-suited for use here. A leader hoping to recruit outside help in the event of post-purge violence can invoke the alliance by claiming that his regime is under attack, and that the ally must live up to the terms of the agreement and intervene to keep the incumbent in power. Leader-years are coded 1 if the country is a member of a defense alliance in a given year, and 0 otherwise.

Neutrality agreements

Other types of alliances in the ATOP data do not obligate members to come to one another’s defense in the event of attack. For instance, *non-aggression pacts* only commit signatories not to use violence in their relations with one another, but do not address any commitments regarding conflict with other parties. *Neutrality agreements* specify only that member states will remain neutral or that they will not assist other states who are in conflict with parties to the agreement. Finally, *consultation agreements* specify that member states will coordinate

³Leeds et al. (2002)

policy with one another during crises or disputes in which the potential for military escalation is present (Leeds et al., 2002). While these three agreement types differ in their specifics, they are similar in that none of them require the provision of material support in the event of a crisis. This is the key element differentiating these agreements from defense alliances, in which signatories pledge material support to one another. Due to this similarity between neutrality, nonaggression, and consultative agreements, I group them together and refer to them in the data as *neutrality agreements*, assigning leader-years a 1 if that country is a member of a non-aggression, neutrality, or consultative agreement in a given year, and a 0 otherwise.⁴

Military assistance and arms shipments

My third measure of external support is based on receipt of US security assistance and arms shipments from other countries. These forms of support entail less commitment, and thus constitute a less credible promise of future support in the event of domestic conflict. Data for these are taken from Security Assistance Monitor (2017) and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2017), respectively. The United States devotes billions of dollars annually to train and equip the military and security forces of regimes it seeks to fortify against the spread of instability. Likewise, the delivery of weapons by other countries is driven by similar rationale. I assume these actions send a signal to the recipient regimes that further support *might* be forthcoming if the regime were to be attacked by domestic rebels. These arrangements are usually less formal. According to Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka and Cooper (2016), such gestures of support entail much weaker signals of commitment, and thus are less likely than firm military alliances to generate the moral hazard. In fact, although the US allocates security assistance to strategically important regimes, this is often done specifically to *avoid* having to provide any further support in the future. This also follows the logic laid out by Morrow (2000) on why states formalize alliances: formal agreements entail a far more credible promise of future support than simple

⁴Observations in which the country is a member of both a defense alliance and a neutrality agreement with different countries simultaneously are coded as having a defense alliance, but *not* a neutrality agreement, as the provisions of defense alliances should trump the effects of neutrality agreements.

“alignments”, which may characterize the provision of security aid or arms. Thus, I create two binary variables to indicate leader-years in which a country 1) receives military training and aid from the United States, and 2) receives arms shipments from any country.

Results

Before presenting the main findings, Figure 3 and Table 1 lend some face validity to my expectations. The plot to the left in Figure 3 shows the mean frequency of purges in countries grouped according to defense alliance status, with bars indicating 95% confidence intervals around the means. States with defensive allies average 3.6 purges in the sample, significantly more than the average of 2.5 among those without a defense alliance. On the right, we see that purges leading to a violent response occur at higher rates—0.75 compared to 0.24—in countries with defensive allies than in those without. This difference is also statistically significant, and supports the intuition behind the argument. These differences in means, taken together, are highly suggestive that defense alliances do in fact have some effect on these outcomes.

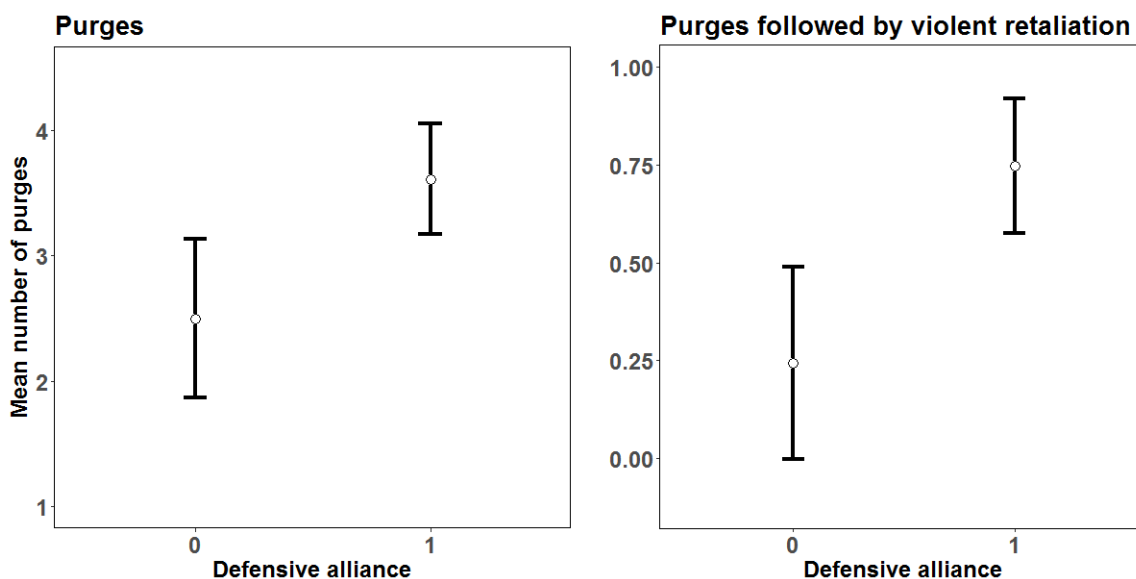


Figure 3: Average number of purges and post-purge civil wars by alliance status, 1969-2003

Table 1 breaks down the occurrence of purges and post-purge violence according to the

four types of external support examined here. The data show that 19% of purges by leaders with defense alliances result in retaliatory violence. This is considerably less common among dictators with other types of support. For instance, in only 5.7% of cases do purges by leaders with neutrality agreements lead to violence.

Table 1: External support, frequency of purges & post-purge retaliation

External support type	number of observations	# purges	# resulting in violence	%
Defense alliances	1,910	343	65	19%
U.S. security aid	1,682	289	44	15%
Arms shipments (SIPRI)	2,147	347	51	14.7%
Neutrality agreements	541	70	4	5.7%

Turning to my hypotheses tests, note that hypotheses 1 (purge occurrence) and 3 (post-purge violence) are part of the same process. To account for this, I model them together using a censored probit estimator. These are ideal for modeling multi-stage processes with binary outcomes in both stages, and in which the second stage can only occur given a positive outcome in the first stage (see Brandt and Schneider (2007); also Lemke and Carter (2016); Reed (2008); Reed and Clark (2000) for other applications). This accurately describes what is occurring here: I expect the anticipation of external support to increase the occurrence of purges, and also to increase the likelihood that those purges will lead to violence. Two separate probit models would be inappropriate, give that we can only observe purge-related retaliatory violence among observations that have first experienced a purge; this strategy assumes these processes are independent, which is likely not the case. The censored probit therefore accounts for the selection process, jointly estimating purge occurrence and any subsequent violent response stemming from the purge⁵.

⁵See appendix for a detailed description and justification of all covariates included in these models.

Let y_{i1}^* be the selection variable, or the latent variable that determines whether a *purge* in case i is observed, whereas y_{i2}^* is the latent variable in the outcome stage, which measures *retaliatory violence*. This can be represented by the following system of equations, in which these latent variables are functions of variables x_{ij} :

$$y_{i1}^* = x_{i1}\beta_1 + \epsilon_{i1}$$

$$y_{i2}^* = x_{i2}\beta_2 + \epsilon_{i2}$$

where x_{i1} are the covariates for the selection equation, x_{i2} are the covariates for the outcome equation, β_i are the coefficient estimates, and ϵ_i are disturbance terms, which are assumed to follow a joint normal distribution.

We can only observe *retaliatory violence*, y_2 if a *purge* occurs in the first stage (i.e., if $y_{i1}^* > 0$). More precisely,

$$Purge = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } y_{i1}^* > 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } y_{i1}^* \leq 0 \end{cases}$$

$$Retaliatory\ violence = \begin{cases} observed & \text{if } y_{i1} = 1 \\ unobserved & \text{if } y_{i1} = 0 \end{cases}$$

While the appendix contains full results tables and discussion of both the selection and outcome stages of these models, I focus here only on the effects of my primary variables of interest: the external support measures⁶.

Each of the four models estimates the effects of a different measure of external support separately. Figure 4 displays a set of first differences derived from post-estimation simulations based on the first-stage results of the censored probit models. Each simulation assumed mean values on all continuous variables, and median values on all binary variables.

⁶See appendix for a variety of robustness checks, alternative model specifications, and corrections for potential endogeneity between purges and defense agreements. Specifically, endogeneity checks are necessary to help rule out the possibility that findings are due to weak leaders simply seeking out alliances in order to purge their regimes, thus generating a spurious relationship. Results suggest that this is not the case.

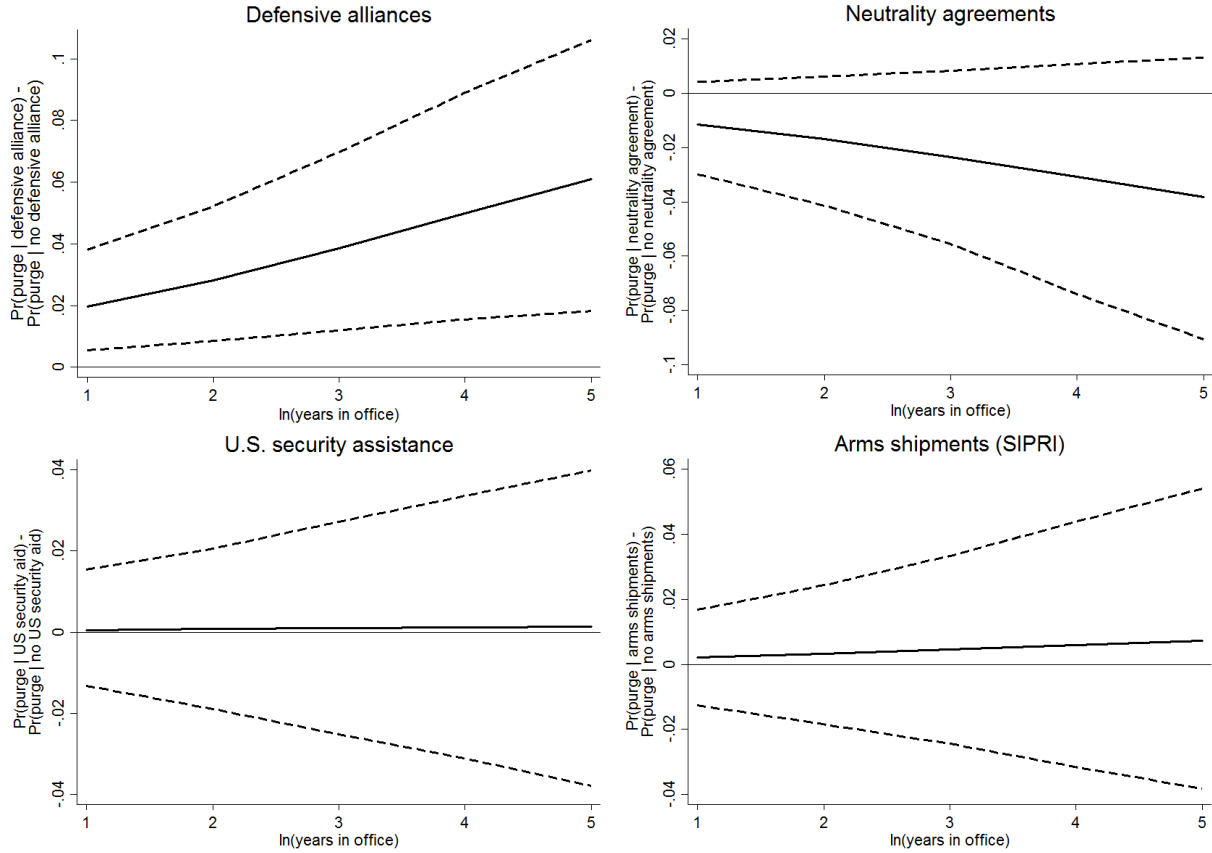


Figure 4: External support and purges

Each plot shows the difference between the predicted probability of a purge by a dictator with the specified form of external support, and a purge by a dictator without that form of support, plotted across the logged number of years in office. Solid lines are the estimated differences in probabilities, while dotted lines represent 95% confidence bounds. As the plot in the top left shows, the difference between the likelihood of a purge by a leader with a defensive ally and one without is positive and significant: Dictators are significantly more likely to purge their regimes if they have stronger guarantees of security in the form of defense alliances. This lends strong support to hypothesis 1. By contrast, none of the other forms of external support appear to have similar effects on purge likelihood. In fact, leaders with neutrality agreements appear to be less likely to purge their regimes, although the difference narrowly misses statistical significance. In the case of U.S. security aid and arms recipients, however, zero falls firmly

within the 95% confidence intervals, meaning that the effect of these types of support on purge occurrence is essentially zero. These figures lend strong support to the argument that signals of external support increase the likelihood that a dictator will purge his regime, but only when the signal entails a *strong* commitment by the ally. By contrast, weaker signals of support have no such effect, which corroborates previous thinking (e.g., Morrow (2000); Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka and Cooper (2016)) on variation in alliance types and other, less formal forms of support, such as military aid and arms shipments. These entail less commitment than written alliances, and thus should not have the same effect on the occurrence of purges.

We have now established that dictators who anticipate supportive intervention purge their regimes more frequently. But are they also more likely to purge their regimes when elites, collectively, are stronger and more mobilized, as Hypothesis 2 predicts? This would run counter to prevailing conventional wisdom regarding authoritarian politics and the logic of purges, which holds that dictators must tread lightly or create powersharing agreements when elites are strong and mobilized (i.e., Sudduth (2017*b,a*); Roessler and Ohls (2018)). In the face of strong elites, any efforts to consolidate power are more likely to be met with violent resistance from the leader's coalition. Regime elites want to avoid being eliminated and are better able to credibly threaten and constrain the leader when they are mobilized. The theory presented herein suggests that leaders who anticipate active external support believe the various costs related to power consolidation to be lower. Feeling less constrained to protect and expand their personal power, dictators with defense alliances should be more likely to purge their regimes when they feel most threatened, and thus when violence is more likely. This section evaluates H2.

While a table displaying the full results of these logit interaction models can be found in the appendix⁷, I restrict the focus here to the results for the external support*elite strength interactions. Marginal effects plots presented in Figure 5 strongly support the intuition behind H2. Each of the four plots represents a different model examining the four types of external support

⁷See appendix Table A3 for full results and details of these models, as well as alternative specifications and robustness checks using diagnostic tools provided by Hainmueller, Mummolo and Xu (2017).

separately. In each, elite strength—as measured by the annual deviation of the probability of a successful coup from the country mean of that probability—appears on the x-axis, while the estimated marginal effect of the external support measure is plotted on the y-axis. As the top left plot demonstrates, defense alliances have no significant effect on the likelihood of a purge at low levels of elite strength. This changes as elite strength approaches and increases beyond country-mean levels. Here, the effect becomes positive and significant. This means that, in accordance with Hypothesis 2, incumbent leaders with defense alliances become *more likely* to purge their regimes as elites grow stronger and more threatening. In other words, dictators who have reason to anticipate supportive intervention behave contrary to what we would expect based on our knowledge of authoritarian power consolidation (e.g., Boix and Svobik (2013); Sudduth (2017*b,a*); Roessler and Ohls (2018)), purging more frequently when it is most dangerous for them to do so.

Notably, this is only true for defense alliances. Just as in the purge models shown in Figure 4, these effects lose significance when other external support indicators—which do not generate the same expectation of intervention—are used. In fact, leaders with neutrality agreements only—a category that includes neutrality, nonaggression, and consultation agreements—are associated with a significantly *lower* likelihood of purges at mean levels of elite strength, although this coefficient falls just short of significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. I argue that this is because these neutrality agreements entail no pledges of future support from the external ally, and thus may not have the same effect as a defense alliance on a dictator’s judgment about the timing of purges.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 predicted that purges conducted by leaders with defense alliances should be more likely to produce a violent response, in the form of either a coup or rebellion. Leaders in these scenarios purge more mobilized elites more frequently, creating a larger pool of marginalized yet powerful factions who have both the capacity and incentive to retaliate against the leader to punish him and reclaim their positions. The outcome stage of the censored probit

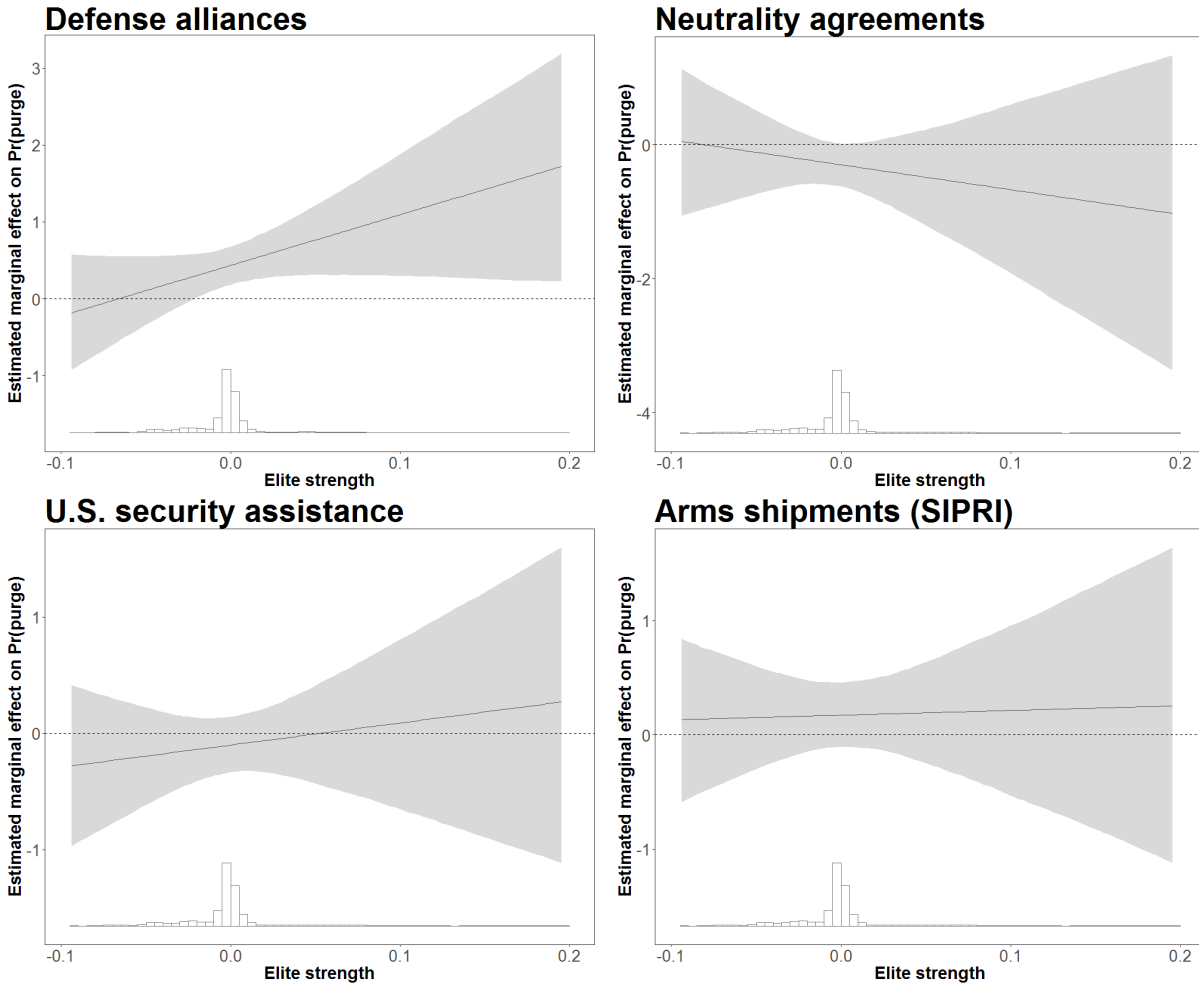


Figure 5: External support, elite strength, and purges

analyzes the joint occurrence of purges and violent retaliation. Here, the dependent variable is the occurrence of retaliatory violence given a purge.

Figure 6 displays the differences between leaders with and without each type of support in terms of the joint probabilities of both a purge and a violent response occurring. These differences are plotted across the natural log of leader tenure, along with 95% confidence intervals. As the plot on the top left shows, purges by leaders with *defense alliances* are significantly more likely to result in violence (in the form of either a coup or rebellion) than are those without a defense alliance, as indicated by the confidence interval remaining well above zero. In other words, leaders with defensive allies are *both* more likely to purge their regimes *and* more likely

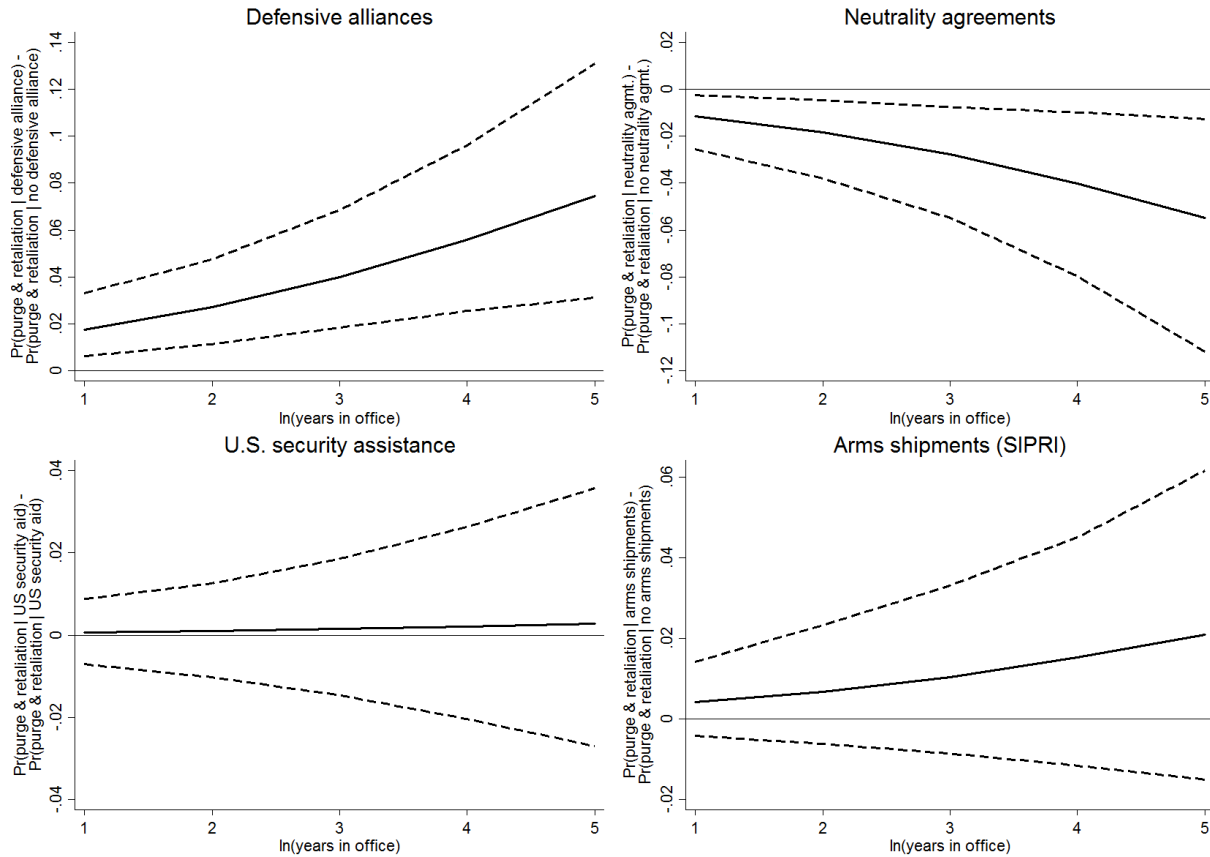


Figure 6: External support and the joint probabilities of purges and post-purge violence

to be met with violence after doing so, which provides support for hypothesis 3. The three other plots in Figure 6 demonstrate that other forms of support—which arguably entail less commitment by the outside state—do not significantly increase the joint occurrence of purges and violence, further corroborating the idea that it is the anticipation of *active* support that is driving these purges, rather than the mere presence of an alliance or other type of assistance involving less commitment. In fact, the plot on the top right suggests that leaders with *neutrality agreements* are significantly *less* likely to carry out destabilizing purges. This makes sense in the context of both the theory and the existing state of knowledge on the consequences of autocratic power consolidation. Leaders with only neutrality agreements do not enjoy the same promises of outside support as leaders with defensive alliances. These leaders are aware that they are more likely to face the fallout of a purge alone, and thus that their actions have serious

ramifications for their own survival in office. They must therefore be more cautious and selective when consolidating power, targeting less powerful individuals or those whose removal is less likely to provoke a violent response. The fact that these purges result in a *lower* likelihood of retaliatory violence is consistent with recent research by Sudduth and Braithwaite (2016), who find purges to be associated with a lower likelihood of civil conflict recurrence.

Note that these findings are driven by the outcomes in *both* stages of the censored probit: leaders with defensive allies are more likely to purge their regimes, and also to experience retaliatory violence soon afterward. One interesting thing about this finding is that this is a relatively hard test of hypothesis 3. The shadow of intervention is long, and marginalized elites who are purged by the leader are strategic actors who are acutely aware of the possibility of intervention. In many cases, these purged elites may be deterred from initiating violence against the regime, even if the leader has purged regime members that he would not have without the alliance. Would-be coup plotters or rebels—even those who are powerful and capable of inflicting violence against the leader—may be forced to accept their fate rather than attempt to fight against a possible invasion by the ally. In fact, Benson, Meirowitz and Ramsay (2014) find that alliance-induced moral hazard can deter aggression by encouraging the protégé to respond more forcefully to provocation. In other words, the data likely contain a significant number of “non-barking dogs” due to these strategic considerations, which may partly explain why Cunningham (2016) finds a decrease in civil war occurrence in his analysis. Furthermore, and in line with Cunningham’s argument, many of these cases in which post-purge retaliation is not observed may in fact still be characterized by non-trivial, purge-related levels of unrest that do not qualify as either coups or civil wars (i.e., riots, protests, or sporadic terror attacks). The fact that we still observe a significant coefficient in the outcome stage, given this harder test, leaves open the possibility that the effects of the moral hazard may be even stronger than the evidence presented here suggests.

Guinea-Bissau, 1998-1999

This section includes an overview of events surrounding the origins of the 1998-1999 civil war in Guinea-Bissau, a case which nicely illustrates each step in the argument and the empirical results. This case study will be to demonstrate how the desire of the Guinea-Bissau president to remove threats to his power, combined with support for his regime from powerful allies, led to the purge of a powerful and ambitious figure from the regime, and, ultimately, large-scale violence. The aim here is to arrive at a more detailed understanding of the data-generating process by closely examining the mechanisms along the causal pathway in the context of a historical case.

Background

Despite having held office since coming to power in a 1980 coup, Bissau-Guinean President João Bernardo Vieira found his authority significantly diminished during the 1990s following the collapse of Soviet support and the economic reforms induced by Western donors. Vieira had narrowly won elections—which he had repeatedly postponed—in 1994, but the victory was viewed as invalid by the opposition and many observers, damaging his legitimacy (Marut, 2001, 3). Vieira became paranoid and increasingly isolated politically, stacking his regime with loyalists and surrounding himself with a presidential guard (Forrest, 2002, 254). IMF structural adjustment programs and the adoption in 1997 of the CFA franc had raised the cost of living dramatically. This, along with political dysfunction and revelations of elite corruption, had resulted in salary cuts for civil servants and widespread discontent with Vieira's rule (Massey (2002, 77), Forrest (2002, 254), Embaló (2012, 264)).

Vieira was especially disliked within the armed forces, having deliberately marginalized the military since coming to power. He had suppressed five coup plots during his time in office, further marginalizing the military and replacing commanders with supporters after each one

(Kovsted and Tarp, 1999, 12). Vieira preferred instead to use his political party, the PAIGC⁸, as his vehicle of personal power. He had recently come under attack from factions within the party as well, however, in response to his personalization of power and abandonment of the ideals of party founders in favor of liberalization (Marut (2001, 3); Kovsted and Tarp (1999, 11); Rudebeck (2001, 28); Mekenkamp (1999, 300); Forrest (2002, 254)). Moreover, the government's compliance with IMF austerity measures in the 1990s had forced cuts to the military budget and salaries, ultimately leading to a planned 40% reduction in the size of the army (Kovsted and Tarp, 1999, 12). Vieira's continual alienation of the military made him extremely unpopular with the rank-and-file, who resented the pay and personnel cuts and perceived Vieira to be deliberately blocking their career prospects (Africa Confidential, 1998, 3).

Alliances

In contrast to Vieira's domestic unpopularity, he had close, cooperative relations with neighboring governments to the north (Senegal) and south (Guinea), both of whom had formal military alliances with Guinea-Bissau. His ties with Guinea were bolstered by personal relationships and reciprocity as well, as Vieira had maintained a long-standing friendship with Guinean president Lansana Conté. During the Guinea-Bissau liberation war, Conté had been the military commander of the adjacent Boké region in northern Guinea, and had facilitated cross-border operations by Vieira's PAIGC guerrillas (Mendy and Lobban (2013, 214-215), Africa Confidential (1998), Foucher (2013, 22)). The two became friends, and Guinea (then led by Sékou Touré) was the first country to recognize Vieira's government after the latter came to power in a 1980 coup. In 1996, when the Conté government came under attack by an army faction, Vieira signaled solidarity with Conté by deploying a contingent of forces to the border region and sending a delegation to Conakry (Mendy and Lobban, 2013, 214-215). Conté also had business and real-estate interests in Guinea-Bissau, and in 1998 the Conté regime itself was under

⁸Portuguese acronym for the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde

threat by mutinous soldiers and from criticism over the arrest of opposition leader Alpha Condé after the recent election (Marut, 2001, 3). Thus, Vieira could rightly expect Conté to come to his aid if necessary, in keeping with the norm of reciprocity that had evolved between the two countries.

Relations with Senegal were founded primarily upon mutual security concerns. Since 1982, Senegal had been fighting a low-level insurgency against the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), a separatist group seeking independence for Casamance, Senegal's southern enclave directly adjacent to the border with Guinea-Bissau (see Figure 7). The conflict had intensified during the 1990s after multiple ceasefire violations and a split within the MFDC between the Front Nord (based north of the Casamance River) and the hard-line Front Sud, based south of the river along the border with Guinea-Bissau (Foucher, 2007, 173). Casamance rebels had enjoyed rear bases and safe haven in northern Guinea-Bissau for many years thanks to historical and ethnic ties between the two regions. As the conflict escalated, however, the border issue, along with illicit sales of land mines and automatic weapons by Bissauan soldiers to the rebels, became major issues in relations between Dakar and Bissau (Ostheimer (2001), (Foucher, 2007, 178), Frempong (2005, 20)). Senegal (and, indirectly, France⁹) had supported the Vieira regime in its efforts to contain the cross-border flow of rebel arms and personnel.

Senegalese paranoia about the arms flow had led to increased pressure on Vieira to help secure the border. Vieira had recently agreed to create a zone of hot pursuit along the border, but the seizure in late January 1998 of an illegal shipment of weapons and landmines from the Guinea-Bissau army en route to Casamance rebels confirmed Senegalese suspicions of military involvement in the arms smuggling (Massey, 2002, 78). In response, Vieira arrested a number of soldiers and suspended his army chief of staff and long-time friend and political ally, Brigadier General Ansumane Mané, for dereliction of duty in failing to control the flow of weapons

⁹France had played a significant role in sustaining Vieira over the years, partially due to his opposition to the Casamance rebels destabilizing Senegal, their former colony, but also because of Guinea-Bissau's recent adoption of the West African CFA Franc in 1997 Cahen (2003, 90-91).



Figure 7: Guinea-Bissau (source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas (2018))

(Massey (2002, 78), Kovsted and Tarp (1999, 10)). As a further demonstration of his sincerity on the issue, Vieira then ordered the destruction in February of thousands of old Soviet land mines in the presence of representatives from Senegal, France, Portugal, the US, and the UN (Africa Research Bulletin, 1998a).

Vieira’s crackdown on arms smuggling, combined with the suspension of Mané—a popular former guerrilla who had a large following among the rank-and-file (Africa Confidential, 1998; Rake, 1998)—further exacerbated the military’s disdain for the president. Although many in the Guinea-Bissau army had historical and ethnic ties to the Casamançais, the primary motivation for soldiers participating in the illicit arms trade was to supplement their incomes, which had been greatly reduced by salary cuts implemented by Vieira in recent years (Africa Confidential, 1998). Therefore, Vieira’s agreement with Dakar to attempt to halt the arms flow only added to

their list of grievances against the president (Embaló, 2012, 265).

The relationship between Vieira and Mané stretched back to the liberation war. They had fought alongside one another, and Mané had organized the coup that brought Vieira to power in 1980. Vieira had begun to grow suspicious of Mané, however, even before the suspension. Mané represented the faction within the military and the PAIGC who favored the socialist ideals of Amílcar Cabral, the country's independence leader and party founder, and who opposed Vieira's IMF-led economic reforms (Rake, 1998). The general also resented the fact that Vieira had yet to reward him politically, despite his decades of loyalty (Frempong, 2005, 12). Conscious of Mané's large following among the rank-and-file—and of his own unpopularity among them—Vieira had begun to fear that the general was plotting against him. Although Vieira knew Mané was not personally involved in the arms trade, he had used the arms smuggling as an excuse to suspend him (Forrest (2002, 254-255), Foucher (2007, 178)).

After the suspension, rumors of a rebellion began mounting in Bissau, and Vieira continued to publicly accuse Mané of aiding the MFDC. Finally, on June 6, Vieira appointed General Humberto Gomes as Army Chief of Staff, thereby officially removing Mané from the post. The following day, a group of several hundred of Mané's men mutinied, seizing the airport and a military barracks near the capital (Rudebeck, 1998, 484). They also attempted, unsuccessfully, to assassinate Vieira (Foucher (2013, 7), Asemota (1998)). Within 48 hours, the mutiny had evolved into a full-scale, Mané-led rebellion, which initially consisted of a group of Vieira's PAIGC opponents and approximately 6,500 soldiers, or 95% of the army (Massey (2002, 80), Mekenkamp (1999, 301)). According to some estimates, fewer than 300 soldiers remained loyal to Vieira (Kovsted and Tarp, 1999, 11).

On June 9, Mané and his followers declared the formation of a *Junta Militar*, demanding that elections be held within 60 days and that Vieira agree to certain political reforms (Mekenkamp, 1999, 301). In response to Mané's declaration of rebellion, Senegal and Guinea each immediately invoked defense alliances to assist Vieira (Rake, 1998). Three days after the fighting

began, on June 10, the Senegalese expeditionary force, estimated at between 1,300 and 2,000 soldiers, officially arrived in Bissau. A contingent of 400 troops from Guinea followed (Massey, 2002, 80). Mané's rebellion was eventually supported by roughly 90% of the civilian population (Forrest, 2002, 257). Fighting between the rebels and Senegalese-Guinean forces continued for nearly a year, punctuated by abortive ceasefires and attempted power-sharing agreements. By early 1999, despite large-scale foreign intervention, Mané's rebels controlled roughly 80% of the country including the capital city. Vieira was forced from office after a final assault by the rebels in May 1999, and was granted asylum in Portugal. In elections held in November 1999, the long-ruling PAIGC lost its majority in parliament to the two primary opposition parties (Forrest (2002, 258-259), Embaló (2012, 266-267)).

External sources of violence in Guinea-Bissau

Several aspects of Vieira's behavior and the subsequent foreign intervention suggest that the alliances with Senegal and Guinea (the latter to a lesser extent) played pivotal roles in his decision to purge his chief of staff. First is the fact that Vieira did not officially dismiss Mané when the arms shipment was seized in late January, but rather stalled for four months before doing so. During this interim period, Vieira continued to publicly accuse Mané of being sympathetic to the MFDC in order to further impress upon the Senegalese the threat Mané represented to their fight against the Casamançais¹⁰ If Vieira were to be toppled by Mané, his replacement would almost certainly be someone less amenable to Senegalese interests, which would have grave implications for the campaign against the MFDC. This would all but force Senegal to intervene if Mané challenged the regime, and all indications are that Vieira knew that removing Mané would provoke a rebellion. He was aware of Mané's popularity within the military—this is why he was threatened by him, after all. He also knew how unpopular he was himself among this

¹⁰Vieira knew that Mané was not personally involved in the arms trafficking, but he used the accusations to captivate Senegal and portray Mané as a threat to their security (Forrest, 2002, 255). In fact, the findings of an investigatory commission, which were released in April 1999, would exonerate Mané and instead implicate Vieira's inner circle (Massey, 2002, 79).

same constituency, having drastically cut both the size of the military and the salaries of the soldiers, and now having cracked down on their lucrative smuggling ring.

Vieira's pre-purge paranoia and self-imposed isolation (e.g., Van der Drift (1999, 228); Forrest (2002, 254)) suggest that he was cognizant of his own unpopularity within his party and among the population as a whole as well, and thus that he would be vulnerable in the event that firing Mané resulted in a rebellion. Between February and June, there was increasing certainty in Bissau that a coup or rebellion was imminent. Mané and his allies in the PAIGC had joined together to accuse the president himself of profiting from the arms trade (Rudebeck (2001, 23-24)), and Vieira had even relocated his wife and children to Paris in early June (Africa Research Bulletin, 1998*b*). This suggests that Vieira knew that his hold on power was in danger, and that violence would ensue in the wake of Mané's removal. At the same time, he was hesitant to take this step until a plan was in place for neighboring countries to intervene and protect the regime. Mané had been suspended and placed under house arrest once before, in 1996, after several children were killed in an explosion that occurred as they assembled shell cases for sale to the MFDC. He was not formally charged in this incident, however, and was later pardoned and reinstated (Kovsted and Tarp, 1999, 10). What was different this time, however, was that the threat to Vieira from his military was greater in 1998 than in 1996¹¹. In line with the findings presented in Figure 5, leaders with foreign allies should be more likely to purge their regimes as the elites surrounding them grow more threatening.

Further evidence of the key role played by external actors in this case is the fact that the Senegalese-Guinean intervention, despite being relatively large and complex, materialized very quickly. Many observers are confident that arrangements had been in place even before Vieira had officially dismissed Mané, and that both the dismissal and the intervention had been jointly planned by the three countries in the period between Mané's suspension in February and his dismissal in June (Mekenkamp (1999, 301), Van der Drift (1999, 226), Forrest (2002, 256),

¹¹ According to the model, the probability of a successful coup in Guinea-Bissau in 1996 was 0.0072 higher than the country mean, while in 1998, it was 0.012 higher, a 69% increase.

Frempong (2005, 22)). In fact, Senegalese newspapers had reported that the military had begun moving toward Bissau on June 7, two days *before* the rebellion officially began (Van der Drift, 1999, 230). Upon their arrival, Senegalese troops immediately assumed positions around the presidential palace, indicating that their objective was not only to put down the rebellion and cut off MFDC supply lines, but also to protect Vieira specifically (Africa Research Bulletin, 1998*b*).

Examining the Guinea-Bissau case gives us a better look at the mechanisms linking external guarantees of support to domestic power consolidation and conflict. Vieira felt increasingly threatened by Mané, a general with a large power base that was unfavorably disposed to the president. Knowing that a purge would likely spark violence, but also realizing that he would be unlikely to survive a conflict in office, he sought to entice his foreign allies to intervene. By painting himself as a loyal ally and Mané as a threat not only to his regime, but to Senegalese security interests, Vieira was able to remove the threat to his regime (albeit temporarily) and to persuade his ally to come to his aid and deal with the backlash. The outcome of the Senegalese intervention also highlights how the traditional alliance dilemma familiar to IR scholars can inadvertently spark domestic conflict as well.

Conclusion

This paper identifies an underdeveloped area of inquiry: the effects of anticipated external support on authoritarian domestic politics. I argue that certain forms of external support—specifically, formal alliance agreements that promise military support during conflict—can generate a moral hazard for authoritarian leaders, in a manner similar to the traditional alliance dilemma well-known to international relations scholars. By signaling the potential for intervention, these types of alliances can lead dictators to deliberately incur a heightened risk of violent backlash by purging their regimes more often, and by purging more powerful and mobilized elites. I find strong evidence for the presence of a domestic moral hazard.

These findings are significant for several areas within both international relations and comparative politics, and point to many avenues for future research. First, in light of these findings, researchers and policymakers should each consider the broader effects of external support on the political development of the client state. By increasing the capacity of dictators to eliminate their internal enemies and creating the incentives for them to do so, defense alliances may inhibit the natural development of more inclusive forms of government. Instead, external military support may hasten the consolidation of what Svoblik (2009) labels “established dictatorships” through the reliance on externally-sanctioned violence. Tilly (1985) expresses concern that this practice risks exacerbating instability in the developing state by increasing the incentive of certain groups to seize control, and by creating a disproportionately powerful military organization “without same internal forging of mutual constraints between rulers and ruled” that characterized the state-building process in Europe (185). Along similar lines, Herbst (1997) argues that propping up failed states reduces the need for elites to form strong, coherent states capable of surviving without this support.

The finding that external support can lead incumbent dictators to consolidate power more aggressively should lead scholars to a more in-depth exploration of coup-proofing tactics used by dictators who do not anticipate external support. Findings in both Boix and Svoblik (2013) and Roessler and Ohls (2018) suggest that a more symmetric balance of power between a dictator and his coalition should lead to more power-sharing. As such, research on authoritarian coup-proofing strategies should do more to examine how outside powers can facilitate inclusive governance and/or less violent power consolidation tactics in dictatorships. Second, given that the anticipation of supportive intervention leads to a higher likelihood of aggressive power consolidation, we should also expect to observe these effects extend to instances beyond intra-elite conflict. In other words, we should expect incumbents with allies take more aggressive bargaining stances with opposition groups, dissidents, and protesters, possibly leading to the expanded use of repression.

Finally, these findings have clear foreign policy implications. A key component of US foreign policy, particularly since World War II, has been the provision of support to unstable, strategically important regimes. Yet, this paper highlights the fact that, while violence and disorder emanating from weak states represent legitimate threats to global stability, attempts by external actors to strengthen these states can in fact worsen the problems they were meant to address. In fact, further intervention on an even larger scale may result, mirroring the tragedy of the alliance dilemma. These conclusions point to a need for policymakers to re-examine strategies of promising unconditional support for authoritarian regimes in the face of internal conflict.

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