

Power Sharing and Authoritarian Stability

How Rebel Regimes Solve the Guardianship Dilemma

Anne Meng Jack Paine

University of Virginia, University of Rochester

January 25, 2022

Big questions in comparative politics

- Why are some authoritarian regimes more durable than others?
- What strategies do dictators pursue to survive in office?
- Why are some more successful than others?

Durability of rebel regimes

- We study the consequences of regimes that gained power by winning a rebellion: **rebel regimes**
- Examples: MPLA regime in Angola, RPF regime in Rwanda
- Our sample of African countries: 21 rebel regimes since independence

Durability of rebel regimes

- Rebel regimes are exceptionally durable
- In any particular year, rebel regimes are **more than four times** as likely to survive in power
- 78% of post-independence rebel regimes are still in power today

The puzzle

The durability of African rebel regimes is puzzling in light of two existing literatures:

1. Revolutionary regimes
2. Guardianship dilemma

1. Revolutionary regimes

- Existing studies establish that regimes founded in social revolutions are very durable
- The main mechanism they propose is domination of the masses: “He who controls the countryside controls the country” (Huntington 1968)
- “... violent overthrow of an existing regime from below accompanied by **mass mobilization and state collapse**, which triggers a **rapid transformation of the state and the existing social order**” (Lachapelle, Levitsky, Way, and Casey 2020)

Most African rebel regimes were not revolutionary

- Most did not adopt a revolutionary ideology or attempt radical transformation of state and society
- Many struggled to control territory beyond the capital
- *Three-fourths* of African rebel regimes do not meet standards for a revolutionary regime
- **Why are African rebel regimes so durable despite (typically) lacking origins in social revolution and not dominating the masses?**

2. Guardianship dilemma

- Who will guard the guards?
- Soldiers strong enough to guard the regime are also strong enough to overthrow it
- Huntington 1957, 1968; Finer 1962; Acemoglu, Vindigni, and Ticchi 2010a,b; Besley and Robinson 2010; Roessler 2011; Svobik 2013; McMahon and Slantchev 2015; Greitens 2016; Harkness 2018; White 2020; Paine 2021

African rebel regimes rarely experience coups

- Guardianship dilemma should be particularly acute in rebel regimes
- The leader came to power via the military and his inner circle is composed of men with military experience and control over troops
- Yet rebel regimes rarely experience coups
- **How do African rebel regimes manage intra-elite conflict and solve the guardianship dilemma?**

Main takeaway!

The stability of rebel regimes is founded upon **peaceful power sharing between the leader and military elites**

Overview of theory

- Origins of peaceful power sharing are in the launching rebellion
- Leader must delegate control and share power with military commanders in order to win

Overview of theory

- After gaining power, rebels replace the state military with their own
- Leaders share power with their former co-combatants to maintain their support
- Commitments to share power are **credible** because of wartime foundations

Overview of theory

- How do victorious rebel leaders share power after establishing a new regime?
- They relinquish personal authority over the military and delegate control to the Ministry of Defense
- Empirical proxy: naming a distinct individual as Minister of Defense

Our data

- Annual data on all authoritarian regimes in Africa, 1960–2017
- Compiled original measure of rebel regimes

Overview of empirical findings

- Rebel regimes survive longer compared to non-rebel regimes
- Less susceptible to successful coups and other modes of overthrow

Overview of empirical findings

- Measuring power sharing with the military: we compiled data on appointment of a Minister of Defense (MoD)
- Rebel regime leaders are more likely to appoint a distinct individual as MoD
- Rebel regimes survived longer when the MoD portfolio was filled more frequently
- MoDs were typically high-ranking soldiers from the war
- Rebel movements routinely replaced the existing state military with their own

Main takeaway!

The stability of rebel regimes is founded upon **peaceful power sharing between the leader and military elites**

THEORY

Outline for the theory

- Leaders can try to mitigate the guardianship dilemma by sharing power with military elites
- But sharing power is a double-edged sword
(↓ motives but ↑ opportunity for coup)
- Which effect dominates? Does sharing power actually reduce motives for a coup? Depends on credibility of commitments
- What's specific about rebel regimes? Commitments to share power with military elites are more credible because of experience with sharing power during launching rebellion

Guardianship dilemma and the fear of coups

- Soldiers strong enough to guard the regime are also strong enough to overthrow it
- Empirically, coups are the most common way in which autocratic leaders are deposed

Sharing power to mitigate the guardianship dilemma

- Leader can share power with military elites
- Widely studied strategy of authoritarian survival
- Although little attention in research on the guardianship dilemma or revolutionary regimes

Sharing power to mitigate the guardianship dilemma

- Key power-sharing decision: whether the leader relinquishes personal authority over the military by **delegating control to the Ministry of Defense**
- Empirically observable indicator: appointing a separate Minister of Defense (MoD)
- As opposed to eliminating the position, keeping it vacant, or the leader taking the portfolio himself
- Absence of separate MoD is empirically frequent: 38% of total regime-years

Appointing a Minister of Defense

- MoD is high-ranking cabinet executive position
- Military command: sits right below the president, oversees the chiefs of staff for all branches of the military
- Creation and implementation of national security strategy
- Involved with appointment, management, and mobilization of all security forces

Outline for the theory

- Leaders can try to mitigate the guardianship dilemma by sharing power with military elites ✓
- But sharing power is a double-edged sword
(↓ motives but ↑ opportunity for coup)
- Which effect dominates? Does sharing power actually reduce motives for a coup? Depends on credibility of commitments
- What's specific about rebel regimes? Commitments to share power with military elites are more credible because of experience with sharing power during launching rebellion

Offering carrots to reduce motives for a coup

- Delivering spoils lessens the **motives** to stage a coup
- MoD is a high-ranking cabinet position, common way to distribute rents in Africa (Arriola 2009; Francois et al. 2015; Meng 2020)
- High salaries, private luxury cars, houses, first-class travel, control over government contracts
- Reduction of friction between executive and military over how to allocate resources

Double-edged sword of sharing power

- Problem! Military elites can instead leverage their favored position to overthrow the ruler
- Greater **opportunity** for a coup

Double-edged sword of sharing power

- High-level military appointees have the greatest rate of coup success
- MoD, Vice MoD, Army Chief of Staff: 85% success rate
- Middle-ranking officers (majors, colonels): 49% success rate
- Lower ranks: 14% success rate

Outline for the theory

- Leaders can try to mitigate the guardianship dilemma by sharing power with military elites ✓
- But sharing power is a double-edged sword (↓ motives but ↑ opportunity for coup) ✓
- Which effect dominates? Does sharing power actually reduce motives for a coup? Depends on credibility of commitments
- What's specific about rebel regimes? Commitments to share power with military elites are more credible because of experience with sharing power during launching rebellion

Problem of credible commitment

- Why might a leader's commitment to share power not be credible?
- African leaders often shuffle elites in top positions
- Empirically, African presidents are most likely to personally hold the MoD portfolio than any other cabinet position
- Leaders fear that a rival will consolidate their influence among the military

Problem of credible commitment

- Anticipation that an appointment will be short-lived \implies internal security dilemma (Roessler 2011, 2016)
- Elites want to capture their “moment in the sun” and launch a coup before they lose their position in the government
- Fear of a coup can be self-fulfilling in environments of non-credible commitments

Outline for the theory

- Leaders can try to mitigate the guardianship dilemma by sharing power with military elites ✓
- But sharing power is a double-edged sword (↓ motives but ↑ opportunity for coup) ✓
- Which effect dominates? Does sharing power actually reduce motives for a coup? Depends on credibility of commitments ✓
- What's specific about rebel regimes? Commitments to share power with military elites are more credible because of experience with sharing power during launching rebellion

Maximizing battlefield efficiency

- When do leaders maximize battlefield efficiency and relinquish personal control over the military?
- When they face intense fighting or severe threats (Greitens 2016)
- Especially relevant for weak rebels vis-à-vis state or colonial military

Military necessity for rebels to share power

- On the ground: decentralize control by delegating decision-making autonomy to field commanders
- At the center: integrate field commanders into top decision-making bodies
 - ⇒ absorb and aggregate battlefield information
- Lengthy struggles
 - ⇒ power-sharing relationships developed over long periods (average launching rebellion: 8.7 years)

After gaining power

- After winning, the political wing of the rebel group heads the government and replaces the state military with their own armed wing
- Yet this doesn't solve the guardianship dilemma by itself
- Partisan and ideological ties are not sufficient
- High-ranking military officials have wartime experience and control over troops

⇒ They pose a real threat to depose the leader

After gaining power

- Leaders must **share power** with their former co-combatants to maintain their support
- Commitments to share power are **credible** because of wartime foundations

Example: MPLA in Angola

- Collective governance structure under Agostinho Neto (became leader in 1962)
- All military/security matters decided by a committee

Example: MPLA in Angola

- Achieved independence from Portugal in 1975
- Armed wing of the MPLA replaced the previous state military with their own FAPLA troops
- Neto became first president after independence and appointed key members of the liberation struggle as Ministers of Defense
- 3 MoDs from 1976–98, all high-level commanders within MPLA

Contrast with non-rebel regimes

- Non-rebel regimes: civilian presidents, leaders of successful coups
- These leaders have not established power-sharing relationships with military elites prior to taking control of the state
- Didn't endure a lengthy armed struggle for power and don't replace high-ranking officers with their own
- At least without triggering a countercoup (Sudduth 2017; Harkness 2018)

Outline for the theory

- Leaders can try to mitigate the guardianship dilemma by sharing power with military elites ✓
- But sharing power is a double-edged sword (↓ motives but ↑ opportunity for coup) ✓
- Which effect dominates? Does sharing power actually reduce motives for a coup? Depends on credibility of commitments ✓
- What's specific about rebel regimes? Commitments to share power with military elites are more credible because of experience with sharing power during launching rebellion ✓

Main testable implications

- Rebel regimes should break down less frequently than regimes established by other means
- Rebel regime leaders should share power with military elites more frequently than non-rebel regime leaders
- I will also present evidence for various intervening implications of the theory

MAIN EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Data

- Annual observations for each African country
- 1960 to 2017
- Post-independence years only
- Non-democracies only
- 2,352 country-years

Dependent variable

- AUTHORITARIAN REGIME BREAKDOWN
- 1 = breakdown
- 0 = no breakdown
- Breakdown can be caused by coup, popular uprising, insurgent group, foreign intervention, election loss

Main explanatory variable

- REBEL REGIME
- 1 = regime came to power by winning a rebellion that generated at least 1,000 battle deaths
- 0 = other regimes

List of rebel regimes in Africa

Colonial liberation

Algeria 62–92	Namibia 90–NA
Angola 75–NA	South Africa 94–NA
Eritrea 93–NA	Tunisia 56–11
Guinea-Bissau 74–80	Zimbabwe 80–NA
Morocco 56–NA	
Mozambique 75–NA	

Civil war winner

Burundi 05–NA	Ivory Coast 11–NA
Chad 82–90	Liberia 97–03
Chad 90–NA	Rwanda 94–NA
Congo-B 97–NA	South Sudan 11–NA
DRC 97–NA	Uganda 86–NA
Ethiopia 91–NA	

Comparing frequencies

- Non-rebel regimes **4x more likely to break down in a given year**: 6.8% vs. 1.7%
- Similar discrepancy for successful coups: 4.5% vs. 1.1%

Table 2: Authoritarian regime breakdown

	DV: AUTHORITARIAN REGIME BREAKDOWN							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Rebel regime	-0.0481*** (0.00918)	-0.0477*** (0.0110)	-0.0574*** (0.0113)	-0.0528*** (0.0115)				
Col. liberation regime					-0.0448*** (0.00970)	-0.0459*** (0.0124)	-0.0511*** (0.0131)	-0.0395*** (0.0147)
Civil war winner					-0.0540*** (0.0110)	-0.0515*** (0.0121)	-0.0679*** (0.0125)	-0.0737*** (0.0129)
ln(GDP p.c.)		0.00203 (0.00516)		-0.0151** (0.00592)		0.00193 (0.00524)		-0.0184** (0.00736)
ln(GDP p.c.) growth		-0.0885** (0.0363)		-0.0828** (0.0376)		-0.0877** (0.0363)		-0.0767** (0.0378)
ln(oil & gas income p.c.)		-0.000192 (0.000718)		0.000463 (0.000722)		-0.000197 (0.000719)		0.000575 (0.000744)
ln(population)			0.00878** (0.00432)	0.0205*** (0.00496)			0.00839* (0.00438)	0.0223*** (0.00534)
Ethnic frac.			-0.00972 (0.0248)	-0.00798 (0.0240)			-0.00545 (0.0265)	-0.00168 (0.0267)
Religious frac.			0.0112 (0.0194)	-0.00419 (0.0208)			0.0132 (0.0196)	-0.00368 (0.0210)
British colony			-0.00220 (0.0132)	0.00100 (0.0132)			-0.00376 (0.0134)	-0.00168 (0.0132)
French colony			0.00884 (0.0103)	0.00303 (0.0110)			0.00740 (0.0107)	-0.00109 (0.0118)
Portuguese colony			-0.00157 (0.0145)	-0.0108 (0.0166)			-0.00710 (0.0151)	-0.0244 (0.0193)
Country-years	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352
R-squared	0.013	0.042	0.043	0.047	0.013	0.042	0.043	0.048
Time controls?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Year FE?	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES

Notes: Table 2 presents linear regression estimates with standard error estimates clustered by country in parentheses. Every column controls for years since the last regime change and cubic splines. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Robustness checks

- Not driven by revolutionary regimes
- Compare rebel regimes to coup regimes only
- Coefficient estimates highly stable across different sequences of covariates
- Jackknife sensitivity analysis
- Logit link

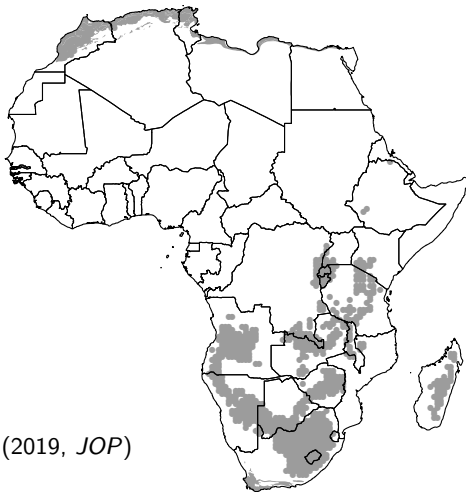
Instrumental variable analysis

- Rebel regimes do not emerge randomly (although selection effects could go in either direction)
- Source of plausible exogeneity in the emergence of colonial liberation regimes: percentage of a country's territory suitable for colonial European settlement
- 2SLS are similar to magnitude to OLS

Motivation for instrument

- European settlers strongly resisted post-1945 decolonization reforms
- Stronger vested economic interests in maintaining control than metropolitan officials and most multi-national corporations
- Violent liberation wars tended to occur in colonies with large European settlements
- Europeans could create large settlements in which they replicated European agricultural practices only in specific areas of Africa

Territory suitable for large-scale European settlement



Data from Paine (2019, *JOP*)

Is the instrument valid?

- Highly correlated with colonial liberation regimes (as well as where Europeans settled and onset of violent liberation movements)
- All variables measured pre-treatment
- No obvious story for why exclusion restriction should be badly violated
- Formal sensitivity analysis: robust to moderately large violations of exclusion restriction

Main testable implications

- Rebel regimes should break down less frequently than regimes established by other means ✓
- Rebel regime leaders should share power with military elites more frequently than non-rebel regime leaders
- I will also present evidence for various intervening implications of the theory

Sharing power with military elites

- STABLE MOD
- 1 = appointment of distinct actor as MoD *and* this was the same person as in previous year
- 0 = no MoD *or* ruler holds portfolio himself *or* shuffling in previous year
- Statistical models identical to before except different DV

Ministers of Defense: Rebel regimes

- Appointed a MoD in **83 percent** of regime-years, and not much shuffling
- Over half of all rebel regimes appointed a MoD in *every* year
- Mozambique: 5 MoDs since independence in 1975; average tenure >8 years

Ministers of Defense: Non-rebel regimes

- Appointed a MoD in **56 percent** of regime-years, and higher rates of shuffling
- Hastings Banda of Malawi held Defense portfolio over entire tenure (1964–1993)
- Burkina Faso: 19 different MoDs since independence in 1960; average tenure <3 years

Main testable implications

- Rebel regimes should break down less frequently than regimes established by other means ✓
- Rebel regime leaders should share power with military elites more frequently than non-rebel regime leaders ✓
- I will also present evidence for various intervening implications of the theory

INTERVENING IMPLICATIONS

Lingering questions

- Does sharing power matter? Are rebel regimes that share power more frequently less prone to breakdown?
- Do rebel leaders actually replace the existing state military with their own armed wing?
- Do rebel leaders actually use the MoD post to share power with former co-combatants?

Does sharing power matter?

- Rebel regimes that frequently share power should be more durable
- Restrict sample to rebel regimes only
- DV = AUTHORITARIAN REGIME BREAKDOWN
- Explanatory variable = STABLE MOD (average)

Comparing rebel regimes

- Rebel regimes without stable MoD appointments are significantly more likely to break down
- Example: Chad 1982–90
- Hissène Habré usually kept MoD position vacant
- Overthrown in a rebellion by a military official (Idriss Déby) purged from the military in the previous year
- Why not share power? Typically, rebel regimes with short launching rebellions

Lingering questions

- Does sharing power matter? Are rebel regimes that share power more frequently less prone to breakdown? ✓
- Do rebel leaders actually replace the existing state military with their own armed wing?
- Do rebel leaders actually use the MoD post to share power with former co-combatants?

Military transformation in rebel regimes

- We assert: in rebel regimes, the leader has prior experience with sharing power among high-ranking commanders in the state military
- This requires that members of the armed wing of the rebel group hold the top positions in the rebel regime
- We compiled data on the composition of the state army following rebel takeover

Military transformation in rebel regimes

Table 6: Military Transformation in Rebel Regimes

Complete Military Transformation		Military Integration	No Military Transformation
Algeria 62–92	Ivory Coast 11–NA	Burundi 06–NA	Morocco 56–NA
Angola 75–NA	Liberia 97–03	Chad 90–NA	Tunisia 56–11
Chad 82–90	Mozambique 75–NA	DRC 97–NA	
Congo-B 97–NA	Rwanda 94–NA	Namibia 90–NA	
Eritrea 93–NA	Uganda 86–NA	South Africa 94–NA	
Ethiopia 91–NA	Zimbabwe 80–NA	South Sudan 11–NA	
Guinea-Bissau 74–80			

Lingering questions

- Does sharing power matter? Are rebel regimes that share power more frequently less prone to breakdown? ✓
- Do rebel leaders actually replace the existing state military with their own armed wing? ✓
- Do rebel leaders actually use the MoD post to share power with former co-combatants?

Are the MoDs former co-combatants?

- We assert: leaders of rebel regimes must share power with high-level military commanders
- They pose credible threats because of their wartime experience and control over troops
- This requires that the MoDs in rebel regimes are typically important figures from the launching rebellion

Are the MoDs former co-combatants?

- We demonstrate this by compiling biographical information about MoDs in rebel regimes
- Within first 20 years of regime, more than two-thirds were important figures from the launching rebellion
- Not relatives of the leader, chosen for co-ethnicity, members of the previous state military, or members of competing rebel factions

Lingering questions

- Does sharing power matter? Are rebel regimes that share power more frequently less prone to breakdown? ✓
- Do rebel leaders actually replace the existing state military with their own armed wing? ✓
- Do rebel leaders actually use the MoD post to share power with former co-combatants? ✓

Alternative explanations

- Control over society
- Ruling parties
- Subjugation of the military (armed counterbalancing, commissar system)
- Sharing power with civilians or across ethnic groups
- Modes of civil war termination (counterrevolutions, Cold War, outright victory)

BROADER TAKEAWAYS

Main takeaway!

The stability of rebel regimes is founded upon **peaceful power sharing between the leader and military elites**

Rethinking the consequences of revolutions

- **Ideological affinity and partisanship** alone are not sufficient to ensure stability. Rebel regime leaders must still **share power** with military elites to survive!
- The conditions that facilitate peaceful power sharing apply to **all rebel regimes** with origins in violent conflict—even those without a **social revolution**
- The stability of rebel regimes comes from stable **elite power sharing**, not from transforming state and society to **subjugate the masses**

Are African cases unique?

- Many seminal theories of authoritarian politics were developed to explain outlier cases like China and USSR
- Often applied to Africa without modification

Are African cases unique?

- Throughout history, African states have typically failed to exercise effective control over extended territories (low population density, tsetse fly, slave trade, ethnic fractionalization)
- Even victorious rebel regimes could not overcome these inauspicious conditions (e.g., Angola)
- Nevertheless, solving intra-elite conflicts could promote regime stability
- Control over countryside is a more compelling mechanism for some cases outside of Africa

Guardianship dilemma

- We develop a largely unexplored mechanism for mitigating the guardianship dilemma in dictatorships: sharing power
- As opposed to recruiting based on personalist ties or counterbalancing
- But sharing power only works in specific circumstances
- Related research “Reframing the Guardianship Dilemma: How the Militarys Dual Disloyalty Options Imperil Dictators” (conditionally accepted, *American Political Science Review*)

Double-edged sword of sharing power

- We explained how sharing power exerts two main consequences
- Greater commitment to spoils \implies lessens motives for a coup
- Greater position of power \implies enhances opportunity for a coup
- This strategic dilemma is quite general

THANKS!