

“The Coup-Proofing Toolbox: Institutional Power, Military Effectiveness, and the Puzzle of Nazi Germany”

Dr. Dan Reiter

Department of Political Science  
Emory University  
[dreiter@emory.edu](mailto:dreiter@emory.edu)

Note to University of Maryland readers: For my April 24 presentation, I will be presenting both this paper and a second, related paper. This paper is currently under review and should not be cited or circulated.

Abstract: How do dictators avoid being overthrown by coup d'état? One theory proposes that dictators reduce internal threats by engaging in “coup-proofing,” though coup-proofing reduces military effectiveness. Another theory proposes that dictators facing external threats avoid coup-proofing to maximize military effectiveness, and simply accept a higher risk of being overthrown. This paper proposes a new theory, explaining how dictators need not choose between *either* reducing internal threats *or* maximizing military effectiveness. It describes coup-proofing tactics available to dictators, noting that only some coup-proofing tactics reduce military effectiveness. It predicts that dictators facing high levels of coup risk and external threat implement coup-proofing tactics that do not reduce military effectiveness, and avoid tactics that reduce military effectiveness. The theory is tested on the case of Nazi Germany, finding empirical support. Hitler generally implemented only those coup-proofing measures that do not reduce military effectiveness. It solves the puzzle of how Hitler was able both to avoid being overthrown in a military coup, and to field an effective military.

National leaders strive to remain in power. Dictators in particular seek to reduce the risk of coups d'état, elite revolutions often led by military officers to remove leaders from power, because coups are relatively frequent means by which dictators are ousted.<sup>1</sup> Leaders concerned about coups sometimes reduce the coup threat by employing tactics commonly known as “coup-proofing.” Coup-proofing can include actions such as purging unreliable military officers, bribery, distorting military command structures, and others.

Coup-proofing is important for the study of both comparative politics and international relations. Regarding the former, coup-proofing is a crucially important set of tools dictators and other leaders use to stay in power. Regarding the latter, coup-proofing has been hypothesized to reduce military effectiveness. Specifically, coup-proofing has been used to explain several surprising and historically important war outcomes, such as Israel's successes against larger Arab foes, Iraq's failure to defeat Iran in the 1980s, Iraq's decisive defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, and South Vietnam's inability to defend itself during the Vietnam War. Some have speculated that dictatorships are more likely than democracies to lose wars because they are more likely to coup-proof.

Coup-proofing is highly relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> century policy-makers. There have been recent coups in Thailand, Egypt, and Yemen, coup attempts in Gambia, Burundi, Burkina Faso, and Turkey, and fear of coups in countries such as Pakistan and Venezuela. Dictators and other leaders continue to coup-proof, including Turkey's July 2016 decision to purge one third of its generals and admirals following an unsuccessful coup attempt, and Russia's decision that same

---

<sup>1</sup> Milan W. Svobik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). A regime is a dictatorship if it is not a democracy, a democracy being a regime in which “government offices are filled by contested elections” (19). Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 19.

month to remove all fifty of its Baltic Sea naval commanders.<sup>2</sup> North Korean dictator Kim Jung Un has purged a number of high level military leaders, including his uncle, a four star general, and the army's chief of general staff.<sup>3</sup> In the years since a 2006 coup attempt, the president of Gambia has employed a number of coup-proofing tactics, including purging military officers suspected of disloyalty and fragmenting the state's intelligence and internal security services.<sup>4</sup>

Coup-proofing is also germane for policy-makers planning for current and future armed conflicts. It is relevant for assessing the military power of states such as North Korea, Iran, and China, if these states have implemented coup-proofing tactics that might affect military effectiveness. It is relevant for counterinsurgency campaigns. The Iraqi military performed poorly against ISIS in the mid-2010s in part because of coup-proofing.<sup>5</sup>

Though scholars have studied coups for decades, there remain theoretical and empirical gaps in our understanding of coup-proofing. There are three theoretical shortcomings to existing work. First, individual coup-proofing works tend to provide only limited glimpses of coup-proofing tactics, each work describing a small set of tactics, these sets overlapping surprisingly little. Second, many works assume that coup-proofing efforts necessarily reduce military effectiveness. Third, coup-proofing scholarship fails to explain satisfactorily how dictators choose among coup-proofing tactics, mostly arguing that dictators choose all coup-proofing tactics or none.

---

<sup>2</sup> Tim Arango, Ceylan Yeginsu, and Ben Hubbard, "Vast Purge in Turkey as Thousands are Detained in Post-Coup Backlash," *New York Times*, July 19, 2016; Jamie Seidel, "Russian President Vladimir Putin Has Purged All the Officers in His Baltic Sea Fleet," *news.com.au*, July 12, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> John Power, "Another Purge in North Korea?" *The Diplomat*, February 12, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart A. Reid, "Let's Go Take Back Our Country," *Atlantic*, March 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Keren Fraiman, Austin Long, and Caitlin Talmadge, "Why the Iraqi Military Collapsed (and What Can be Done About It)," Monkeycage, June 13, 2014 <available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/06/13/why-the-iraqi-army-collapsed-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/?utm\\_term=.8d2cddb3ba8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/06/13/why-the-iraqi-army-collapsed-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/?utm_term=.8d2cddb3ba8)>; Erica de Bruin, "Coup-Proofing for Dummies," *Foreign Affairs Snapshot*, July 27, 2014 <available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iraq/2014-07-27/coup-proofing-dummies>>.

There are also empirical shortcomings to coup-proofing scholarship. Most of the qualitative empirical work on coup-proofing has focused on a small handful of cases, generally post-World War II Middle Eastern regimes and North Vietnam. There are a few quantitative studies of coup-proofing, but most of them have been hampered by validity problems in the measurement of coup-proofing.

This paper addresses these theoretical and empirical shortcomings. On the theoretical side, it describes the nine primary coup-proofing tools available to dictators. It challenges the assumption that coup-proofing tactics necessarily reduce military effectiveness, describing several coup-proofing tactics that do not reduce military effectiveness. It then builds a new theory, termed the “toolbox theory,” that relaxes the assumption that all leaders motivated to coup-proof adopt all coup-proofing measures. The theory proposes that leaders facing high levels of coup risk and high levels of external threat will tend to adopt those coup proofing tools that do not reduce military effectiveness, and will tend to avoid those coup proofing tools that threaten to reduce effectiveness. This prediction contrasts with two existing sets of predictions, an “internal threat” theory forecasting that leaders facing high coup risk will adopt all coup-proofing measures regardless of levels of external threat, and an “external threat” theory that leaders facing high levels of internal and external threat avoid coup-proofing entirely.

Empirically, the paper tests its theory on Nazi Germany, a regime that faced high levels of internal and external threat. Despite its central importance to security studies, there are very few political science works on either coup-proofing or civil-military relations in Nazi Germany. The internal threat theory would predict that Adolf Hitler should have adopted the wide range of coup-proofing tactics. This prediction confronts an empirical puzzle, however. If Hitler embraced an array of coup-proofing tactics, and coup-proofing reduces military effectiveness,

how did Nazi Germany manage to field such an effective military? The external threat theory would predict that Hitler should avoid coup-proofing entirely. That theory faces the puzzle, if Hitler eschewed coup-proofing, how was he able to avoid being overthrown?

Toolbox theory solves these puzzles. It predicts that Hitler should implement those coup-proofing tactics that do not threaten to reduce military effectiveness and to avoid those tactics that reduce military effectiveness. In surveying the nine possible coup-proofing tactics, Hitler's actions follow the pattern predicted by the theory, as Hitler coup-proofed selectively, mostly implementing only those tactics that did not undermine military effectiveness. The theory helps explain why Hitler was able both to field an effective military and reduce his chances of losing power in a coup.

The paper provides several contributions. First, it builds a new and more empirically accurate theory of coup-proofing. The theory explains why coup-threatened leaders are more resilient than current coup-proofing theories would allow. Current theories predict that politically insecure leaders either adopt the suite of coup-proofing tactics and sacrifice military power, or reject coup-proofing tactics increasing the risk that the leader will be ousted from power by internal actors. The theory developed here allows that leaders can be more effectively flexible in choosing their coup-proofing tactics, having the luxury of leaving aside those tactics that reduce military effectiveness while retaining tactics that help them stay in power. The implication is that the ability of leaders, especially dictators, to cling to power even in the face of serious internal and external threats should not be underestimated. Second, it broadens our understanding of the relationship between regime type and war outcomes. In particular, it helps better explain why, even if democracies might be general more likely to win their wars, some dictatorships, such as Nazi Germany and North Vietnam, are able to field effective militaries

even as they are able to blunt coup threats.<sup>6</sup> Third, it deepens our understanding of the sources of Nazi German military effectiveness, a crucial historical case in security studies.

## Coup-Proofing

All leaders wish to stay in power. Dictators are especially intent on staying in power, not only because they value the benefits of political power, but also because they understand that they may face prison or execution if they lose power.<sup>7</sup> Both elected and non-elected leaders lose power in coups, the latter with greater frequency than the former. Scholars over the decades have developed an increasingly nuanced understanding of when and how leaders strive to reduce coup risks, by coup-proofing. One common proposal is that dictatorships are more likely than democracies to coup-proof.<sup>8</sup> Coup-proofing has caught the interest of international relations scholars because of the proposition that coup-proofing reduces military effectiveness.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> On democracies winning wars more frequently than dictatorships, see Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). Another explanation for why dictatorships sometimes fight effectively is that they sometimes build cohesive militaries, by strengthening regime control over citizens and by granting militaries greater autonomy in training their troops. Jasen J. Castillo, *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). Castillo's explanation is consistent with the argument made here, as the actions described by Castillo, such as indoctrination, giving military commanders greater autonomy, and training, are also coup-proofing tactics.

<sup>7</sup> Giacomo Chiozza and H. E. Goemans, *Leaders and International Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, chapter 3; Ulrich Pilster and Tobias Böhmelt, "Do Democracies Engage in Less Coup-Proofing? On the Relationship Between Regime Type and Civil-Military Relations," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8 (October 2012): 355-372; Jessica L. P. Weeks, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness," Ph.D. diss, department of political science, MIT, 1996; James T. Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security* 24 (Fall 1999): 131-165; Timothy D. Hoyt, "Social Structure, Ethnicity, and Military Effectiveness: Iraq, 1980-2004," in Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley, eds., *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 55-79; Caitlin Talmadge and Vipin Narang, "Civil-Military Pathologies and Defeat in War: Tests Using New Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (forthcoming). Risa A. Brooks also focused on Arab regimes, but did apply her argument to autocratic regimes more generally. *Political-Military Relations and the Stability of the Arab Regimes* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), esp. 36-37. Stephen Biddle and Robert Zirkle presented case studies of Iraq and North

Understanding coup-proofing first demands describing the variety of tactics leaders employ to reduce the risks of coups.<sup>10</sup> There is surprisingly little agreement within the coup-proofing literature about how leaders coup-proof. That is, coup-proofing works provide different lists of available tactics, and there is little overlap among these lists.<sup>11</sup> The subsections that follow provide a comprehensive list of the main coup-proofing tactics available to leaders, describing the potential consequences for military effectiveness of each coup-proofing tactic.<sup>12</sup> This section then describes the lack of consensus among coup-proofing scholars about coup-proofing tactics.

### Selection, Promotion, and Purges

Generally, regimes wish to appoint and promote military officers on the basis of merit, as a means of maximizing military power. However, military officers can launch coups against the regime. Higher ranking officers in particular have direct control over resources, including command authority over more troops within the military, that can be used in a coup attempt. Officers stationed close to the capital can capture or assassinate the dictator, and seize control of the government.

---

Vietnam. "Technology, Civil-Military Relations, and Warfare in the Developing World." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 19 (June 1996): 171-212.

<sup>10</sup> The focus here is on coup-proofing work since the 1990s. For a summary of earlier work, see Staffan Wiking, *Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa: How to Justify Illegal Assumptions of Power* (Uppsala, Sweden: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1983), chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup> Talmadge and Narang provide a longer list of coup-proofing tactics, though it does not include all of the tactics listed here, such as bribery or adopting foreign policies favored by the military. "Civil-Military Pathologies." They assume that all of their listed coup-proofing tactics reduce military effectiveness.

<sup>12</sup> A tenth possible tactic, newly described in academic scholarship, is the designation of official rules in dictatorships for leadership succession. The existence of such rules in dictatorships makes coups less likely, and ought not reduce military effectiveness. Erica Frantz and Elizabeth A. Stein, "Countering Coups: Leadership Succession Rules in Dictatorships," *Comparative Political Studies* (forthcoming).

Leaders who fear coups d'état have an incentive to appoint and promote military officers on the basis of political reliability, as indicated by shared familial, ethnic, ideological, or religious ties with the dictator, rather than merit, as reliable officers are less likely to launch coups.<sup>13</sup> However, promoting politically reliable officers can reduce military effectiveness by lowering the quality of a state's military leadership. Further, political appointees are more likely to be toadies unwilling to disagree with the leader's statements and ideas, undermining the quality of decision-making. These efforts can also reduce a military's ability to employ advanced conventional weapons technologies.<sup>14</sup>

### Training Quality

Realistic and extensive training with access to appropriate equipment is essential for maximizing military effectiveness. However, though training provides skills necessary for success in combat against other nations, it can also impart skills needed to execute a successful coup. Further, training can be used as a pretext for repositioning equipment and forces in locations that would facilitate a successful coup.

Leaders fearful of a coup might reduce training in order to render the military less able to attack the regime. Such leaders may reduce the extent of training exercises, make exercises less realistic by forbidding live fire activities, and require that training occur away from the national capital. Less realistic and less extensive training activities may make a military less prepared for battle.

---

<sup>13</sup> See Kristin A. Harkness, "The Ethnic Army and the State: Explaining Coup Traps and the Difficulty of Democratization in Africa," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60 (June 2016): 587-616. For a somewhat contrasting view, see Risa A. Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*; Biddle and Zirkle, "Technology."



## Command Arrangements

Militaries can choose how much battlefield command authority to give to lower level officers, that is, how decentralized to make the command structure. At least for some military strategies, such as maneuver-based strategies in armored warfare,<sup>15</sup> a more decentralized command structure improves military effectiveness, because it allows combat leaders to adapt quickly to evolving battlefield conditions. However, such decentralized structures can increase coup risks. Specifically, without tight control by the regime, commanders might be able to use the forces under their command to overthrow the government.

A leader fearful of a coup might impose a more centralized command structure upon the military. Specifically, fearful civilian leaders might reduce substantially the command authority of military officers, including lower level officers and field commanders.<sup>16</sup> Lower level commanders might be forbidden from making any combat decisions without authorization from the highest levels of military command, if not the political leadership itself. This in turn could lower military effectiveness by preventing the adoption of potentially effective military strategies.<sup>17</sup>

## Information Management

---

<sup>15</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 41-42.

<sup>16</sup> Talmadge, *Dictator's Army*, 16; Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 49. This is also the drift of Pollack's discussion of commissarism, comparable to coup-proofing. "Influence of Arab Culture," 89.

<sup>17</sup> Dan Reiter and Curtis Meek, "Determinants of Military Strategy, 1903-1994: A Quantitative Empirical Test," *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (June 1999): 363-387.

There are effectiveness incentives for modern militaries to facilitate information flows, both vertically and horizontally.<sup>18</sup> Vertical information flows give higher levels of command more up to date information about battlefield events, whereas horizontal information flows better facilitate combined arms operations, an essential element of combat in the age of armor and aircraft. However, the free flow of information within a military might facilitate coup-plotting. Disgruntled officers could more easily discover each other and coordinate a coup attempt.

Leaders fearful of coups limit both horizontal and vertical information flows. This is done both directly, through restricting information flows within the military, and indirectly, by creating internal security units designed to heighten units' and officers' suspicion of each other, thereby reducing cooperation and communication (see next subsection). Fearful regimes might also frequently rotate officers to block the formation of personal networks among officers, networks that in turn might facilitate a coup. Such actions serve to undermine the ability of the military to update its strategy and tactics as a war unfolds, and to impede combat coordination between units, including combined arms operations.

### Organizational Fragmentation

Leaders can reduce the risk of overthrow by building parallel militaries, separate military units that answer directly to the leader him or herself, tasked with the defense of the leadership. Such units might be regular military formations or paramilitary units. They are often stationed near the national capital, reducing the likelihood of a coup by making it more difficult for plotters to capture or kill the leader. Relatedly, dictators sometimes create divisions within their military hierarchies, such as creating more branches of the military or separate armies. Similar

---

<sup>18</sup> Ryan Grauer, *Commanding Military Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

to impeding information flows (see preceding subsection), subdividing the military impedes the coordination required by a coup and creates collective action problems among coup-plotters, especially if the leader encourages different elements of the military or security hierarchy to spy on and compete with each other for power and resources. This technique is sometimes called “counterbalancing,” especially in some quantitative work on coup-proofing.<sup>19</sup>

Organizational fragmentation can reduce military effectiveness. Parallel armed forces make the allocation of military resources less efficient if they have first priority over advanced technology and other materiel, because the leader prioritizes their mission of defending the regime over combat success against the adversary. Further, those units are less likely to be used effectively in integrated operations, because the dictator will keep them near the capital, and because these units are outside the command structure of the rest of the military.<sup>20</sup>

At higher levels of command, organizational fragmentation can impede the collection of quality intelligence. The creation of multiple intelligence agencies that are not encouraged or allowed to coordinate with each other, a process sometimes called “stove piping,” can make it less likely that the intelligence community can provide an integrated view of the entire body of available intelligence, in turn reducing the quality of intelligence assessments.

## Indoctrination

---

<sup>19</sup> The first quantitative work to use the term “counterbalancing” was Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, “Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47 (2003): 594-620. Quantitative works that have used employed a counterbalancing variable include Pilster and Böhmelt, “Do Democracies Engage”; Jonathan Powell, “Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups d’état,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56 (2012): 1017-1040; Belkin and Schofer, “Toward a Structural Understanding”; Ulrich Pilster and Tobias Böhmelt, “Coup-Proofing and Military Effectiveness in Interstate Wars, 1967-1999,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 28 (2011): 331-350. The data used to construct the quantitative measure of counterbalancing has severe internal validity problems. Jun Koga, “Domestic Institutions, Leadership Survival, and Conflicts in Dictatorships,” Ph.D. diss, Emory University, 2013. More careful quantitative studies on the consequences of coup-proofing include Talmadge and Narang, “Civil-Military Pathologies,” and Erica de Bruin, “Preventing Coups d’état: How Counterbalancing Works,” unpublished manuscript, Hamilton College, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Talmadge and Narang find that the presence of paramilitaries does not reduce military effectiveness. “Civil-Military Pathologies.”

Regimes can use indoctrination both outside and within the military to reduce the risk of coups. In society more broadly, indoctrination of the population to accept the leader's rule can make the population less likely to support a coup. Militaries are less likely to launch coups against popular leaders, recognizing that leader popularity reduces the likelihood of coup success and increases the difficulties of ruling after a successful coup. Coup-plotters hope that the mass public would at least remain indifferent in the face of a coup attempt, if not support it outright.<sup>21</sup>

Within the military, (civilian) leaders can indoctrinate in three different ways to reduce coup risk. First, military academies can stress the difficulty of successfully executing a coup d'état, part of what James Quinlivan referred to as "fostering expertness."<sup>22</sup> Teaching officers that carrying off a successful coup is logistically difficult can dissuade officers from attempting a coup. Second, academies can train officers of the normative importance of civilian control of the military, for general reasons of stability or because of the divine right of the civilian leadership.<sup>23</sup> Third, ideological indoctrination of enlisted troops and lower-ranked officers to be loyal to the leader might make them less likely to follow a coup launched by high level officers. High level officers in turn might be less likely to launch a coup attempt if they knew that the bulk of the army is either unwilling to follow or actively opposed.<sup>24</sup> Indoctrination of troops and officers

---

<sup>21</sup> Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). Some are skeptical that mass support of the leader affects the likelihood of coups. See Naunihal Singh, *Seizing Power: The Strategic Logic of Military Coups* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> "Coup-Proofing," 151-152.

<sup>23</sup> Studies have explored whether American military training of foreign military officers makes coups d'état less likely, with mixed empirical results. Tomislav Z. Ruby and Douglas Gibler, "US Professional Military Education and Democratization Abroad," *European Journal of International Relations* 16 (2010): 339-364; Jesse Dillon Savage and Jonathan Caverley, "Foreign Military Training and Coup Propensity," unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, MIT, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Singh, *Seizing Power*.

ought not reduce military effectiveness, and some speculate indoctrination might actually increase effectiveness by increasing the staying power of combat units.<sup>25</sup>

## Bribery

Leaders can provide money or material goods to potential coup-plotters, to give them a concrete incentive not to overthrow the regime. This is a central insight of the selectorate model of governance developed by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and his coauthors. They proposed that dictators rely on the support of a small number of people to stay in power, distributing private goods to maintain their support.<sup>26</sup> This is a common tactic undertaken by leaders fearful of coups. Hein Goemans proposed that mixed regimes in particular shape their aims during war to facilitate the capture of private goods that can then be distributed to regime supporters.<sup>27</sup> That said, one quantitative study used military spending per soldier as a proxy for bribery, finding only mixed results that military spending per soldier is negatively correlated with the onset of coup attempts.<sup>28</sup> Bribery ought not necessarily reduce military effectiveness.<sup>29</sup>

## Pursue Foreign Policies Favored by the Military

---

<sup>25</sup> Castillo, *Endurance*; Dan Reiter, "Nationalism and Military Effectiveness," in Elizabeth A. Stanley-Mitchell and Risa Brooks, eds., *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007), 27-54.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> *War and Punishment: The Causes of War Termination and the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Powell, "Determinants."

<sup>29</sup> Brooks proposed that if bribery means giving segments of the military control over ongoing economic activities such as industrial production, then the time and energy demanded for management of these efforts may reduce the military's resources and motivation to work on improving combat readiness. *Political-Military Relations*.

The leader can cultivate support by adopting foreign policies consistent with the preferences of the military. Possible actions include expanding military spending, taking a more aggressive stance against an adversary, or launching bids for empire. Pursuing foreign policies favored by the military need not reduce military effectiveness, though it may lead to poorly integrated grand strategy.<sup>30</sup> One variation of this proposition is that military juntas, including regimes led by dictators who must answer to powerful audiences of military officers, are more likely to initiate conflict because military officers view the costs of initiating conflict as lower and the benefits as higher.<sup>31</sup>

There is a related argument that interstate war is itself a form of coup-proofing. Militaries become less likely to launch coups during interstate wars, especially as they endure, because it becomes more difficult for coup-plotters to coordinate, the quality of information needed to plan a successful coup degrades, troops get deployed outside the capital city and national territory more generally, and preparation for war fuels divisions between military branches. There is empirical work demonstrating that various forms of interstate conflict reduce coups and coup attempts.<sup>32</sup>

## Achieve Foreign Policy Successes

---

<sup>30</sup> Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*. See also Snyder, *Myths of Empire*.

<sup>32</sup> Cemal Eren Arbatli and Ekim Arbatli, "External Threats and Political Survival: Can Dispute Involvement Deter Coup Attempts?" *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 33 (April 2016): 115-152; Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, "Coup Risk, Counterbalancing, and International Conflict," *Security Studies* 14 (January-March 2005): 140-177; Varun Piplani and Caitlin Talmadge, "When War Helps Civil-military Relations: Prolonged Interstate Conflict and the Risk of Coups," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (forthcoming).

Foreign policy successes (and, avoiding foreign policy defeats) such as winning international crises and wars can reduce the risk of coups.<sup>33</sup> Some scholars propose that successes stabilize dictators in particular because they please elites, whose support the regime depends on. Bueno de Mesquita and his colleagues argued that successes can stabilize dictators if such successes provide the dictator with private goods that she can then distribute to her supporters.<sup>34</sup> Jessica Weeks makes a broader argument, proposing that defeats in international crises or wars may encourage elites to overthrow the dictator, because of the loss of private goods like economic resources or public goods like national reputation.<sup>35</sup>

Another causal pathway between foreign policy successes and leader stability concerns mass opinion. This is a two-step argument. First, foreign policy successes can make a dictator more popular among the mass public. Such successes can provide public goods and fuel a dictator's narrative of her great power, and that the dictator herself is destined to lead the nation to historical greatness. Jessica Chen Weiss assumes that mass dissatisfaction with foreign policy outcomes can jeopardize a dictator's hold on power as part of her argument that dictators sometimes use mass protests as signals of resolve to other states.<sup>36</sup> Second, as noted, popular leaders face fewer coup attempts, because coup success becomes less likely and post-coup governance becomes more difficult. Hence, foreign policy successes strengthen a leader not just because they reduce elite dissatisfaction. They also strengthen a leader because greater

---

<sup>33</sup> Chiozza and Goemans found that defeat in crisis or war significantly increased the likelihood of an autocrat losing power forcibly. *Leaders*, 70. Scholarship is mixed on whether dictators engage in diversionary wars, that is, whether dictators facing internal threats to their power become more likely to initiate international conflict. See, for example, Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950-1992," *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (January 2006): 113-126; Christopher Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions: Governmental Structure and the Externalization of Domestic Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (April 1997): 225-282.

<sup>34</sup> *Logic of Political Survival*. Note that this dynamic overlaps with bribery.

<sup>35</sup> Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*, 14-19.

<sup>36</sup> *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

popularity among the mass public discourages elites such as military officers from launching a coup.

## Summary

Table 1 lists all nine coup-proofing tactics described in the previous subsections. It indicates which coup-proofing tactics are described by six sets of coauthors who have written important post-1995 works on coup-proofing or the foreign policy behavior of dictatorships, as well as whether or not each listed tactic reduces military effectiveness. No single author has described all nine of these tactics, and only two have described as many as five. Further, there is relatively little overlap in tactics described across the six coup-proofing authors listed.

Table 1: Coup-Proofing Tactics

	Weeks	Bueno de	Quinlivan	Talmadge	Biddle	Brooks	Reduce
--	-------	----------	-----------	----------	--------	--------	--------



	2014	Mesquita et al 2003	1999	2015	and Zirkle 1996	1998	Military Effect.?
Selection, Promotion, and Purges			x	x	x	x	Yes
Training				x			Yes
Command Arrangements				x	x	x	Yes
Information Management			x	x	x	x	Yes
Organizational Fragmentation			x			x	Yes
Indoctrination			x				No
Bribery		x	x			x	No
Foreign Policy Preferred by Military	x						No
Foreign Policy Successes	x	x					No

### How Leaders Choose Coup-Proofing Tactics

There are two mainstream theories on how and whether leaders coup-proof. The more conventional view, termed here “internal threat theory,” focuses simply on level of internal threat. This theory proposes that leaders facing higher risks of being overthrown in a coup ought to be more likely to embrace coup-proofing tactics.<sup>37</sup>

A second theory focuses on the international security environment, labeled here “external threat” theory. This theory emerged as a modification of the internal threat perspective. It accepts the internal threat theory proposition that higher levels of coup risk increase the likelihood that a leader will implement coup-proofing tactics. However, external threat theory

<sup>37</sup> Biddle and Zirkle, “Technology,” 173; Pilster and Böhmelt, “Do Democracies Engage”; Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, “Coup Risk, Counterbalancing, and International Conflict,” *Security Studies* 14 (January-March 2005): 140-177.

also proposes that because coup-proofing tactics reduce military effectiveness, leaders under high levels of external threat will eschew or relax coup-proofing efforts, accepting a higher risk of coup in order to improve the state's warfighting capacity.<sup>38</sup>

These two theories describe the conditions under which leaders decide to coup-proof or not. A related question is, how do these theories and other coup-proofing scholars describe how dictators choose among coup-proofing tactics? Current scholarship takes one of two views. First, most scholars tend to assume that leaders either impose all coup-proofing tactics or none of them, failing to allow for the possibility that leaders might choose to implement some tactics but not others. In his seminal article on coup-proofing, James Quinlivan remarked, "Although every case of coup-proofing has its own unique elements, they do share common characteristics, including ...effective exploitations of loyalties...creation of an armed force parallel to the regular military...development of multiple internal security agencies...fostering expertness...and the financing of such measures."<sup>39</sup> Risa Brooks provided a similar perspective: "[Arab] regimes have used a range of [coup-proofing] methods to ensure [military] backing."<sup>40</sup> Caitlin Talmadge and Viping Narang agreed: "regimes characterized by coup concerns are likely to take a variety of [coup-proofing] measures that reduce the state's ability to generate military power."<sup>41</sup> Two works make the point in passing that sometimes dictators might adopt some but not other coup-proofing measures. The perspective is that there is a simple correlation between motivation for coup-proofing and number of coup-proofing measures adopted.<sup>42</sup> However, these authors do not predict which coup-proofing tactics will be selected.

---

<sup>38</sup> Talmadge, *Dictator's Army*.

<sup>39</sup> Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 133. Talmadge allows that dictators may adopt some but not all coup-proofing tactics, though she does not describe what factors might guide dictators' choices. *Dictator's Army*, 26.

<sup>40</sup> Brooks, *Political-Military Relations*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> "Civil-Military Pathologies," 13.

<sup>42</sup> Talmadge, *Dictator's Army*, 26; Biddle and Zirkle, "Technology," 201n.

An important, somewhat hidden assumption of much of the current work is that coup-proofing always reduces military effectiveness. This assumption emerges from two dynamics. First, the works that focus on the relationship between coup-proofing and military effectiveness, by authors such as Biddle and Zirkle, Quinlivan, and Talmadge, tend to focus on coup-proofing tactics that reduce military effectiveness (see above table). These works do not tend to recognize the variety of tactics that leaders have to coup-proof without reducing effectiveness. Second, these works tend to view coup-proofing as an all-or-nothing proposition, that leaders either adopt the slate of coup-proofing tactics, including those that reduce effectiveness, or eschew the set of tactics.

This paper proposes a new coup-proofing theory that relaxes the assumptions that all coup-proofing tactics reduce military effectiveness, and that leaders tend to adopt all coup-proofing tactics or none of them. This theory, termed “toolbox theory,” explains which coup-proofing tactics dictators choose. The theory proposes that the general likelihood of choosing any particular coup-proofing tactic is driven by the level of internal threat, but that the choice of which coup-proofing tactics to implement is affected by the level of external threat. Specifically, among leaders facing high levels of internal threat, those who also face high levels of external threat will tend to implement those coup-proofing tactics that do not reduce military effectiveness, and will tend to eschew those coup-proofing tactics that reduce military effectiveness. That said, not all tactics are necessarily available to all leaders, as for example, not all leaders wield a powerful ideology, and not all leaders may have the same access to private goods that can be used for bribes. Availability shapes which tactics are chosen.

This prediction contrasts with the predictions of the internal and external threat theories. Internal threat theory proposes that leaders facing high levels of internal threat are more likely to implement the range of coup-proofing tactics, and external threat theory proposes that leaders facing high levels of internal and external threat will decide against implementing the range of coup-proofing tactics. The toolbox theory presented here is consistent with a prominent comparative politics perspective that dictators pick and choose among a variety of different tactics they can use to stay in power.<sup>43</sup> Andreas Schedler called it a “menu of manipulation,” in the sense that dictators have a menu of options they can choose from to stay in power, and they choose some but not necessarily all items on the menu.<sup>44</sup>

### **Coup-Proofing and Military Effectiveness in Nazi Germany**

This paper applies the three theories of coup-proofing described above to the case of Nazi Germany. Nazi Germany’s ruling dictator Adolf Hitler faced both external and internal threats. The external threat to Nazi Germany, though self-created, escalated after the war broke out in 1939, and especially after 1941 as the US entered the war, the Soviet Union failed to collapse, the Allies launched a bombing campaign against German cities, and the Allies invaded North Africa, Italy, and France.

Hitler was also concerned about the possibility of a military coup. He was especially paranoid of conservative elements of the military, the old Prussian officer corps. He referred in

---

<sup>43</sup> Erica Frantz, and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, “The Dictator’s Toolkit: Understanding How Co-optation Affects Repression in Autocracies,” *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (2014): 332-346.

<sup>44</sup> “The Menu of Manipulation,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2002): 36-50.

fall 1939 to the command of the Army as the “most insecure element of the state.”<sup>45</sup> He had reasons to fear that disgruntled military officers might attempt to seize power, as the German military was traditionally a powerful domestic political actor that saw itself as a pillar of the state; indeed, Germany had experienced a quasi-coup in 1916, when Generals Paul Hindenburg and Erich von Ludendorff seized power to impose a “silent dictatorship.” In March 1942, Heinrich Himmler warned Hitler that “anti-Party and anti-state movements [in the Army] were in progress.”<sup>46</sup> A few months later, Hitler remarked to Himmler that his “enemies were growing stronger the longer the war went on...[they included] even high-ranking people in the military.”<sup>47</sup> In May 1943, Hitler remarked to Joseph Goebbels that, “All generals lie...All generals are faithless. All generals are against National Socialism. All generals are reactionaries.”<sup>48</sup> In the words of one historian, “Hitler was in fact by no means always certain that he had the generals’ support, and he remained suspicious of them to the very end.”<sup>49</sup>

Hitler’s fear of the military was not unfounded. Opposition to Hitler from within the German officer corps emerged from three sometimes overlapping sources.<sup>50</sup> Some officers were ideologically opposed to Nazism itself, or at least its genocidal excesses. Others were opposed to the magnitude of Hitler’s ambitions, fearing that such a grand bid for empire would inevitably

---

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Norman Goda, “Black Marks: Hitler’s Bribery of His Senior Officials During World War II,” in Emmanuel Kreike and William C. Jordan, eds., *Corrupt Histories* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 101. See also Wette, *Wehrmacht*, 155.

<sup>46</sup> Gerhard Engel, *At the Heart of the Reich: The Secret Diary of Hitler’s Army Adjutant*, Hildegard von Kotze, ed., Geoffrey Brooks, trans. (London: Greenhill Books, 2005), 126.

<sup>47</sup> *Heart of the Reich*, 140-141.

<sup>48</sup> *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-1943*, Louis P. Lochner, ed. and trans. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 368.

<sup>49</sup> Wette, *Wehrmacht*, 153.

<sup>50</sup> Joachim Fest, *Plotting Hitler’s Death: The Story of the German Resistance*, Bruce Little, trans. (New York: Henry Holt, 1994).

fail and doom Germany. Still others didn't necessarily oppose Hitler's goals, but felt that Hitler was mismanaging the war effort, and his poor decisions presented a dire threat to Germany.<sup>51</sup>

There is reliable evidence of military opposition to Hitler. The private conversations of German officers held as prisoners of war in Britain were secretly recorded, and revealed opposition to Hitler within the officer corps, and a willingness to support Hitler's overthrow.<sup>52</sup> Beyond those recorded statements, as described below several officers expressed opposition at various points to Hitler's management of the war. And perhaps most importantly, there were a variety of unsuccessful coup plots.<sup>53</sup> That said, this is not to embrace the position that the Germany military was an essentially professional organization disinterested in Nazi political ideology and/or ignorant of the ongoing genocide. Certainly, more recent work has effectively demonstrated that much of the German army, especially lower ranked troops and those forces fighting on the Eastern Front, embraced Nazism, supported and engaged in war crimes, and worshipped Hitler.<sup>54</sup>

One possible critique of Nazi Germany as a case is that Hitler's control of the military was so strong, especially because of the military's ideological commitment to Hitler, that a coup was unlikely. A few observations are in order. First, there were very real coup plots, and the reality of these plots aside there is evidence that Hitler feared internal threats from the military. Second, if Hitler was secure, then this is likely *because* of the coup-proofing efforts described below, including bribery, foreign policy successes, adopting policies preferred by the military,

---

<sup>51</sup> See Winfried Heinemann, "Military Resistance Activities and the War," in Jörg Echternkamp, ed., *Germany and the Second World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), vol IX/I, 780-806. See also Danny Orbach, *The Plots Against Hitler* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2016), chapter 20.

<sup>52</sup> Sönke Neitzel, *Tapping Hitler's Generals: Transcripts of Secret Conversations, 1942-45*, Geoffrey Brooks, trans. (St. Paul, Minn: Frontline Books, 2007), 61.

<sup>53</sup> Fest, *Plotting*.

<sup>54</sup> Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Stephen G. Fritz, *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

and indoctrination. Historians such as Wolfram Wette have made just this point, that especially after 1938 Hitler faced limited internal threat from his generals exactly because of these tactics.<sup>55</sup> Third, support of Nazism and the German war effort did not necessarily preclude an officer from supporting a coup against Hitler. Similar to how some fanatically pro-emperor military officers in Japan attempted a military coup when the emperor elected to surrender to the Allies, some pro-Nazi and pro-war German military officers plotted against Hitler because they opposed his management of the war effort.<sup>56</sup>

Another possible critique is that Hitler himself makes the Germany case too unique, as his tremendous charisma gave him a grip on power that made coup-proofing much less necessary as compared with other states. However, Hitler's charisma was not qualitatively different from that of other dictators such as Mao Tse-Tung, Joseph Stalin, Fidel Castro, Kim Il Sung, and others who built cults of personality to solidify their holds on power. Further, if some but not all dictators are able to indoctrinate through charisma and personality, then this fits nicely into the toolbox theory presented here, as it allows that dictators' choices of coup-proofing tools will be affected if some tools are unavailable (or less effective). Further, Hitler's charisma did not make him completely immune to internal threats, nor (perhaps more importantly) did he believe that he was immune to internal threats.

The three theories make different predictions about Hitler's coup-proofing behavior. Internal threat theory predicts that Hitler should have coup-proofed widely, because of the high level of internal threat. External threat theory predicts that because of the high level of external threat, Hitler should have eschewed coup-proofing.<sup>57</sup> The toolbox theory predicts that high

---

<sup>55</sup> Wette, *Wehrmacht*, 153-156.

<sup>56</sup> On Japan, see Richard Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Talmadge makes this point, applying her external threat theory to Germany. *Dictator's Army*, 31, 256, 43n. Jasen Castillo begins to make an argument in some ways similar to parts of the argument made here, as he points out that

levels of internal and external threat would push Hitler to employ those coup-proofing measures that do not reduce military effectiveness, including indoctrination, bribery, pursuit of foreign policies preferred by the military, and foreign policy successes, but reject coup-proofing measures that threaten to reduce military effectiveness, including selection/promotion/purges, training, command arrangements, information management, and organizational fragmentation. The remainder of this section tests these predictions by examining which of the nine coup-proofing tactics Hitler did and did not adopt.

### Command Authority

Hitler did not highly centralize command authority or remove command authority of lower level officers, in the manner described by coup-proofing theory, especially in the earlier years of the war. The willingness to give lower level officers command authority is expressed in the German idea of *Auftragstaktik*, an idea that emerged in the Prussian military during the Napoleonic Wars and is embraced by the German military to this day. This notion is that commanders are informed of their objectives in broad terms, and are given leeway to decide how to accomplish those objectives, using their own initiative and judgment if needed.<sup>58</sup>

*Auftragstaktik* was not disrupted by Hitler's ascent to power.<sup>59</sup> Making this work requires an organizational structure that gives commanders the ability to innovate in battle, and also requires a system of military education and training that nurtures and develops the ability to innovate, and

---

Hitler engaged in some forms of coup-proofing, such as engaging in policies the military liked and through indoctrination. Castillo also points out that Waffen SS both helped protect the regime and fought well. H-Diplo Roundtable, vol. VIII, no. 17 (2016). Available at <https://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-8-17.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 35-37; Werner Widder, "Auftragstaktik and Innere Führung: Trademarks of German Leadership," *Military Review* (September-October 2002): 3-9.

<sup>59</sup> Manfred Messerschmidt, "German Military Effectiveness between 1919 and 1939," in Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 2 (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 243.



in turn identify and advance individuals who can innovate. Affording command authority to German field officers enabled the implementation of the German military strategy of blitzkrieg, an approach that facilitated the rapid conquest of several countries, including France.<sup>60</sup> It also afforded Germany many tactical successes that aggregated to operational victories. For example, the independent and improvisatory actions of a German lieutenant and staff sergeant in May 1940 enabled the capture of the Belgian fortress of Eben Emanuel, an accomplishment that was critical in permitting German forces to advance rapidly across the Meuse River en route to defeating France.<sup>61</sup>

One possible exception to this pattern is the reduction in commander authority on the Eastern Front, especially after December 1941.<sup>62</sup> This reduction occurred in two ways. First, Hitler took personal command of the army that December. Hitler began issuing “no retreat” orders, requiring German forces to stand and fight, to the death if need be. However, the motivation was not to reduce coup risk, but rather out of frustration with the December 1941 stall in the German offensive against the Soviet Union. Hitler saw his generals as failing the war effort, and felt that his guidance was needed to reverse Germany’s fortunes. The rigidity of the no-retreat order in particular ought not be exaggerated, as Hitler authorized retreats in the Eastern front in January 1942, Crimea in 1942, southwest France in 1944, southeast Europe in 1944, and Latvia in 1944.<sup>63</sup> Somewhat relatedly, it is unclear if the no-retreat order degraded German military effectiveness, as contemporary historians generally disagree with the counterfactual that if only Hitler had given his generals a freer hand to run the war effort,

---

<sup>60</sup> Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*.

<sup>61</sup> Widder, “Battle Command.”

<sup>62</sup> Another possible exception is Hitler’s interference in the military plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union. However, this interference was not absolute; the invasion plan itself was ultimately a compromise between Hitler and his generals. Johannes Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer: Die Deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/42* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), esp. 223.

<sup>63</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, “Introduction,” in *Hitler and His Generals: Military Conferences 1942-1945*, English ed. (London: Greenhill Books, 2002), vii; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 455.

Germany would have enjoyed greater success.<sup>64</sup> Some observers go further, proposing that the no-retreat order helped prevent an even larger catastrophe from occurring.<sup>65</sup>

A second dimension of the reduced command authority in the East occurred not because of actions taken by Hitler, but because the German military high command reduced the command authority of lower level field commanders. The high command command rather than Hitler himself was responsible for the reduction in the autonomy of lower level commanders: “Already, in this early phase of the campaign, the debilitating antagonisms between the generals and the central command emerged regarding the conduct of operations. This was by no means only due to disagreements between Hitler and the generals — even absent the dictator’s claim to power the traditional autonomy of military leaders was threatened to be curtailed.”<sup>66</sup> That is, this reduction in commander authority was driven by the directive of the military high command itself, and not by Hitler.

## Bribery

Hitler used bribery to maintain the political support of his generals. He gave them promotions, money, property, and land.<sup>67</sup> Members of the high command such as General Gerd von Rundstedt, Admiral Eric Raeder, Field Marshall Wilhelm von Leeb, Luftwaffe Field Marshall Erhard Milch, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel and Field Marshal Günther von Kluge all

---

<sup>64</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War, 1939-1945* (London: Penguin, 2008), 211-212; Weinberg, “Introduction,” vi-viii; Helmut Heiber, “Preface,” in *Hitler and His Generals*, xxx-xxxii; Hürter, *Hitlers*, esp. 282, 284, 315.

<sup>65</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 456.

<sup>66</sup> Hürter, *Hitlers*, esp. 284.

<sup>67</sup> Hürter, *Hitlers*, 135-137; 164; 174-175; Albert Seaton, *The German Army 1933-1945* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 143-144.

received birthday presents of 250,000 Reichsmarks.<sup>68</sup> General Heinz Guderian received double his normal salary, tax-free.<sup>69</sup> SS officers were promised large farms in conquered regions of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, to be worked by teams of Slav slave labor.<sup>70</sup>

Hitler used bribes to reduce internal political threats. In the words of one historian, they “were specifically designed to bind senior military officers to Hitler and the Nazi state.”<sup>71</sup> Here are the notes, kept by one of Hitler’s army adjutants, of comments Hitler made about the practice: “[Hitler] spoke about promotions following the French campaign...He had done it intentionally and deliberately...the more one honoured bravery and military success, the more indebted and duty-bound did the recipients become, quite independent of their personal beliefs, to their oath and to the figure they had to thank for the honour. In this way he was linking a tax-free gratuity to the promotions...what he did expect of a general and an officer was that he subordinate himself in politics utterly to the political leadership...That would be easier to accomplish, even against one’s inner conviction, as the recipient of honours awarded by the head of state, and by this means of itself and also towards the state he would feel duty-bound to so act.”<sup>72</sup> The bribes reduced generals’ incentives to overthrow the regime. For example, when Guderian was relieved of his command the bribes tempered “whatever bitterness Guderian felt at his dismissal,” and perhaps not surprisingly Guderian rejected approaches from four coup-plotters across the course of the war, and elected not to participate in the July 1944 assassination attempt.<sup>73</sup> Bribes also allowed Hitler to address potential internal threats without removing high

---

<sup>68</sup> Goda, “Black Marks,” 111.

<sup>69</sup> Russell A. Hart, *Guderian: Panzer Pioneer or Myth Maker?* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2010), 83.

<sup>70</sup> Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Allen Lane, 2006) 270-271.

<sup>71</sup> Hart, *Guderian*, 83.

<sup>72</sup> Engel, *At the Heart*, 96.

<sup>73</sup> Hart, *Guderian*, 83, 99.

performing generals: “Hitler, unlike Stalin, did not eliminate his military leaders, but instead tried to win their favor through promotions and gifts.”<sup>74</sup>

Hitler was quite strategic in crafting bribes. Bribes often came in the form of increases in monthly pay, *Aufwandsentschädigungen*. Along with the increase in pay came the written notification that the funds were dispersed at the approval of Hitler himself, and that they could be revoked at his (dis)pleasure: “Whether and in what amount further *Aufwandsentschädigungen* can be expected...remains reserved for my decision in [each] individual case, based on the authorization given...by the Führer.”<sup>75</sup> A more explicit quid pro quo of material reward in exchange for political support of the regime is difficult to imagine.

### Foreign Policy Successes

Achieving diplomatic and military successes substantially bolstered Hitler’s grip on power. It quieted concerns amongst the military leadership that Hitler’s grand schemes would doom Germany, encouraged his supporters, and bolstered mass support for Hitler, making a coup less likely to succeed if launched.

There are many examples of this dynamic. Hitler’s reoccupation of the Rhineland in March 1936 was the final step in Germany’s abandonment of the Versailles Treaty, and it boosted high-ranking generals’ belief in Hitler’s course.<sup>76</sup> It also solidified his public support; in the wake of the crisis, the American ambassador to London wrote, “an overwhelming majority of

---

<sup>74</sup> Hürter, *Hitlers*, 603.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Goda, “Black Marks,” 105-106.

<sup>76</sup> Fest, *Plotting*, 57; MacGregor Knox, *Common Destiny: Dictatorship, Foreign Policy, and War in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93-94.

Germans would support any venture which Hitler might undertake.”<sup>77</sup> General Werner von Fritsch shied away from supporting a coup against Hitler because Hitler had so effectively won the support of the German people. Fritsch knew that military rule following a coup would be unpopular, and therefore difficult if not unmanageable, as, “It was not possible to rule a people like the Germans with bayonets.”<sup>78</sup> Hitler was more easily able to ignore military resentment over Fritsch’s February 1938 removal after the successful March 1938 annexation of Austria, a move the German public overwhelmingly approved in a plebiscite vote.<sup>79</sup> In September 1938, several German military officers planned to overthrow Hitler, as soon as Hitler gave the order to invade Czechoslovakia. However, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s September 13 offer to negotiate, leading to a complete German diplomatic victory, dissuaded them from attempting the coup, in part because they feared that German troops would no longer participate. One conspirator complained, “the troops would never revolt against the victorious Führer.”<sup>80</sup> Another wailed, “What can the troops possibly do against a leader this victorious?”<sup>81</sup> The 1940 successes against France and Norway further bolstered support for Hitler in the military and within the civilian population, the latter, according to one diarist, going “berserk with success.”<sup>82</sup>

Some might propose that Hitler’s mass support at least through the 1930s was ensured by the successes of German economic policies, such as public works projects that reduced unemployment. Hence, the popularity provided by these economic accomplishments would have been enough to stave off coup attempts, foreign policy successes aside. However, Germany’s

---

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Anchor, 1995), 361.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Harold C. Deutsch, *Hitler and His Generals: The Hidden Crisis, January-June 1938* (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), 417.

<sup>79</sup> Knox, *Common Destiny*, 101-102.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Orbach, *Plots Against Hitler*, 61. See also Volker Ullrich, *Hitler: Ascent 1889-1939*, Jefferson Chase., trans. (London: The Bodley Head, 2016), 746; Hürter, *Hitlers*, 151.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Fest, *Plotting*, 97.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Knox, *Common Destiny*, 107. See also Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*, Deborah Lucas Schneider, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 153.

prosperity should not overestimated. Mobilization for war crimped the economy and domestic consumption; there were food shortages and rationing as early as the first months of 1939, never mind the privations that came during the war itself.<sup>83</sup> More pointedly, the 1930s economic successes were not enough to discourage the October 1938 coup-plotting, but the foreign policy success of the Sudetenland crisis was.

### Pursue Foreign Policies Favored by the German Military

An essential element of Hitler's coup-proofing was the pursuit of foreign and military policies preferred by the German military. Hitler directly reached out to the military leadership from the first days of regime, describing his plans for military expansion, including violating the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles and territorial expansion.<sup>84</sup> These ideas were welcomed by the military leadership. Some scholars have been critical of the military on this score, suggesting that German officers made something of a devil's bargain, assenting to support Hitler in exchange for these new policy directions. As General Werner von Blomberg put it after the war, Hitler won the support of the generals because "he gave them what they wanted."<sup>85</sup>

### Training

Hitler did not reduce training to coup-proof; to the contrary, German soldiers received high quality training. This training, including exercises in combined arms operations, prepared

---

<sup>83</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power, 1933-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 350.

<sup>84</sup> Fest, *Plotting*, 36-38.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Seaton, *German Army*, 104. See also Hürter, *Hitlers*, 124, 144.

the army well in the years leading up to the outbreak of war.<sup>86</sup> During the war, combat veterans regularly rotated through training camps, to ensure that new recruits could learn lessons from contemporary combat experience. German training arrangements were at least in some ways superior to American training.<sup>87</sup>

## Information Management

On one hand, Hitler embraced the coup-proofing imperative of blocking communication among the elite, including his generals. In January 1940, Hitler reinforced secrecy, ordering that, “No one...may learn about a matter to be kept secret if he does not unconditionally need to know about it.” Some have proposed that impeding information flows undermined German military and foreign policy intelligence.<sup>88</sup>

Conversely, other elements of the coup-proofing tactic of information management were not present. Hitler did not disrupt horizontal flows of information within and between military units, and accordingly Germany was quite successful in conducting combined arms operations. Indeed, the German army pioneered important elements of combined arms operations, including the coordination of armor and infantry that proved so effective in the blitzkrieg strategy, as well as the coordination of aircraft with ground forces as early as the Poland and France campaigns, and aircraft with naval forces during the Norway campaign.<sup>89</sup>

## Indoctrination

---

<sup>86</sup> Messerschmidt, “German Military Effectiveness,” 245.

<sup>87</sup> Van Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 73-74.

<sup>88</sup> David Kahn, *Hitler's Spies: German Military Intelligence in World War II* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), eg 535.

<sup>89</sup> Williamson Murray, *The Luftwaffe, 1933-45: Strategy for Defeat* (Washington: Brassey's, 1983), 30-31, 35-39.

A crucial part of Hitler's regime was of course the totalitarian indoctrination of society, emphasizing the German people's destiny to have Hitler lead them. This paralleled indoctrination efforts in the German military. Hitler changed the military oath in 1934, such that all soldiers swore loyalty to him personally rather than to the state.<sup>90</sup> At the end of 1943, Hitler attached political officers to all army units.<sup>91</sup>

The successful indoctrination of German soldiers helped make a coup attempt less attractive to highly ranked officers opposed to Hitler, comparable to how Hitler's popularity in society more broadly made a coup attempt less appealing. High ranking officers recognized that propaganda had made the majority of German troops personally loyal to Hitler and, as Omer Bartov has written, "even those [German officers] who did find the courage to plot against Hitler were evidently much disheartened to discover that virtually no military units existed which could knowingly be deployed in a *Putsch* attempt."<sup>92</sup> Some have proposed that the indoctrination of German troops contributed to Germany's military effectiveness.<sup>93</sup>

### Organizational Fragmentation

Did Hitler fragment his military to coup-proof his regime, and did those fragmentation efforts undermine German military effectiveness? The answer to this question is nuanced. In the mid-1920s Hitler created the SS as a paramilitary group, tasked with protecting Hitler, the Nazi Party, and eventually the Nazi regime. During World War II, SS units performed a variety of

---

<sup>90</sup> Deutsch, *Hitler*, 19-20.

<sup>91</sup> Goda, "Black Marks," 120.

<sup>92</sup> *Hitler's Army*, 146.

<sup>93</sup> Eg Castillo, *Endurance*.



functions, including committing genocide against Jews and other groups, policing occupied territories, and fighting in combat.

If creating and maintaining the SS is a tactic that make coups less likely and reduced military effectiveness, we would expect that as a parallel military unit the SS would be based near Berlin to protect the regime, would be outside the rest of the military structure, would enjoy a disproportionate share of training and other resources, and would diminish German military effectiveness. The first two and last of these claims are not supported, and the third received some support, but not in the manner predicted. Regarding the first, 38 SS divisions fought in combat across the breadth of the Nazi empire; they were not idled during the war standing watch near Berlin.<sup>94</sup> Regarding the second, SS divisions generally worked in cooperation with the rest of the German war effort, not as a separate, unintegrated force. Regarding the fourth claim, SS units helped the army accomplish key objectives, as these divisions' "forays onto the battlefields of the Eastern Front, however, undoubtedly staved off a decisive defeat on more than one occasion. The intervention at Kharkov in February 1943 saved the Eastern Front." SS divisions also made critical contributions in the West, including at Normandy, Arnhem and the Ardennes.<sup>95</sup> Regarding resources, SS divisions were better equipped than conventional divisions.<sup>96</sup> However, these units attracted more resources because they were viewed as elite fighting units. They did not receive extra resources to help them defend the regime.

An interesting additional case of organizational fragmentation in Nazi Germany is the SA. The SA (or "brownshirts") was a paramilitary organization created before the SS, and during the 1920s and early 1930s it was used for the personal security of Hitler and the Nazi

---

<sup>94</sup> Tim Ripley, *Hitler's Praetorians: The History of the Waffen-SS 1925-1945* (Staplehurst, UK: Spellmount, 2004), 337.

<sup>95</sup> Ripley, *Hitler's Praetorians*, 333-334.

<sup>96</sup> Ripley, *Hitler's Praetorians*, 105.

party, and the intimidation of opposition. Coup-proofing theory might predict that Hitler would nurture the SA after he took power in 1933, both to continue to provide security to the regime as a parallel security force, and to counterbalance against the SS and other security organs.

However, in 1934, during the Night of the Long Knives, Hitler with the support of the army purged the SA, because he feared the SA as a potentially revolutionary threat to the regime.<sup>97</sup>

Beyond the SS, did Hitler engage in organizational fragmentation in other ways? As described, Hitler avoided some of the more deleterious forms of organizational fragmentation, for example creating splits between armor, infantry, and artillery that might undermine combined arms operations. That said, there was some organizational fragmentation especially at higher levels of command that may have undermined Germany's intelligence capabilities. Historians have argued that Hitler may have fragmented elements of his military and foreign policy apparatus in order to reduce internal threats, including exacerbating divisions between the high command of the armed forces (OKW) and high command of the army (OKH), splitting off the air force from the army, and allowing Ribbentrop to create a spy agency alongside the intelligence organs of the military and party.<sup>98</sup>

Did these fragmentation decisions undermine German military effectiveness? Making the air force independent this did not undermine German combined arms operations (indeed, the postwar trend globally was the creation of independent air forces). During the war, the *Luftwaffe* demonstrated "an exceedingly high level of competence on the tactical and operational side."<sup>99</sup>

Some propose that fragmenting the German intelligence community undermined the quality of German intelligence. However, even one of the more strident advocates of this position concedes that several other factors also contributed to inferior German intelligence

---

<sup>97</sup> Seaton, *German Army*, chapter 2.

<sup>98</sup> Fest, *Plotting*, 103; Kahn, *Hitler's Spies*, 535; Seaton, *German Army*, 35.

<sup>99</sup> Murray, *Luftwaffe*, 319.

during the war, including arrogance, an aggressive foreign policy orientation which encouraged the neglect of intelligence, an organizational culture within the German military that was hostile to a focus on intelligence, and anti-Semitism that led to the departure of many qualified intelligence analysts.<sup>100</sup>

### Selection, Promotion, and Purges

In the 1930s, Hitler engaged in occasional, targeted actions purging officers or factions perceived to be political threats, most notably the 1934 purge of the SA and the removal from power in 1938 of Blomberg and Fritsch. Such actions became less frequent once the war started, though of course individuals connected with the July 1944 assassination attempt were executed or imprisoned. Hitler stayed away from witch hunts sometimes seen in other regimes, such as the Soviet Union in the 1930s or Turkey in 2016, of dismissing, imprisoning, or executing any officers suspected of dissent. Keeping purges targeted and limited allowed Hitler to bolster the internal strength of his regime without undermining the quality of military leadership. Even after the July 1944 episode, arrests were targeted at individuals identified as participating in the conspiracy, rather than sweeping purges of the officer corps.<sup>101</sup>

A related coup-proofing tactic is to appoint only politically loyal officers who avoid disagreeing with the political leadership. This can undermine quality foreign policy decision making and military effectiveness, because generals in dictatorships are afraid to convey

---

<sup>100</sup> Kahn, *Hitler's Spies*, chapter 27.

<sup>101</sup> Orbach, *Plotting*, chapter 19.

accurate, discouraging intelligence estimates to dictators, sometimes leading them to start wars they go on to lose.<sup>102</sup>

However, members of the German high command expressed disagreement with Hitler's plans surprisingly frequently, sometimes directly to Hitler. Further, those who did speak out often avoided severe punishment. There are several examples, including Generals August von Mackensen, Blomberg, Fritsch, Johannes Blaskowitz, Walther von Brauchitsch, Hermann Göring, Guderian, Paul von Kleist, Hoepner, and Fedor von Bock who all spoke out against wartime atrocities or disagreed over some issue of military planning. None of them were executed or imprisoned, only some were dismissed or demoted (and some of those only temporarily), and some received bribes after dissenting, an example of a leader employing a tactic that does not reduce military effectiveness, bribery, in order to avoid using a tactic that reduces military effectiveness, purges.<sup>103</sup>

Expressions of disagreement aside, Hitler was willing to relieve officers when he perceived that they underperformed. Hitler expressed the view as early as 1939 that German officers be promoted on the basis of demonstrated performance in combat, above other considerations such as careerism or military education. He formalized his view in German policy in 1941 and 1942, relieving several commanders following the 1941 setbacks in the Russia campaign, choosing their replacements on the basis of combat performance rather than political reliability.<sup>104</sup> Hitler did not prioritize political loyalty over combat effectiveness, remarking to an aide in October

---

<sup>102</sup> Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, chapter 2.

<sup>103</sup> Goda, "Black Marks," 110; Deutsch, *Hitler's Generals*, 121-127; Seaton, *German Army*, 123-124, 137, 142, 165; Fest, *Plotting*, 172-178, 382; Kershaw, *Hitler*, 507.

<sup>104</sup> Kershaw, *Hitler*, 455; Hürter, *Hitlers*, 349.

1942 that he “did not demand of any officer that he be a National Socialist, but enthusiasm to strike a blow, to fight were pre-conditions for everything which followed.”<sup>105</sup> This fit into Hitler’s broader view as to how to maximize German military effectiveness. He interpreted Germany’s World War I policy of offering preferential promotional consideration to regulars over even combat-tested reserve officers to have been detrimental, especially undermining ties between officers and their troops. He saw this new policy as necessary to break the grip of the Prussian officer corps, in his words “the calcified *Wehrmacht* old gang,” on his new National Socialist army.<sup>106</sup> After July 1944, General Staff officers could only be promoted after serving a tour at the battle front.<sup>107</sup> One quantitative study found that in the North African, Italian, and West European theaters, German generals were significantly more likely to be demoted after poor performance in combat.<sup>108</sup>

Ironically, these policies of promotion on the basis of combat performance had coup-proofing as well as effectiveness motivations. Replacing members of the Prussian officer corps with younger officers permitted Hitler to reduce further a potential internal threat to his regime. Hitler had long been suspicious of the opposition of the old officer corps, worrying that the old guard questioned both his strategic plans and his basic military competence.<sup>109</sup> That is to say, Hitler’s personnel policies were to some degree a reversal of the coup-proofing proposition that dictators coup-proof by promoting on the basis of political reliability rather than competence. In

---

<sup>105</sup> Ender, *Heart of the Reich*, 137.

<sup>106</sup> Knox, *Common Destiny*, 212, 215.

<sup>107</sup> Van Creveld, *Fighting Power*, 144; Knox, *Common Destiny*, 220.

<sup>108</sup> Dan Reiter and Andrew Wagstaff, “Leadership and Military Effectiveness,” unpublished manuscript, Emory University, 2016.

<sup>109</sup> Goda, “Black Marks,” 101; Knox, “1 October.”

Hitler's case, he may have promoted officers on the basis of battlefield competence partly *in order to* reduce internal political threats.<sup>110</sup>

## Summary and Discussion

Hitler adopted some but not all coup-proofing tactics. Specifically, he adopted those that did not directly impair military effectiveness, including indoctrination, bribery, the pursuit of policies favored by the military, and the accomplishment of foreign policy successes, and mostly eschewed those coup-proofing tactics that promised to reduce military effectiveness, such as distorting selection and promotion, undermining training, and reducing command autonomy. The partial exceptions were some organizational fragmentation and some distortion of information flows, lowering effectiveness most consequentially by reducing intelligence quality, and reduction of command authority on the Eastern Front, though this last action was taken in part by generals themselves, and did not reflect coup-proofing motives. The Germany case also reveals some curious and unpredicted effects. For example, Hitler's decision to promote on the basis of combat experience had the effects of bolstering leader quality *and* reducing internal threats.

---

<sup>110</sup> An alternative view of Hitler's officer selection policies hews more to the view that especially from 1942 forward Hitler's main focus was the coup-proofing motive of making the officer corps more ideologically subservient, at the expense of reducing German military effectiveness by removing professionals who might think independently. Heinemann, "Military Resistance," 801, and MacGregor Knox, "1 October 1942: Adolf Hitler, Wehrmacht Officer Policy, and Social Revolution," *Historical Journal* 43 (2000): 824. However, these critics present no real evidence in a decline in effectiveness as a result of these policies. The evidence seems to indicate that Hitler himself saw these policies as genuinely necessary to improve fighting performance, especially in the wake of the winter 1941-42 setbacks. See, for example, *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942-1943*, Louis P. Lochner ed. and trans. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 355. Knox (824) concedes that these changes in some ways improved tactical performance, as they meant the promotion of more officers willing to fight to the death, a useful characteristic for an army intending to fight a bloody retreat.

One possible critique is that it is perhaps overly generous to describe Hitler as optimally balancing reducing the risk of coups with optimizing military effectiveness. He was not thrown from power, but there were close calls. This is a reminder that though dictators (like all leaders) seek to balance competing goals, there is inevitably an element of guesswork, and they sometimes guess wrong, either over-coup-proofing or under-coup-proofing. This observation should not overshadow the central conclusion of the case study, that Hitler's coup-proofing behavior much better matches the toolbox theory than the internal or external threat theories, with the outcome of higher military effectiveness than the internal threat theory would predict, and higher internal stability than the external threat theory would predict.

## **Conclusions**

Leaders facing coup threats need not choose between deflecting internal or external threats. These leaders can deflect internal threats while deploying effective militaries. As the toolbox theory describes, they do this by eschewing coup-proofing tactics that reduce military effectiveness, and implementing those coup-proofing tactics that protect them without undermining military power. This explains why Hitler was able to survive for so long against both internal and external threats, as his efforts to build an effective military were largely unaffected by his efforts to stave off internal threats. It also explains why Hitler was able to field such an effective military without risking being overthrown, a key empirical contribution to the evolving debate on the relationship between regime type and war outcomes. The Nazi Germany case also suggests some elaborations of coup-proofing theory, as it stresses the potential role of

mass public support in blocking coups, and it demonstrates that in their officer selection policies dictators can advance military effectiveness and coup-proofing objectives simultaneously.

Like Hitler, other dictators under internal and external threat have also implemented some but not all coup-proofing tactics, in an effort to boost military power and stave off coup threats. Consider Saddam Hussein's behavior towards the end of the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>111</sup> Around 1988, Hussein began to roll back some coup-proofing measures that had impinged on Iraqi military effectiveness, as he began to improve training, grant more decision-making authority to permit combined arms operations, and in some cases promote officers on the basis of competence rather than ethnicity. However, he retained other coup-proofing tactics that did not reduce effectiveness, such as bribery. These efforts helped somewhat improve Iraqi combat performance against Iran without significantly jeopardizing Hussein's hold on power.<sup>112</sup>

Another alleged paragon of coup-proofing, Egypt, also abandoned some coup-proofing tactics, as when it conducted very extensive training and promoted leaders on the basis of merit rather than political reliability prior to the 1973 Yom Kippur War.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, beginning in the years after the 1939-1940 Winter War and accelerating after the 1941 German invasion, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin moved away from some coup-proofing tactics. Stalin created mobile forces that

---

<sup>111</sup> Talmadge, *Dictator's Army*, esp. 221, 227.

<sup>112</sup> On occasionally promoting on the basis of competence rather than ethnicity, see Williamson Murray and Kevin M. Woods, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 302-303; Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliott (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap, 2015), 434. On bribery, see Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 181-184. On restricting initiative and not giving lower level commanders more autonomy, see Murray and Woods, *Iran-Iraq War*, 302-303; Kenneth N. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press). On multiple security organizations, see Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2012), 208-209. Talmadge assesses a larger improvement in Iraqi military effectiveness than Pollack or Murray and Woods.

<sup>113</sup> Pollack, *Arabs*, 98-131.



operated with greater autonomy, placing less emphasis on the political credentials of an officer, and removing underperforming commanders, while retaining other coup-proofing elements.<sup>114</sup>

Future work can explain what kinds of assets or structural conditions make certain coup-proofing tactics more or less attractive. The availability of certain material assets might facilitate bribery. Rapid Chinese economic growth has made it easier for the Chinese Communist Party to bribe the Chinese military by offering officers a variety of commercial opportunities in areas such as real estate and manufacturing. Strong political parties, especially when coupled with political ideologies, may facilitate the coup-proofing tactic of indoctrination. More generally, higher levels of infrastructural power may strengthen a dictator's grip on society, reducing the likelihood that society would support a coup, in turn making a coup attempt look less attractive to military officers.<sup>115</sup>

Last, the paper has important implications for foreign policy. Policy-makers cannot blithely assume that dictators must sabotage the effectiveness of their militaries in order to fend off coups. That said, if policy-makers are able to discover exactly what coup-proofing measures dictators are and are not taking, they will be able to craft more accurate assessments of their potential adversaries' military power and plan accordingly.

---

<sup>114</sup> David M. Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941-1943* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 124, 378-402; Roger R. Reese, *Red Commanders: A Social History of the Soviet Army Officer Corps, 1918-1991* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), esp. 175.

<sup>115</sup> Dan Slater, "Iron Cage in an Iron Fist: Authoritarian Institutions and the Personalization of Power in Malaysia," *Comparative Politics* 36 (October 2003): 81-101.