

Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950–1992

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What are the most important sources of institutional variation among authoritarian regimes, and how do such institutions influence these dictatorships' propensity to initiate military disputes? This article argues that most existing studies in both comparative politics and international relations employ a flawed conceptualization of authoritarian institutions. Excessive focus on the personalization or institutionalization of authoritarian regimes' decision-making procedures has distracted attention from the more critical issue of what institutions these regimes deploy to enhance social control and secure political incumbency. Since military regimes are systematically less effective than single-party regimes at developing these types of authoritarian institutions, they more frequently resort to desperate measures to fend off domestic challenges to their power. In particular, we find compelling empirical support for our hypothesis that military regimes are more likely than single-party regimes to initiate military disputes, irrespective of whether those regimes are highly personalized or not.

States fight wars, but governments in power make the fateful decision whether or not to start them. Warfare thus results not merely from what students of international relations have tended to see as the benchmark interest of states: maximizing relative gains in a Hobbesian world (i.e., Waltz 1979). It also arises from what students of comparative politics typically argue is the benchmark interest of government officials: staying in power (i.e., Bates 1981). Since prospects for retaining power are influenced by domestic political institutions, we expect such institutions to exhibit a powerful effect on the conflict propensity of different types of governments.

Unfortunately, we still know much too little about *how* or even *which* institutions make governments more or less likely to initiate military disputes. This problem is particularly acute in our study of authoritarian regimes. There is considerable scholarly consensus that dictatorships are more likely than democracies to instigate wars; but why are some dictatorships more belligerent than others? Like many students of the democratic peace, we ar-

gue that variation in international aggression arises from variation in domestic political institutions. But what are the most important sources of institutional variation among authoritarian regimes? And how do such institutions influence these dictatorships' propensity to initiate military disputes?

We address these questions by applying a novel institutional typology of authoritarian regimes to the question of militarized dispute initiation (Slater 2003). We argue that authoritarian institutions influence conflict propensity through their effect on regime legitimacy and government tenure. The less legitimate the regime and the less secure the government in power, the more likely the political leadership will be to initiate military conflict.

We argue further that the critical institutional factor influencing an authoritarian regime's legitimacy and security in office is whether it is ultimately backed by the military or by a ruling party. What matters in institutional terms is not how these regimes *make* decisions (personalized vs. collective procedures), but how they *enforce*

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them (party vs. military institutions). We thus expect that authoritarian regimes resting on military institutions are more likely to initiate interstate conflict than those relying on party institutions—regardless of whether those regimes are personalized or not. We find robust empirical support for this argument from a dataset of all states from 1950 to 1992.

This hypothesis counters the view that military regimes are *less* belligerent than single-party regimes, since they ostensibly focus their military power against domestic opponents rather than external enemies (Andreski 1980). Our institutional logic also departs from the intuitive normative argument for *why* military-backed regimes might be more belligerent than party-backed regimes: Soldiers in power must be keen to resolve diplomatic disputes through armed means. Yet what defines a military regime in institutional terms is not the personal background of its leadership, but the absence of any effective party institutions to help manage elite factionalism and curb mass dissent. As we show in our empirical results, military regimes are more likely to initiate disputes whether they are fronted by military *or* civilian leaders. This suggests that military regimes are not more aggressive because they exhibit a “cult of the offensive,” but *institutions of the offensive*.

Regime Type and the Initiation of International Conflict

The most prominent work on regime types and international relations is that of the democratic peace. Empirical researchers have consistently found that democracies are less likely to go to war or be involved in an international crisis with each other than authoritarian or mixed authoritarian-democratic dyads (Oneal and Russett 1997; Ray 1995; Rousseau et al. 1996; Russett and Oneal 2001). One explanation for this pattern focuses on democratic institutions. Democratic institutions create a predictable process for removing a government from power, forcing decision makers to analyze how their actions are likely to affect their tenure, leading to a significantly decreased likelihood of conflict between democracies (Buono de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003; Gaubatz 1991). This research agenda has also generated interesting insights into the effects of institutional differences across democracies, such as the puzzle of why some democracies tend to be more aggressive than others (Ireland and Gartner 2001; Reiter and Tillman 2002).

Attention to the impact of specific authoritarian institutions on foreign policy behavior has been much more

sporadic and much less systematic, hindering the kind of knowledge accumulation witnessed in the democratic peace literature. A handful of studies have argued that certain types of authoritarian regimes are more inclined to cooperate and less likely to be in conflict with each other than other types. Oren and Hays (1997) find that socialist regimes with relatively high levels of economic development were unlikely to fight each other during the Cold War. In contrast, Bebler (1987) argues that socialist regimes lacked a conflict resolution mechanism and were generally unwilling to allow international arbitration, leading them to use force against each other. Weart (1994) finds that established oligarchic regimes are as unlikely to fight each other as established democracies. While these approaches provide some interesting insights into the behavior of nondemocracies, they only examine the war proneness of dyads whose members have a similar regime type. This provides us with little guidance in determining which types of authoritarian regimes are most likely to *initiate* militarized disputes: the puzzle of interest here.

The sparse existing literature on dispute initiation by authoritarian regimes has produced mixed findings. Andreski (1980) argues that military regimes should be especially unlikely to use force externally because their military force is geared toward internal control. Miller (1995) finds that authoritarian governments are more likely to use military force to divert attention from domestic problems than democratic governments, because they generally lack the policy tools to address domestic problems. Additionally, new research suggests that states having undergone only partial democratic transitions are highly likely to initiate militarized disputes to harness nationalism and mobilize support to preserve incumbency (Mansfield and Snyder 2002; Snyder 2000).

We both draw upon and build upon these perspectives in several ways. Like Miller, Mansfield, and Snyder, we argue that unstable regimes make for belligerent states. But we find it inadequate to infer regime instability from regime institutions (democracy vs. authoritarianism) alone. Since some types of authoritarian regimes are systematically more unstable than others, we expect the states these regimes command to be systematically more war-prone than others. Like Andreski, we locate the source of this variation in authoritarian regimes' domestic instability (and hence international belligerence) in institutional variation *among* dictatorships. Whether authoritarian rulers primarily face challenges from fellow elites or from mobilized mass groups, and whether they deal with such challenges primarily with carrots or sticks, their capacity to defeat challengers largely depends on the institutions at their command. The key institutional

question is whether authoritarian regimes construct effective party apparatuses to help them govern, or depend overwhelmingly on military institutions to keep opposition in check.

Authoritarian Institutions and Their Effect on Conflict

Reconceptualizing Authoritarian Institutions: Infrastructural vs. Despotic Power

Current research on authoritarian institutions in comparative politics tends to classify authoritarian regimes based on the locus of decision-making power, or “despotic power” (Mann 1988). This generally leads to coding authoritarian governments into three types:¹ (1) personal, (2) single party, or (3) military (Brooker 2000; Geddes 1999a; Huntington 1991; Peceny et al. 2002). As Geddes puts it:

“In military regimes, a group of officers decides who will rule and exercises some influence on policy. In single-party regimes, access to political office and control over policy are dominated by one party. . . . Personalist regimes differ from both military and single-party in that access to office and the fruits of office depends much more on the discretion of an individual leader.” (1999a, 121)

The central conceptual problem with this approach is its assumption that it is only “despotic power” that matters in authoritarian regimes, not “infrastructural power,” or the capacity to enforce the leadership’s decisions throughout national territory. Military and party institutions are portrayed as potential constraints on executive prerogative, not as the leadership’s organizational foundation for rule. Institutions present political constraints—just like in democracies—but do not provide political capacity.

Yet the capacity of an authoritarian regime to curtail dissent influences its chances of staying in power, which

¹Danolovic and Clare (2004) use a different approach by classifying authoritarian regimes along the degree of “horizontal accountability” or the number of veto players. While this coding of authoritarian regimes is different than the military, personalist, and single-party approach, it still is based on the same assumption that authoritarian leaders are constrained by their domestic institutions, but unlike democracies, they do not face vertical accountability (constraints from the electorate). This approach still assumes that despotic institutions constrain authoritarian leaders similar to the way that legislatures might constrain a democratic leader.

should therefore affect its propensity to initiate conflict. And keeping opposition under wraps is a job for authoritarian institutions—most notably, party and military institutions. If regimes that rely on parties to maintain social control and elite cohesion can be shown to be *systematically* more or less capable at these tasks than regimes that ultimately rely on the institutional might of the military, we can expect single-party and military regimes to exhibit differing conflict propensities. Our ability to recognize such variation is hindered, however, by a typology that classifies authoritarian regimes strictly in terms of their despotic institutions, not their infrastructural institutions.

This faulty conceptualization leads to faulty causal analysis in two important ways. First, when an authoritarian regime is coded as strictly “personal,” we have no idea whether the regime ultimately depends on a party or military apparatus to maintain political control. Yet as Levi aptly puts it: “Only in the instance of a small, isolated community where all are unarmed except for the one person who possesses a six-gun is it possible even to conceive of rulers as able to obtain power without allies and support” (1988, 42–43). In addition, since the three-party typology squeezes two very different types of institutions into one dimension, it inevitably forces a large number of cases into hybrid categories. This makes it impossible to determine which type of institutions—despotic or infrastructural?—are responsible for the outcome of interest.

Neither of these problems is trivial or semantic. Of the 92 countries Geddes (1999a) codes, 37 are classified at some juncture as purely personal, thus “hiding” the regimes’ infrastructural institutions altogether. Another 29 are coded as a hybrid of personal and either military or single-party rule, thus complicating efforts to determine which type of institution matters. This leaves the student of international conflict wondering: Did purely “personal” leaders like Pakistan’s Ayub Khan and Indonesia’s Sukarno launch cross-border offensives in the mid-1960s because they were unconstrained in their decision-making power? Or did they do so because their dependence on the military for domestic control left them with little institutional capacity to preserve their own positions? Analytical problems also arise from the large quantity of hybrid regimes, which are simply coded as “other” in Peceny et al.’s (2002) recent study of authoritarian institutions and conflict. The problem is not flawed coding, but a flawed typology guiding the coding process.

To capture the key distinction between infrastructural and despotic institutions, we employ a new institutional typology (Slater 2003) that arranges authoritarian regimes along these two dimensions (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 Slater's (2003) Institutional Typology of Authoritarian Regimes

		<u>Despotic Power</u> (Who Decides?)	
		<u>Oligarchic</u> Machine (1461/34)	<u>Autocratic</u> Bossism (1214/22)
<u>Infrastructural Power</u> (Who Executes?)	<u>Party</u>		
	<u>Military</u>	Junta (152/3)	Strongman (616/18)

Numbers in Parentheses are 1) Total number of nondemocratic state years from 1950-1992 in each category and 2) number of nondemocracies in each category in 1990. For Machines, there are a total of 1461 non-democratic state years from 1950-1992 and 34 machines in 1990.

Examples from each category:

Machine: China (1976-present), Taiwan (pre-1996), Tunisia, Senegal (pre-2000)

Bossism: North Korea (Kim), China (Mao), Zimbabwe (Mugabe), Malaysia (Mahathir)

Junta: Burma, Algeria, Greece (pre-1974), Argentina (pre-1983)

Strongman: Chile (Pinochet), Pakistan (Zia), Zaire (Mobutu), Panama (Noriega)

Personalized regimes that rely on military enforcement are “strongman” regimes, while personalized regimes depending on parties to implement top-down commands are examples of “bossism.” Regimes with more collectivized decision-making procedures are “juntas” or “machines,” depending on whether their grip over political opponents ultimately rests on military or party power.

The distinction between authoritarian regimes based on military institutions as opposed to party institutions has long proven to be both empirically regular and theoretically significant. Although some authoritarian regimes might appear to rest entirely on clientelist networks among elites, rather than on party or military institutions per se, this presents only a partial picture of how authoritarian regimes work. Authoritarian regimes with stronger party institutions are more effective purveyors and organizers of elite patronage than regimes that lack them. Even when regimes do not allow an active day-to-day role for the military, one can safely assume that the leadership is counting on the military to provide it with security against any potential mobilization by the political opposition. Not all authoritarian regimes have effective parties, but all do have militaries that are expected to be at least minimally effective if the survival of the regime should come into question.

By coding all countries with Slater's institutional typology of authoritarian regimes, we bring “hidden” infrastructural institutions into clear relief. Regimes coded as purely personal or as personalistic hybrids in the existing typology become regimes with readily identifiable despotic *and* infrastructural institutions: bosses, juntas,

strongmen, and machines. This helps set the stage for determining whether conflict propensity is heightened more by the personalization of executive power, or by a regime's dependence on party or military institutions.

To explain the foreign policy behavior of nondemocracies, we marry this new typology of authoritarian institutions to familiar deductive premises regarding elite political behavior. Similar to other studies (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Smith 1996), we assume that the primary goal of any leader is to stay in power. This incentive is likely to be even greater for authoritarian leaders than for democratic leaders, given the unpredictability of succession procedures in most authoritarian settings. The prospect of an unceremonious (or even violent) removal from power makes authoritarian leaders more desperate to hang on, and thus more likely to take the desperate measure of initiating an interstate conflict. In sum, we see regime institutions (democracy vs. authoritarianism) influencing conflict propensity in ways consistent with most institutional explanations for the democratic peace.

To understand variation in conflict propensity *among* authoritarian regimes, however, we need to look beyond regime institutions and examine despotic and infrastructural institutions. Do authoritative decisions derive from autocratic will or oligarchic deliberation, and does a ruling party or a loyal military serve as the regime's primary instrument for maintaining power? While both types of authoritarian institutions are worthy of attention, we argue that infrastructural institutions matter more than despotic institutions for militarized dispute initiation,

because they have a clearer impact on *government tenure*: the bread-and-butter concept of institutional variants of the democratic peace. As Huntington (1991) has argued, and as Geddes (1999a, 1999b) has confirmed in a recent quantitative analysis, single-party regimes systematically last longer than military regimes. If our logic of government insecurity and propensity to initiate conflict is correct, we should expect military regimes to initiate interstate disputes more often than their single-party counterparts.

The Relative Stability and Durability of Party-Backed Authoritarian Regimes

There are two main perspectives on why party institutions provide more secure incumbency than military institutions. For some scholars, military regimes are particularly brittle due to their tendency to splinter at the elite level—notably between political and professional soldiers—whereas political parties provide a superior organizational basis for maintaining elite cohesion (Geddes 1999b). Since most democratic transitions begin with splits in the ruling elite, this variation between military and single-party regimes is significant indeed. Other scholars take a different tack, suggesting that single-party regimes are more willing and able than military regimes to mobilize the citizenry into a wide array of pro-regime political organizations (Kasza 1995; Perlmutter and Bennett 1980). This provides single-party regimes with a more potent institutional infrastructure for suppressing potential opposition both in the wider society and within the state apparatus itself (Slater 2003). Lacking such institutions, military regimes exhibit less capacity to counter popular dissent through cooptation and are more often forced to rely on raw coercion.

Single-party regimes tend to exhibit greater institutional capacity to mobilize coercive and ideological resources on behalf of incumbent leaders. In terms of coercion, single-party regimes prioritize party supremacy and the political subordination of the armed forces. Without proving one's political loyalty to the party, one has no hope of advancing to positions of authority within the military hierarchy. Such regimes also typically develop strong nonmilitary police forces as an extra reservoir of politically reliable coercive capacity (Brooker 2000; Slater 2003). Furthermore, while military regimes often manage to develop some level of popular legitimacy through the provision of political stability or strong economic performance, they differ from most single-party regimes in that they rarely elaborate full-blown regime ideologies to justify long-term authoritarian rule. Thus, when popular challenges arise or the economy deteriorates,

military regimes tend to enjoy less of a cushion of ideological legitimacy to help them weather such tough times.

Military regimes are also more vulnerable to challenges emanating from within the ruling elite. As Geddes (1999b) notes, divisiveness in military regimes between political and professional soldiers presents a chronic problem. Single-party regimes resolve this problem by making *all* soldiers political soldiers. While the military is still a functioning organization in a party dominated system, it has either been coopted by the party or its interests are in line with the party (Brooker 2000). For example, in China, Communist Party officials disciplined and purged several high-ranking military officers in 1989 after dissent arose over the decision by the Party to use military repression against the popular uprising in Tiananmen Square (Godwin 1999).

In sum, military regimes have been found to be systematically more vulnerable to collapse than single-party regimes. Since infrastructural institutions (party vs. military) strongly influence government tenure—irrespective of personalization—they should be associated with variations in authoritarian regimes' conflict propensity.

Military Regimes and International Conflict

Because leaders backed by military regimes have greater insecurity in their leadership tenure, we expect them to be more belligerent internationally to compensate for this lack of domestic institutional capacity. This is because, even in authoritarian settings, sheer repression has its limits as a strategy for maintaining control (Danopoulos 1988; Wintrobe 1998). As a leading Africanist colorfully puts it, "coercion may well be conceived of metaphorically as a gold reserve underpinning the currency of power. If constantly employed, the reserves are emptied in short order, and rapid devaluation of power itself soon follows" (Young 1994, 37). Repression can best be minimized by generating domestic legitimacy, but military regimes possess fewer institutional tools than single-party regimes for doing so. Even worse, repression in military regimes raises the specter of exacerbating natural tendencies toward elite disunity, as the military itself threatens to fragment in ways that mirror splits within the population at large (Dassel and Reinhardt 1999).

With a weaker domestic institutional endowment at their command, leaders of military regimes often seek to use foreign policy to secure loyalty and bolster legitimacy. This was the logic of the Greek military regime in 1974. Facing internal problems, they attempted to use a military dispute in Cyprus to legitimate their rule

(Danopoulos 1988; Veremis 1985). Unfortunately, the military's poor performance only exacerbated the illegitimacy of the regime, helping to precipitate its downfall (Danopoulos 1988). Despite its ultimate failure, the Greek military was hoping for an effective military campaign to legitimize its rule in the face of overwhelming economic and social problems.

International disputes can also help leaders insulate themselves from internal threats such as coups. First, international conflict can generate rally around the flag effects. Gelpi (1997) and Miller (1995) find that diversion will be used when a state lacks other policy tools to address domestic grievances. Also, Dassel and Reinhardt (1999) argue that the use of force is more likely during extreme domestic strife, because domestic repression is likely to divide the military. Mobilization against a foreign enemy also helps leaders brand internal opposition groups as tools of foreign aggressors (Snyder 1991, 2000). For example, one reason the Argentinian junta invaded the Falklands was to forestall unrest due to economic policy failures and the military's repressive actions during the "Dirty War" (Levy and Vakili 1992).

Given their relatively secure position at home, leaders of single-party regimes are less likely to initiate conflict abroad. Since the leadership's tenure is relatively secure, foreign policy is more likely to be decided on the international merits (Smith 1996). Evidence of such a pattern comes from research on the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The interventionists in the Soviet leadership were only able to create a coalition from the moderates within the party because they were able to convince party members that an intervention would be quick and costless (Valenta 1991). Conversely, in 1981, when the "Solidarity" movement grew in Poland, the Soviets did not intervene. One reason was the high costs of intervention, especially since the Soviet army was already fighting in Afghanistan (Gati 1990). In both these examples, the party leadership enjoyed enough security of tenure at home to make them highly cautious about projecting state power abroad.

This institutional explanation for military regimes' relative belligerence stands in contrast to Peceny et al.'s (2002) recent focus on normative factors. They attribute the relative peacefulness of single-party regime dyads during the Cold War to shared socialist values. Yet many single-party regimes during the Cold War were *not* socialist (i.e., Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Senegal, Singapore, Taiwan). To take one noteworthy example, the fact that party-backed regimes in China and Taiwan have never allowed their rivalry to erupt into outright warfare cannot be explained with Peceny et al.'s normative logic; but it is perfectly compatible with the institutional logic we

develop here. Furthermore, even if shared socialist ideology dampens conflict *between* socialist states, we see no reason to suspect that commitment to socialism would reduce the likelihood of a regime *initiating* conflict. To the contrary, the Comintern's ideological commitment to supporting leftist rebellions worldwide should have made single-party regimes more rather than less belligerent during the period in question.

Our institutional argument gains further credibility vis-à-vis normative explanations when one considers recent findings that new, unconsolidated democracies are more prone to initiate militarized disputes (Mansfield and Snyder 2002; Snyder 2000). At a normative level, there is no reason to presume that new democracies would be less committed to international dialogue and the peaceful resolution of disputes than established democracies. But if conflict propensity is heightened by weak domestic institutions that prove unable to generate legitimacy and secure government tenure, as we argue here, the puzzling belligerence of new democracies ceases to be a puzzle.

Another possible normative explanation might hold that military regimes are more belligerent due to their leaders' military backgrounds (Sagan 2003; Walt 1987). Yet there is no clear consensus that leaders of military regimes are especially war-prone. While some indeed argue this, others view military leaders as more conservative in their decision to use force (Betts 1991; Gelpi and Feaver 2004; Huntington 1957; Petraeus 1989). More importantly, our institutional approach explains why *civilian* leaders of military-backed regimes are especially likely to initiate conflict. Such leaders are not socialized by a military background, but they are still more likely to initiate war because their reliance on the military at home creates institutional incentives to use force abroad to remain in power.

We thus argue that institutions are more important than norms and that some institutions are more important than others. Specifically, we see ample reason to surmise that *infrastructural* institutions have a powerful influence on the conflict propensity of authoritarian regimes, but little reason to suspect that *despotic* institutions similarly affect militarized dispute initiation in authoritarian settings. This leads us to our core hypothesis:

Military regimes (Strongmen and Juntas) are more likely to initiate international disputes than either democracies or party regimes (Bosses or Machines), regardless of their despotic institutions (personalized vs. collective decision-making procedures).

To the extent that other scholars have uncovered an empirical relationship between personalization and belligerence, we submit that it is spurious. “Personal” regimes are not more belligerent because they are personalized, but because military regimes are systematically more likely to become personalized than party regimes. Only when we recode all authoritarian regimes in the 1950–92 period with Slater’s four-part typology can we assess whether variation in despotic institutions or infrastructural institutions is primarily responsible for producing variation in authoritarian war making.

Research Design

To test our core hypothesis, we use the following research design. Our hypothesis is monadic, so our empirical analysis uses state years as the unit of analysis.² We examine from 1950–1992 all states as opposed to only nondemocracies, to compare the effect of authoritarian institutions to that of democratic institutions. Given the substantial amount of literature about the restraining effects of democratic institutions (see Russett and Oneal 2001), including democracies in our dataset provides a very useful benchmark for determining the relative significance of specific authoritarian institutions.³

Including democracies also creates a harder test for our theoretical argument. Research on the democratic peace has found that democracies are less likely to initiate militarized disputes than other states (Bremer 1992; Huth 1996; Rousseau et al. 1996; Russett and Oneal 2001). This makes it more difficult to demonstrate that any type of authoritarian regime is not more likely to initiate a militarized dispute compared to democracies. Additionally, including democracies is common in studies of the impact of authoritarian regimes on conflict (Butler and Peceny 2004; Peceny et al. 2002). We also reexamine the presented models excluding democracies and the results are consistent with the presented findings.⁴

²While other studies (see Peceny et al. 2002 and Reiter and Stam 2003) use dyads as their unit of analysis, our hypothesis says nothing about targets, rather it simply focuses on the incentives of an individual state to initiate conflict. Thus looking at states as opposed to dyads is the appropriate unit of analysis.

³Including democracies is common in studies of the impact of authoritarian regimes on conflict. See Peceny et al. (2002) and Butler and Peceny (2004).

⁴Democracies are considered any state scoring less than a 6 on the Polity –10 to 10 scale. We also tested for thresholds of 5 and 7 and the results do not change. In these models, we exclude either party or military (i.e., one of the categories serves as the baseline category). The results confirm the findings presented in this article.

The dependent variable is the number of militarized disputes initiated by a state in a given year. Data for all the variables except the authoritarian codings were created from EUGENE (Bennett and Stam 2000) and will be discussed below. The dependent variables are from the Correlates of War (COW) Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data (Jones, Bremer, and Singer 1996). The MID data codes the initiator of a dispute as the first state to threaten or use military force.⁵

The key independent variables are the regime type variables. First, states are coded as either democratic or nondemocratic. To do this, the Polity III data is used. A state’s autocracy score (0–10) is subtracted from its democracy score (0–10) to create a variable that ranges from –10 to 10. States that score a 6 or better are considered democracies. All other states are nondemocracies. We test our results using different thresholds of democracy and the results do not change. We include a measure of democracy in the analysis because we expect that democratically governed states should initiate the least number of MIDs.

To code these nondemocracies along the axes described above, one variable from the Polity III data is used for despotic institutions, and one variable from the Banks’ Cross National Time Series Archive is used for infrastructural institutions. For despotic institutions, a variable XCONST is used from the Polity III data.⁶ This variable measures “the operational (de facto) independence of the chief executive” (Jagers and Gurr 1995). It ranges from unlimited authority to executive parity. A nondemocratic regime is coded as personalized if its executive is rated as having unlimited authority or is in the intermediate category (1 or 2 on the XCONST variable). Otherwise a nondemocratic regime is coded as collective.

⁵MID defines the initiator as Side A, the state that took the first militarized action. While there may be some concern over whether this captures who actually initiated a dispute, we are confident in our use of this measure for a few reasons. First, our theoretical argument is about who uses force first. We argue that because of institutional incentives, military regimes are likely to use force first, in order to garner domestic political benefits. Thus, this measure of initiation is appropriate for our theoretical argument. Also, this measure of initiation has been commonly used in the international relations literature (Bennett and Stam 2000; Leeds 2003; Reiter and Stam 2003), allowing our results to be comparable with other studies in international relations.

⁶XCONST takes on seven values: (1) Unlimited authority—there are no regular limitations on the executive’s actions; (2) Intermediate category; (3) Slight to moderate limitations—there are some real but limited constraints on the executive; (4) Intermediate category; (5) Substantial limitations—the executive has more effective authority than any accountability group but is subject to substantial constraints by them; (6) Intermediate category; (7) Executive parity or subordination. Accountability groups have effective authority equal to or greater than the chief executive in most areas of activity.

We use different thresholds of the XCONST variable to test the robustness and the results do not differ.⁷

To measure whether a regime rests primarily on party or military institutions, a variable from the Banks' data is used that measures whether a government is controlled by civil or military authorities.⁸ A nondemocracy is coded as being a single-party regime if it is coded as (1) "Any government controlled by a nonmilitary component of the nation's population" (Cross National Time Series Archive 1995). It is coded as military if it is (1) under direct military control or is (2) effectively under military control. Our party-military category corresponds relatively well with Geddes' codings for single parties and militaries.⁹ All states are then coded by whether their regimes are (1) Democracies, (2) Machines (Party-Collective), (3) Bossism (Party-Individual), (4) Junta (Military-Collective), or (5) Strongman (Military-Individual).¹⁰ Thus, to test our hypothesis, we simply in-

⁷Comparing our military-party and individual-collective codings to the standard Polity -10 to 10 scale reveals some interesting results. Infrastructural institutions (party-military) are correlated with the Polity variable at the .83 level, but this is driven highly by the democracies. The correlation for states with nondemocratic regimes is only .11.

⁸This variable takes on four values: (1) Civilian. Any government controlled by a nonmilitary component of the nation's population; (2) Military-Civilian. Outwardly civilian government effectively controlled by a military elite; (3) Military. Direct rule by the military, usually (but not necessarily) following a military coup d'état; (4) Other. All regimes not falling into one or another of the foregoing categories, including instances in which a country, save for reasons of exogenous influence, lacks an effective national government.

⁹For all state years, there are a few cases where Geddes' codings for single party and military do not match with our codings for party and military. While it would have been ideal to have a perfect match, this discrepancy does not present a problem for our measure. First, there is only a discrepancy in 11% of cases where Geddes codes a state as either single party or military. This is not a large percentage and we reanalyzed our results using Geddes coding of single party or military and our codings when Geddes codes a state as personalist or mixed. These results are the same as the presented results. Second, this 11% is likely to be driven by a few states and not a systematic difference. For example, when we only look at 1990, there are no differences between Geddes' single party and military states and our party and military states.

¹⁰One possible criticism of our use of the Banks data is that while it makes a distinction between military and civilian governments, it does not indicate if all civilian governments have a party based system. While the Banks' data does not provide this type of information, we believe it is not necessary and that this data is appropriate for our theoretical argument. First, governments where the locus of power is not the military are likely to be organized along similar lines regardless of the type of party system. Nonmilitary regimes have to organize in order to maintain control over society without reliance on military force. Also, a cross sectional look at the 34 party regimes in 1990 indicate that they all had a central party.

clude the authoritarian regime variables as dichotomous variables (leaving democracy as the reference category).

Control Variables

In addition to the hypothesized variables, we include a few control variables that are standard in research on militarized disputes. First, we include a measure of the number of contiguous borders, which is the total number of states by land or sea contiguous to a state as defined by the COW project. Research in international relations has pointed to the importance of contiguity as a critical indicator of the opportunities a state has to engage in conflict (Huth 1996; Most and Starr 1989). The second control variable is the total number of allies of a state, as defined by the COW Alliance data. Having more allies is likely to create more opportunities for conflict. Allies may embolden members to engage in conflict with the belief that they have a network of states to support them (Leeds 2003; Snyder 1997).

The next variable is the military capability of a state. This variable is a state's Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) score from the COW project. This measures a state's power relative to the total power of all state members. Similar to contiguity, power is an important indicator of a state's opportunity to initiate conflict (Most and Starr 1989). Also, this variable accounts for one possible alternative explanation of our hypothesized relationship, that military regimes possess more military capability than other states and thus have more opportunity to use force than other states. Our inclusion of the relative military capabilities variable should capture this potential explanation.¹¹ We also include a measure of economic openness, which is a state's total trade (exports + imports) divided by its GDP. Liberal theories of international relations have pointed to the importance of trade as potentially inhibiting conflict. Trade dependent states should be less likely to initiate conflicts to preserve the benefits of trade for their economies (Russett and Oneal 2001).¹²

¹¹The CINC score uses six measures of a state's power and divides it by the total measure of the world. For example, a state's share of military personnel is its total number of military personnel divided by the total number of military personnel worldwide. The average of these six indicators is a state's CINC score. More information on this measure is available at <http://cow2.la.psu.edu/>

¹²Data for the control variables was created using EUGENE (<http://www.eugenesoftware.org/>) and is from the COW Alliance data (1 for any type of alliance, 0 otherwise), COW state member data, and COW national material capabilities data (we use the state's combined indicator of national capabilities (CINC) measure. We get data on openness from the Penn World Tables and the World Bank. More information on the COW data is available at

Finally, to control for the effects of autocorrelation and heteroskedasticity, a lagged dependent variable is used for the monadic analyses, where the dependent variable is a count of the number of initiations. Similar to an OLS regression (Stimson 1985), a lagged dependent variable should help reduce the effects of autocorrelation. This is a process recommended and used in other research in political science (Beck and Katz 1995; Li and Reuveny 2003; Li and Schaub 2004).¹³ Because the dependent variable is a count of the number of initiations, we use a negative binomial regression model with robust standard errors clustered on the state.¹⁴

Empirical Results

Table 1 presents the results for the empirical models examining the number of disputes initiated by a state in a given year. Model 1 provides empirical support for our core hypothesis. In model 1, democracies are the excluded reference category so the results of the party and military variables are in relation to democracies. Only the military variable is significant and positive, indicating that *authoritarian regimes that rely on military institutions are likely to initiate more disputes than democracies*. The party variable is not significant, indicating that *party-based authoritarian regimes are not more likely to initiate disputes than democratic regimes*. Model 2 looks only at initiation

<http://cow2.la.psu.edu/>. The COW Alliance data records state membership in interstate alliances. Using this data, we create a variable that is a count of the number of alliances a state is in. The COW state member data lists which states are contiguous by land or sea to a state. Similar to the alliance data, we simply create a variable that is the number of contiguous states for all the states in our data. For the COW national material capability, we use their provided CINC score. They provide a CINC score for all states from 1816 to 2000.

¹³While our dependent variable examines the number of disputes initiated in a given year and not the change in the number of disputes, inclusion of the lagged dependent variable is useful to prevent threats to our statistical analysis. It is one way to account for possible temporal correlations in the error term of our model. If our error structure is not random and is instead correlated across years for each state, our model might produce deflated standard errors. Temporal correlation in our model is possible as the number of disputes initiated may be related to the number of disputes initiated in the previous year, and our model may not include all relevant variables to account for this relationship. Thus, inclusion of a lagged dependent variable should help address this potential problem. Finally, we reran our models without the lagged dependent variables, and there is little change to our results.

¹⁴We use a negative binomial as opposed to a Poisson because the data shows a pattern of overdispersion. Summary statistics indicate that a negative binomial is a better fitting model. Results are generated from Stata 8.0

of militarized disputes in which a state eventually goes to war (5) or uses force (4) based on the MID codings. The results are the same. Only military based authoritarian governments were likely to initiate more MIDs than democracies. These findings provide empirical support for our hypothesis, especially given our controls for the military capabilities of a state.

To examine the alternative, normative argument that military regimes are especially belligerent because of the military background of their leaders, we reexamine our findings by considering authoritarian governments as party regimes, civilian leaders who rely on military institutions, and military regimes.¹⁵ Our approach predicts the latter two to be more likely to initiate MIDs, while the military background argument only predicts this for military regimes. Our results are presented in model 3 of Table 1. We find support for our institutional argument as even civilian leaders are more likely to initiate MIDs if their main base of support is the military.¹⁶

Models 4 and 5 directly compare the impact of infrastructural institutions with despotic institutions by examining whether military based authoritarian regimes (junta or strongman) are likely to initiate more MIDs than party-based authoritarian regimes (machine or bossism), regardless of their despotic institutions. Similar to the first two models, model 4 looks at the initiation of any MID while model 5 examines initiation where the highest level of force by the state is either the use of force or war. These results provide further evidence in support of our hypothesis. In both models, the military-based authoritarian governments (juntas and strongmen) were likely to initiate more MIDs and more violent MIDs than democracies, while there was no statistical difference in the number initiated by the party-based authoritarian regimes and democracies. Thus, *infrastructural institutions influence the conflict propensity of authoritarian regimes more than despotic institutions*. Had despotic institutions mattered more, the personalized authoritarian governments (bosses and strongmen) should have been significant

¹⁵Using the Banks data described earlier, we use all three categories.

¹⁶Another possibility is that military regimes may have greater control over their militaries and thus may initiate more disputes. We disagree with this possible argument for several reasons. First, there is no developed causal argument that direct control over the military necessarily leads to increased use of the military. Also, as we discuss in the theory section, military regimes often worry about splits within the military elite (thus they actually have potentially less control) which creates an incentive to use military force to keep the generals busy and out of the capital. Additionally, there is no systematic evidence that military regimes have greater control over their militaries. In fact, as previously discussed, there are theoretical reasons to expect that military regimes actually have less control and fear coups from within the military.

TABLE 1 Negative Binomial Regression Results for Number of MIDs Initiated By a State

	Model 1 Any MID	Model 2 MID of Use of Force/War	Model 3 Any MID	Model 4 MID of Use of Force/War	Model 5 Any MID
Party	.125 (.207)	.256 (.234)	–	–	.123 (.206)
Military	.516* (.224)	.682** (.263)	–	–	.510* (.243)
Military/Civilian	–	–	–	–	.513* (.231)
Machine	–	–	.060 (.234)	.164 (.257)	–
Junta	–	–	.535* (.267)	.645* (.279)	–
Boss	–	–	.201 (.213)	.363 (.240)	–
Strongman	–	–	.513* (.239)	.693** (.280)	–
Total Borders	.070*** (.018)	.071*** (.019)	.071*** (.018)	.071*** (.018)	.070*** (.019)
Capability	4.68** (1.61)	4.04* (1.91)	4.71** (1.57)	4.11* (1.81)	4.67** (1.61)
Openness	–.947*** (.283)	–1.08*** (.346)	–.959*** (.288)	–1.09** (.354)	–.947*** (.283)
Total Allies	.007 (.006)	.005 (.006)	.007 (.006)	.005 (.006)	.007 (.006)
Lag DV	.549*** (.097)	.708*** (.114)	.548*** (.099)	.704*** (.121)	.550*** (.097)
Constant	–2.17*** (.280)	–2.54*** (.300)	–2.17*** (.276)	–2.54*** (.295)	–2.17*** (.280)
	N = 4960	N = 4960	N = 4960	N = 4960	N = 4960
	LL = –2612.5	LL = –2073.5	LL = –2611.5	LL = –2071.9	LL = –2612.7
	$\chi^2 = 135.1$ ***	$\chi^2 = 142.2$ ***	$\chi^2 = 144.6$ ***	$\chi^2 = 157.8$ ***	$\chi^2 = 135$ ***

Democracy is the excluded reference category for the regime type variables.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 All tests are two-tailed. Robust Standard Errors (clustered on each state) are in parentheses.

while the collective governments (juntas and machines) should have been insignificant. Instead we saw support for the importance of infrastructural institutions.¹⁷ In regards to the control variables, only the total alliances

¹⁷One potential criticism of this interpretation is that we have a population and not a sample, thus we should only be interested in the sign and magnitude of the coefficient and not the statistical significance. We disagree with this argument for two reasons. First, this is not a true population. States interacted prior to 1950 and after 1992, thus we are trying to make inferences about the past and perhaps more importantly about the future. Second, even if we had a true population, statistical significance is important to determine the likelihood that any single individual case within the data is likely to behave as our model predicts. For example, a variable with a high standard deviation (i.e., one where the confidence intervals include

variable is not significant. The others are significant and in the predicted direction.¹⁸

Table 2 displays substantive effects of the significant independent variables of model 1. This table reports changes in the number of MIDs initiated between

0) is one where an individual case is not likely to behave according to the coefficient (i.e., mean prediction) versus one with a small standard deviation.

¹⁸We also ran our models with variables controlling for region of the world. Using the Correlates of War regions (North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia) as dichotomous variables in our model, we find some support for increased conflict in different regions, though the effect of these variables did not alter the main findings of this article.

the first value listed for the independent variable (Value 1) and the second value (Value 2), holding all other independent variables at their mean (continuous) or mode (dichotomous). For the military regimes, we only present a change from a state that is not (0) a military regime to one that is (1). For the other variables, which are continuous, we present multiple increments including one and two standard deviation changes. For the continuous variables, the cumulative changes are simply the sum of the individual changes. For example, for the capabilities variables, going from a state that has 0% of the world's power capabilities to one that has 2.5% of the world's capabilities (approximately a one standard deviation increase) leads to a .019 increase in the number of initiated MIDs, while going from 2.5% to 5% of the world's power capabilities increases the number of initiated MIDs by .021. Thus, going from 0% to 5% of the world's power capabilities yields a .04 increase in the number of MIDs (.019 + .021). Looking at Table 2, military regimes have .095 more initiations than democracies. While this seems like a small number, the mean number of initiations is only .23. So going from a democracy to a military regime actually increases the number of initiations by about 41% relative to the mean number of initiations.¹⁹ This is almost the same increase as going from a state with 0% of the world's military capabilities (i.e., St. Kitts or Vanuatu) to a state with 10% of the world's capabilities (i.e., China, which had about 12% as of 1992).

The results thus provide evidence for our hypothesis. Party-based authoritarian regimes initiate fewer MIDs than military based authoritarian regimes, and the infrastructural institutions of an authoritarian regime (party-military) play a stronger role in explaining an authoritarian government's conflict propensity than its despotic institutions (number of decision makers). Given that previous work on the effects of authoritarian institutions have used a dyadic framework (Peceny et al. 2002; Reiter and Stam 2003), we also conducted a series of directed dyadic analyses to determine if controlling for dyadic factors such as alliance ties, relative power capabilities, and geographic distance influenced the results. The results of our directed dyadic analyses confirm the results from the presented results that military regimes are more likely than party regimes and democracies to initiate MIDs of all types, and that infrastructural institutions influence dispute propensity more than despotic institutions.²⁰

¹⁹Since the mean number of initiations is .23, a .095 increase is roughly 41% of the mean number of initiations (i.e., .095/.23)

²⁰For these unreported models, we run a second set of analyses that uses the directed dyad-year as the unit of analysis. We run our analysis on both all dyads and politically relevant dyads. The de-

Implications and Conclusions

The results of this article indicate that variation in the institutional configuration of authoritarian regimes gives rise to significant variation in the conflict propensity of different types of nondemocracies. In particular, military regimes are more likely to initiate conflict than single-party regimes due to differences in underlying institutions. These results also demonstrate that the new framework we employ for examining authoritarian institutions is useful for understanding how such institutions constrain or provide incentives to initiate disputes. Our findings reinforce the need to go beyond looking at whether an authoritarian government is ruled by one or a few, focusing instead on the importance of the institutional basis for an authoritarian government's control over potential opponents.

These results thus point to the central importance of infrastructural institutions in explaining variation in the conflict propensity of authoritarian regimes. Party institutions are more likely to ensure the tenure of a leader because these organizations are more effective suppressors of both elite defection and mass mobilization, two common paths to authoritarian breakdown. This relative security of tenure prompts leaders of single-party regimes to be relatively cautious about initiating a military dispute. Alternatively, military regimes lack the same level of control over masses and elites alike, creating fears of domestic challenges and pressuring leaders to initiate disputes to mobilize and unify the military and society.

pendent variable for this set of analyses is whether the first state in a directed dyad initiated a militarized dispute against the second state. Both sets of analyses examine the 1950–92 period. As for the independent variables, we test our hypothesis by coding each directed dyad as one of nine pairs: (1) Democracy-Democracy, (2) Democracy-Party, (3) Democracy-Military, (4) Party-Democracy, (5) Party-Party, (6) Party-Military, (7) Military-Democracy, (8) Military-Party, (9) Military-Military, as well as creating 25 pairs based on a combination of Democracy, Machine, Bossism, Junta, and Strongman. We also include the following control variables for the directed dyadic analyses, (1) Distance—measures the distance between two states; (2) Alliance—whether the two states are in an alliance; (3) Major Power—whether one of the states in a dyad is a major power; (4) Military Balance—the ratio of the stronger state's military capabilities divided by the military capabilities of the two states; (5) Tau-b—a measure of the preference similarity of two states; (6) Trade—a measure of the lower trade dependence between states A and B (7) temporal splines. These control variables are common in the study of dyadic analysis (see Russett and Oneal 2001; Bennett and Stam 2000 for a good overview). These are from the sources listed in the previous endnotes. A probit and rare events logit model are used to analyze the data.

Because our hypotheses are monadic, we only examined the dyadic analyses to check the general robustness of our findings, so we do not present them. They are available at the following Website along with a brief description of the results: <http://myweb.uiowa.edu/bhlai/data/data.html>.

TABLE 2 Changes in the Number of Initiated MIDs for Statistically Significant Variables in Model 1 of Table 2

Independent Variables	Value 1 of the Independent Variable	Value 2 of the Independent Variable	Change in Number of MIDS Initiated between Values 1 and 2 for Each Statistically Significant Independent Variable (Model 1)
Military	0	1	.095
Total Borders	0 [†]	2	0.018
	2	5 [‡]	0.032
	5 [‡]	8 [§]	0.041
	8 [§]	11	0.051
	11	28 ^{††}	0.670
Capability	0 ^{†‡}	0.025 [§]	0.019
	0.025 [§]	0.5	0.021
	0.5	0.1	0.049
	0.1	0.2	0.139
	0.2	0.3 ^{††}	0.218
Openness	0 [†]	0.4 [‡]	-0.081
	0.4 [‡]	1 [§]	-0.074
	1 [§]	1.5	-0.036
	1.5	2	-0.022
	2	9.53 ^{††}	-0.035

[†]Minimum value of the independent variable.

[‡]Approximate mean of the independent variable.

[§]One standard deviation increase from the mean.

^{||}Two standard deviation increase from the mean.

^{††}Maximum value of the independent variable.

The actual mean of the capability variable is .008.

The Change in Number of MIDS is calculated by taking the predicted number of MIDS initiated for Value 2 and subtracting the predicted number of MIDS initiated for Value 1 of a particular independent variable while holding all other independent variables at their mean (continuous) or mode (dichotomous).

The results of this article have implications for both the academic and policy literature on conflict. First, our findings fit and bolster the institutional arguments used to explain the democratic peace. As in democracies, leaders in authoritarian regimes conduct foreign policy in a manner designed to minimize the chances of removal from office. While the possibility of losing office produces caution among democratic leaders, it can cause more risk-acceptant behavior among leaders of military regimes, who have few institutional weapons at hand to secure their incumbency. Like military regimes, governments of newly democratizing states are likely to experience severe legitimacy concerns that cannot be resolved with coercion alone, leading them to use external force to legitimize their rule (Snyder 2000, etc.). Thus, while we present a novel theoretical and empirical examination of the initiation of militarized disputes, our approach fits with and supports other institutional (rather than normative) explana-

tions for the effects of domestic politics on international conflict.

Our findings also highlight how authoritarian institutions structure foreign policy in ways analogous, but not identical, to democratic institutions. Recent research on the effect of authoritarian institutions (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; Danilovic and Klare 2004; Peceny et al. 2002) views them as providing constraints on a chief executive, similar to democratic institutions. Our results demonstrate that this focus on constraints is misplaced and that we should focus instead on how authoritarian institutions facilitate social control. Despite the potential costs of international conflict, the incentives of leaders to use force abroad can be considerable when those leaders rely on military institutions to stay in power.

Most importantly, our finding that party-backed authoritarian regimes are *no more likely* than democracies to instigate warfare suggests a need for researchers to move

beyond the old confines of the democratic peace literature. It suggests that peace arises not so much from *democratic* regimes as from *stable* regimes. Rather than focusing most of our attention on regime institutions (democracy vs. dictatorship), we might learn more by refocusing on the state and party institutions that tend to produce political stability in democracies and dictatorships alike.

Finally, the main policy implication of this article is that analysts must consider the internal structural character of authoritarian regimes—and not just the proclivities of their individual leaders and the geopolitical interests of the states they rule. Paying closer attention to infrastructural institutions than despotic institutions has interesting implications for the United States' handling of two difficult foreign-policy challenges: the threat of nuclear proliferation and conflict emanating from North Korea and Iran. Since North Korea has a personalized regime and Iran has a far more collective leadership, a focus on despotic institutions would imply that North Korea is more likely to initiate a war than Iran. Our analysis implies the opposite. Personalized as it is, Kim Jong-Il's regime rests upon a powerful ruling party, which should moderate the regime's need to use foreign aggression for domestic purposes. By contrast, Iran's collective leadership lacks robust party institutions and confronts a persistent domestic challenge in the form of a broad-based democratic opposition. The international community should take such domestic institutional factors into account when attempting to manage these complex and dangerous foreign policy dilemmas.

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