

Mapping Coercive Institutions: The State Security Forces Dataset, 1960-2010

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Abstract

How states organize their coercive institutions can have a substantial effect on regime durability, military effectiveness, and repression. This article describes the first release of the State Security Forces (SSF) data set, which includes information on how 283 security forces in 78 states are controlled, staffed, equipped, and deployed between 1960 and 2010. A country-year version also includes indicators of fragmentation, politicization, and coup-proofing within the security sector as a whole. The data suggest there is wide variation between states and within them over time in the organization of coercive institutions. After introducing the data set and comparing it to existing ones, this article highlights three new findings from the data that contradict understandings of coup-proofing. First, while the average number of security forces states employ has remained relatively constant since the early 1980s, rulers are increasingly likely to counterbalance the military with security forces outside of military control. Second, while much existing work focuses on counterbalancing in the Middle East, it has been as common in Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War. Finally, although counterbalancing is frequently depicted as a tool of dictators, democratic regimes employ it as well. In addition to facilitating research on civil-military relations, the data set may also be helpful for scholars and policymakers interested in understanding state repression, state capacity, and military effectiveness.

Keywords

Coercive institutions, security forces, coup-proofing, internal security, paramilitaries, policing, militia, military organization, civil-military relations

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Introduction

How does the design of coercive institutions vary across states and within them over time? What is the effect of military organization on regime durability? Military effectiveness? Repression? Answering these questions requires high quality data on how states organize and use the republican guards, secret police, popular militia, and other armed forces that comprise their official security sectors. While important strides have been made in collecting data on non-state armed groups including pro-government militia, existing research on state coercion has been hindered by a lack of data on security forces beyond the regular armed forces that can be compared across countries and over time within them.

This article presents the first release of the State Security Forces (SSF) data set, which compiles information on security forces in 78 states, 1960-2010. A final round of data collection, currently underway, will bring the total to 96. The data set comes in two versions: one in which the unit of analysis is the security force-year, which captures how each security force is commanded, staffed, equipped, and deployed; and one in which the unit of analysis is the country-year, which includes indicators of fragmentation, politicization, and coup-proofing or counterbalancing within the country's security sector as a whole.

In what follows, I first describe the central features of the SSF dataset, including how state security forces are defined, the scope of the data set, and variables included. The next section discusses the sources used to compile the dataset, highlighting potential sources of bias and the strategies used to minimize them. The third section compares the SSF data set to data from the *Military Balance*, an annual defense publication of the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, and currently a widely used source of data on state security forces, highlighting key differences between the data sets. In particular, while the *Military Balance*

cautions against using its data in cross-national time-series analysis, the SSF data set was designed to facilitate it; other differences included expanded temporal and geographic coverage; the use of different source material; and the inclusion of different features of state security forces.

The fourth section presents descriptive statistics on states' coercive institutions. It highlights three findings in particular that contravene common assumptions about a common form of coup-proofing: counterbalancing the military with independent security forces. First, counterbalancing has increased even as the risk of a coup has declined over time. While the average number of security forces states employ has remained relatively constant since the early 1980s, rulers are increasingly likely to organize their forces outside of defense departments, enabling them to counterbalance the power of the military. Second, while counterbalancing is frequently depicted as a predominantly Middle Eastern phenomenon, this article demonstrates that, since the end of the Cold War, it has been as common in Eastern Europe. Finally, while counterbalancing is more common in dictatorships, democratic rulers do employ it as well.

The State Security Forces Data Set

Defining security forces

State security forces are defined as armed groups, outside the regular military, that are publically recognized as under the administrative control of a state in the international system. This definition emphasizes three features of state security forces. First, state security forces are armed groups: organizations with an identifiable name and leader, whose members carry weapons. This excluded agricultural and other work forces that may bear the name "army" but that are unarmed.

Second, they are *state* forces: publically recognized in government documents as part of the state's official security sector. The forces may be under the administrative control of a ministry of defense or home affairs, report directly to the chief executive, or be organized under another government body. In this context, administrative control refers to the ability to organize, recruit, train, equip, and fund a security force.² These criteria distinguishes state security forces from private military companies and militia that may be “pro-government,” but which lack official status as part of the state's security sector.³ They also exclude security forces organized at a sub-national level, such as municipal police.

Finally, I define state security forces as those forces established *beyond* the army, navy, air force, and coast guard that compose a traditional military, and which are already documented in existing datasets, such as the Correlates of War (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972).⁴ The security forces in the data set include presidential guards, interior troops, militarized police and gendarmerie, armed intelligence services, border guards, and national militia. Police forces are included only if they have one or more of the following organizational indicators of militarization: command and control centers; the use of elite squads patterned after military special operations; barracked housing; and/or long-range deployment capabilities).⁵

² While all security forces in the data set are under the administrative control of a state, the degree of *operational* control exercised by the state may vary. Operational control refers to the ability to initiate and terminate military operations and, while operations are underway, to specify permissible repertoires of violence and ensure adherence to stated political objectives (Pion-Berlin 2009).

³ On the difficulty of defining paramilitaries, militias, and other armed groups that are neither an official part of the state's security sector nor in open rebellion against it, see Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger (2015). Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe (2013) have constructed a useful, and complementary, data set that focuses on pro-government militia.

⁴ In much of the classical scholarship on civil-military relations, state security forces beyond the regular military are typically referred to as “paramilitaries” (e.g., Luttwak 1979, Janowitz 1977); because the term “paramilitary” has subsequently come to be associated with non-state security forces, the SSF data set uses “state security forces” instead.

⁵ For a discussion of these and other indicators of police militarization, see Rantatalo (2012).

Scope of the data set

The dataset currently includes the 78 states listed in in Table 1 (an additional 18 states listed in *italics* are currently being coded). I selected states for inclusion in the data set in two rounds. The first focused on states that have not been democratic for more than 50 years as of 2010, and included 65 countries in total. It excluded most states in Western Europe from the dataset, but included states such as Pakistan and Argentina. The second round, currently in progress with the assistance of research assistants, expanded the data set to include consolidated democracies, as well as increased the number of authoritarian regimes and unconsolidated democracies included. States were selected for inclusion in both rounds through a simple random sample. Using a random sample ensures that differences between the sample and the full population of states in the international system are not likely to be related to characteristics of the security forces that are excluded.⁶

[Table 1: Countries in the State Security Forces Data Set]

Features of individual security forces captured in the data set

The dataset comes in two versions. In the first, the unit of analysis is security force-year; the second, the unit of analysis is country-year. The security force-year version of the data set includes information on a number of different features of security forces, including their chain of command, staffing, equipment, and deployment. Including these dimensions allows for the mapping of how rulers in different types of political regimes structure and use their security

⁶ An initial population threshold for inclusion in the data set was set at 250,000 (as of the year 2000); this was subsequently raised to 500,000. The increase in the population threshold for inclusion was pragmatic one: data on the smallest states is the most difficult to collect, and these states are also likely to drop out of subsequent analyses of the data due to missing values on other variables of interest.

forces, which forces can be marshaled when a coup is underway, and which forces are likely to be used in international conflict. In what follows, I discuss each variable included.

Supervising body is a text variable that identifies the ministry, committee, or other government body through which the security force reports to the regime. I also include dichotomous indicators for the most common government bodies that control troops: the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior/Home Affairs, intelligence agencies, and direct supervision by the executive. These categories are not mutually exclusive; for security forces under the joint command by two government bodies, or have different *de facto* and *de jure* chains of command, both supervising bodies are included.

Independent is a dichotomous indicator equal to 1 where the security force reports to the regime outside the regular military chain of command. Independence is a key indicator of whether or not the security force can be used to counterbalance to the military. I include cases of *de facto* independence in which specialized military units have an independent reporting channel to the regime outside the minister of defense. For instance, under the regime of Hafez al-Assad, Syria's Security Companies are coded as independent between 1970 and 1984, when Assad placed them under the command of his brother Rifaat (Brooks 1998). And in the Dominican Republic, the Dessalines and Leopards battalions of the army were coded as independent in the years in which they reported directly to Jean-Claude Duvalier (Rotberg 1971, Laguerre 1993).

The SSF data set contains three variables capturing how each security force is staffed. *Affiliated* is a dichotomous variable coded as 1 if the troops in the security force are described as coming disproportionately from the executive's hometown, region, ethnic group, or political party. It also includes security forces described as 'loyal' to the current executive or ruling party or 'personal' force of the executive in two or more sources. *Affiliated with* lists the name of the

executive, region, ethnic group, and political part(ies) with which the security force is described as affiliated. *Civilian membership* is a dichotomous indicator that is coded as 0 if the force is comprised of full-time soldiers or police whose training is commensurate with that of the regular army soldiers that have been seconded with from the military; and/or who have their own training college, and 1 otherwise. This variable differentiates civilian militia from professional soldiers and police.

Another set of variables captures how each security force is armed and deployed. *Heavily armed* captures whether the has access to infantry support weapons (e.g., medium and heavy machine guns, automatic grenade launchers, anti-aircraft guns), armored combat vehicles, and/or aircraft, or lightly armed, with access to small arms only. The type of arms and equipment a security force has access can indicate the extent to which it may be able to substitute for the regular armed forces in the event of war, or the extent to which it is capable of credibly deterring the military from attempting to seize power in a coup. Two features of deployment are included. *Mission type: Internal* and *Mission type: External* distinguish between security forces that are primarily deployed to defend the regime against internal security threats and those primarily deployed to defend against external ones. Internal missions may include domestic policing, riot suppression, and counterinsurgency, as well as the physical protection of government officials or buildings; externally-oriented duties include border protection, defense against invading forces, and deployment abroad. A small number of security forces have dual missions. *Capital deployment* is a dichotomous indicator of whether part of all of the force is deployed within 60 miles of the capital. This distance was chosen as a threshold as it is one that is likely to enable quick access to the centers of political power that are typically the targets of coup attempts.

Finally, the security force-year version of the data set includes a dichotomous indicator, *counterweight*, marking security forces with the greatest potential to counterbalance the military: those that are both (1) independent from military command (*independent=1*); and (2) deployed within sixty miles of the capital (*capital deployment=1*). While rulers have employed a range of different armed groups to counterbalance the military, those outside the chain of command, and close to centers of political power) are the most likely to be able to intercept coup plotters and prevent them from seizing their targets (Horowitz 1985, Luttwak 1979, De Bruin 2017).

Features of state security sectors as a whole

The country-level version of the data set includes three variables that capture aspects of the security sector as a whole. It is designed to be compatible with existing country-level data sets on political regimes, conflict, human rights, and other features of states. *Fractionalization* is a count of the number of distinct security forces a regime employs in a given year. It captures the extent to which rulers divide their coercive power among different organizations. *Politicization* is a count of the number of security forces that are tied to the regime through personal, party, or other loyalties (in other words, the number of security forces for which *affiliation=1*). Finally, *counterbalancing* captures rulers' efforts to coup-proof their regimes by counterbalancing the military with independent (and centrally deployed) security forces. It is a count of the number of counterweights employed in each year.

Sources, potential bias, and limitations of the data

Efforts collect systematic data on how states organize their coercive institutions must contend with several potential sources of bias. The first is that rulers may have incentives misrepresent

features of their security sectors in order to shield themselves from criticism or to deter potential challengers. For instance, rulers may wish to obscure their relationship to security forces that employ particularly repressive tactics. This has been a persistent problem in efforts to collect data on militias and paramilitaries whose ties to the state are more tenuous. However, the SSF data set focuses only on security forces that are a publically recognized part of the state's security sector, which should mitigate this concern.⁷

Another challenge when compiling information on state security forces is obtaining sufficient coverage over time and space. There is more information readily available in English and in translation on countries of strategic interest to the United States and other major powers, larger states, and those that have been more frequently involved in international conflict.⁸ This may artificially deflate the number of security forces in smaller and more peaceful countries, as well as those without close ties to major powers. In addition, as international interest in democracy promotion and human rights has increased since the end of the Cold War, coverage of internally oriented security forces by non-governmental organizations focused on human rights may have also increased. This may result in artificially missing security forces in earlier decades, which could introduce temporal bias in the data that would be difficult to detect.

To account for reporting biases that may appear in any one type of source, the SSF data set draws upon as wide an array of sources as possible. For the 78 countries in the data set thus far, over 1,800 unique sources were consulted. These included: national defense legislation, government websites, and other primary source documents available in translation;⁹ academic

⁷ Armed groups with more indirect or unofficial ties to the state are better captured in pro-government militia data set compiled by Carey, Mitchell, and Low (2013).

⁸ For instance, data compiled by the *Military Balance* in the 1960-1980s focuses largely on comparing Warsaw Pact and NATO member states. I am grateful to Jonathan Powell for this point.

⁹ The translation of government websites was facilitated by Google Translate; while less precise than official translations of government documents, for most countries, information such as the ministry or other government body supervising the security force was easily decipherable.

accounts of the history and civil-military relations in each country; historical dictionaries; Library of Congress Country Studies; encyclopedias of policing and law enforcement; historical news sources (as collected and translated by LexisNexis, the Federal Broadcast Information Service, World News Connection and Keesing's World News Archive); annual defense assessments (including the *Military Balance*, *Statesman's Yearbook*, and regional military balance reports) and reports from nongovernmental organizations (including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, and Small Arms Survey). A full list of sources used to code each country can be found in the online supplement.

A final concern is human error in coding. All observations in the data set were hand-coded by the author; that errors were made in this process is certain. In the second round of data collection, a team of research assistants spot-checked the initial round of coding in addition to compiling information on new countries. To facilitate further corrections, documentation of all coding decisions for each security force is available from the author. (As an example, the appendix includes sample coding notes for three security forces in the Central African Republic.)

While the data set includes a number of features of state security forces, it does not include estimated number of personnel. Force size is particularly difficult to track over time, even in regular armies, and even in states that are closely watched by outside observers.¹⁰ Rulers may have incentives to inflate the size of their security forces so as to deter other states from attacking or domestic opponents from organizing a rebellion. Initial efforts to compile data on force size as part of the SSF data set were abandoned due to the paucity of reliable information on this feature of security forces. Although it may be possible to construct accurate measures for some security forces in some countries, collecting data on the size of each security force in the

¹⁰ For an in-depth discussion of the difficulty in compiling accurate information on force size and spending, see Colgan (2011).

data set between 1960 and 2010 was not deemed feasible. Instead, the SSF data set includes other indicators of the capabilities of each force including their access to heavy weaponry and professionalism of their soldiers, which are easier to for journalists, non-governmental organizations, and scholars writing about each country to observe without requiring access to more detailed archival data.

Comparison to the *Military Balance*

Several recent data collection efforts have captured important aspects of civil-military relations and the composition of the military.¹¹ Research on security forces outside of the regular military, however, continues to depend almost exclusively on data compiled in the *Military Balance*.¹² While the central focus of the *Military Balance* is on states' regular military, it also includes "paramilitary forces whose training, organization, equipment and control suggest they may be used to support or replace regular military forces" (IISS 2010, 8). For each security force, the *Military Balance* includes an estimate of personnel size; in more recent editions, information on the force's equipment and the ministry with administrative control over the force are also included. *Military Balance* data is frequently used to capture rulers' efforts to coup-proof their regimes (e.g., Quinlivan 1999; Belkin and Schofer 2003, 2005; Pilster and Böhmelt 2011, 2012, 2015; Powell 2012; Brown, Fariss, and McHahon 2016).

¹¹ These include data sets capturing the degree of civilian control over the military (Narang and Talmadge 2017; Kenwick 2017); the participation of military officers in government (White 2017); and the ethnic composition of military forces in Africa and the Middle East (Harkness 2016; Johnson and Thurber 2017). N.B. Also include data set(s) on conscription.

¹² In addition to the *Military Balance*, two other data sets compile information on the presence of paramilitaries separate from the military during wartime (Narang and Talmadge 2017) or in authoritarian regimes (Geddes 2009), but do not identify the individual security forces or the extent of fractionalization in the security sector as a whole. See also a project by Blank (2016), which builds on the *Military Balance* using additional sources to compile new personnel data for gendarmerie, private militia, and state-run militia.

The SSF data set differs from *Military Balance* data in several important ways. First, in order to facilitate its use in cross-national time series analysis, the SSF data set applies a consistent set of criteria for inclusion in the data set across countries and within them over time. In contrast, the *Military Balance* explicitly cautions against using its data to capture variation over time because prior editions are not updated when new information becomes available (IISS 2010, 6-7).¹³ Second, the definition of security forces used in the SSF data set excludes unarmed labor forces and youth organizations, which are typically included in the *Military Balance*. Finally, the SSF draws upon a different set of source material in order to capture information on a number of additional features of security forces not included in the *Military Balance*, including aspects of their training, deployment, and affiliation with regime; in addition, all variables are included for the entire 1960-2010 period.¹⁴

Table 2 uses security forces in Cuba to illustrate some of the differences in the two data sets. The *Military Balance* includes two forces, the Youth Labor Army and Civil Defense Force, which are excluded from the SSF data set because they are unarmed.¹⁵ The SSF data set also includes an additional security force, the Special Operations Troops under the Ministry of Interior, which is missing from the *Military Balance*.¹⁶ Security forces that do appear in both data sets do so in different years. For instance, the SSF data set includes the National Militia of the Revolution (MNR) from 1960-1966. Created by Fidel Castro shortly after the 1959

¹³ This can result in large fluctuations in reported force size from year to year. In Egypt, for instance the *Military Balance* estimates the size of the National Guard 6,000 1974, 60,000 from 1975-1976, then back down to 6,000 in 1977. There do not appear to have been any actual changes in force size during this time.

¹⁴ In earlier years, the *Military Balance* often includes an estimated total number of personnel in state security forces without identifying the individual forces.

¹⁵ The Youth Labor Army (Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo, EJT) amalgamated various non-military youth organizations into one organization under military command (Mazarr 1990; Latel 2003). It replaced the earlier (and similarly unarmed) Military Units for Production (Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción, UMAP) in 1968. The goal was to take over agricultural tasks from the army, and allowed it to focus on military tasks.

¹⁶ The Special Operations Troops were used for regime protection during crises (see Rothman 2003, 9; Walker 1994; Femosell 1987).

revolution brought him to power, the MNR counterbalanced the military until a series of purges brought it firmly under Castro's control; it was officially disbanded in 1966 (Mazaar 1990, LeoGrande 1978, Fermoselle 1987, Klepak 2005). The MNR was replaced by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), which gathered intelligence and conducted nighttime patrols, but which had no right to bare arms (Walker 1994, 57); as a result, the CDR is excluded from the SSF data set. In contrast, the *Military Balance* includes the MNR from 1962 (two years after its creation) to 1968 (two years after it was abolished), and then again from 1973-1975; a separate "people's militia," which likely refers to the same force, is listed from 1976-1979.¹⁷ These differences are likely a reflection of the different sources, methods of data collection, and inclusion criteria in the two datasets.

[Table 2: Security Forces in Cuba: Comparing the *Military Balance* & SSF Data Set]

New Findings From the SSF Data

In this section, I present key descriptive statistics from the data set in both the security force- and country-year versions. I highlight three new findings related to counterbalancing in particular: (1) while the average number of security forces states employ has remained relatively constant since the early 1980s, rulers are increasingly likely to organize their forces outside of defense departments, enabling them to counterbalance the military; (2) while coup-proofing is commonly depicted as a predominantly Middle Eastern phenomenon, it has been as common in Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War; and (3) coup-proofing has been used by democratic and authoritarian rulers alike.

¹⁷ I find evidence the Border Guard troops were created in 1963, seven years before they appear in the *Military Balance*, and the Territorial Troop Militia one year earlier.

Variation among security forces

The data set identifies substantial variation in the way in which security forces are commanded, deployed, staffed, and equipped. Summary statistics for all numeric variables can be found in Table 3. Across all security force-years in the data set, some 43% are under the control of a ministry of interior or home affairs. 37% have a chain of command that runs through a defense department instead or in addition to the interior ministry. Direct control by the office of the executive occurred in 19% of the security force-year observations, while intelligence agencies had control some 2% of the time. In 7% of the cases some other government ministry or body controlled the security force; while in a further 8% of the cases, the chain of command could not be determined. Taken together, some 70% report to the regime through at least one channel that is independent from that of the regular armed forces. In 82% of the paramilitary-year observations in the dataset, the security force has access to centers of political power. In terms of overt politicization, approximately one-third were tied to the regime through personal, ethnic, or party affiliation. Over half, 57%, had access to heavy weaponry. 15% are comprised of civilian recruits with little to no military training. On average, states in the data set had employed 2.1 security forces, and 1.2 counterweights, between 1960 and 2010. Rulers counterbalanced their militaries with at least one independent security force 67% of the time.

[Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Numeric Variables]

Variation in the highest level of fragmentation by country

Figure 1 shows the highest number of security forces in simultaneous operation for each country in the sample. It demonstrates that there is substantial variation in extent to which rulers fragment their security sectors. Of the 78 countries currently included in the dataset, 15

employed 5 or more security forces simultaneously at some point between 1960 and 2010. For instance, between 1992 and 1995, as Russia reorganized its security sector following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of distinct security forces it employed ranged from 7 to 9.¹⁸ For much of the 1980s and early 1990s, Guatemala employed three separate police forces, along with a presidential guard and state-organized civilian defense patrols. The map also shows countries with lower levels of fragmentation. On the whole, it suggests that there is a great deal of variation in the extent to which rulers fragment their security sectors.

[Figure 1: Highest level of security sector fragmentation]

Variation over time in the average level fragmentation

The SSF data suggest that states have increasingly fragmented their coercive institutions over time. Figure 2 shows that the average number of security forces employed by countries in the sample increased most dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1960, there were 83 security forces in the countries in the data set; by 1980, this figure doubled to 161. The total number of security forces in the data set remained steady from the 1980s to today, while the average number of security forces per country declined slightly following the Cold War.

[Figure 2: Variation over time in security sector fractionalization]

Variation over time in average fragmentation by region

When the data is disaggregated by region, it becomes clear the post-Cold War trends vary by region. Figure 3 illustrates the changes over time by region in the extent of security sector fractionalization. In Asia and Africa, after initial periods of proliferation in the 1960s and 1970s,

¹⁸ These included a Border Guard, Interior Troops, Railway Troops, Special Construction Troops, Civil Defense Troops, Federal Security Service, Federal Protection Service, and a Presidential Guard.

the creation of new security forces leveled off; states in both regions consolidated and disbanded a number of forces following the end of the Cold War. The heavy-handed role of the military in Latin American politics kept the total number of other security forces employed by the state comparatively low throughout both the Cold War; in the post-Cold War period, several demilitarized their police forces in the late 1990s and 2000s, bringing the region's average even lower. Rulers in the Middle East and North Africa maintained highly fragmented security sectors throughout this period.

[Figure 3: Variation over time in security sector fractionalization, by region]

Variation over time in counterbalancing and politicization

Figures 4 & 5 show that there have also been significant changes over time in the way in which rulers control and staff their security forces. In particular, while the total number of security forces regimes employ has remained relatively constant since the 1970s, the number of these forces independent from the military has continued to rise at a relatively steady clip. In other words, coup-proofing in the form of counterbalance has spread precisely as the risk of a coup has declined. At the same time, however, overt politicization of the security sector, through the development of ethnic, party, and other ties has declined substantially from its late-Cold War peak.

[Figure 4: Variation over time in counterbalancing]

[Figure 5: Variation over time in affiliated forces]

Variation in counterbalancing by regime type

Coup-proofing, and counterbalancing in particular, is typically understood as a tool of dictators.

Indeed, many studies of coup-proofing restrict their focus to particular forms of dictatorships (e.g., Geddes 2009; Quinlivan 1999). However, the SSF data set suggests that it is common in democracies as well. Figure 6 shows the average number of counterweights a regime employs by Polity score. On the x-axis of the graph is the Polity IV Polity 2 score, and along the y-axis is the average number of counterweights. Although dictatorships do counterbalance at higher rates than democracies—with the most authoritarian regimes (those awarded as Polity score of 10) counterbalancing more than any other—a significant number of states with positive Polity scores counterbalance as well. The most common type of counterweights employed by democracies are militarized police forces; they are less likely to be overtly politicized, but just as capable of counterbalancing the military as interior forces and presidential guards.

[Figure 6: Coup-proofing by polity score]

Figure 7 shows that military dictatorships employ fewer independent security forces than both democracies and other authoritarian regimes. The data on authoritarian regime types comes from Geddes, Wright, and Franz (2014); states receiving a polity2 score of +6 or higher are coded as democracies. The low rate of counterbalancing under military regimes is perhaps unsurprising given the hostility that military officers often feel towards security forces outside of their control. As Horowitz (1985, 547) describes it, “what is attractive about such units to political leaders is exactly what is provocative about them to military forces”; in particular, organizing forces outside the military chain of command “infuriate[s] regular military officers.”

[Figure 7: Coup-proofing by regime type]

Conclusion

This article introduced a new data set of 283 security forces in 78 countries, 1960-2010. The SSF data set can help advance our understanding of how and why states organize their coercive

institutions in the way that they do, and what the consequences of their choices are. The analysis in this paper shows that there is important variation over time and among different types of regimes in terms of fragmentation and personalization of the security sector, as well as in the types of security forces that states employ. It also suggests that several common assumptions about coup-proofing, and counterbalancing in particular, are inaccurate: it is not solely a tool of dictators; nor, since the end of the Cold War, has it been concentrated in the Middle East. These findings suggest new theorizing about the conditions under which counterbalancing is used may be warranted. Beyond coup-proofing, the new data presented here might be used to test theories about state capacity, battlefield effectiveness, and repression more systematically.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

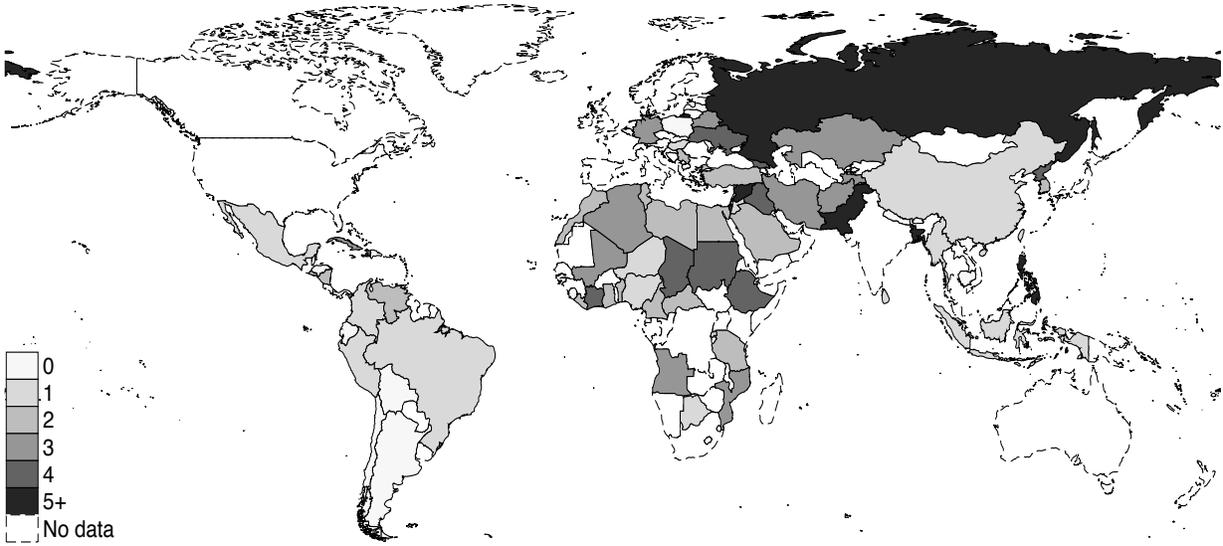


FIGURE 1. Highest number of security forces in simultaneous operation, 1960-2010

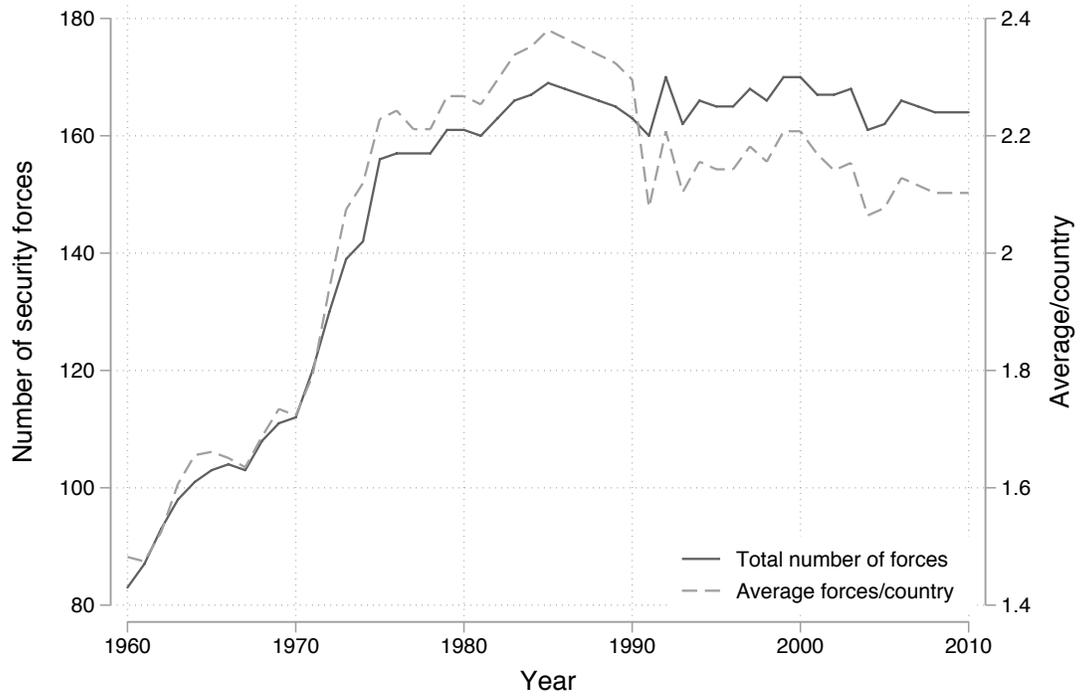


FIGURE 2: Variation over time security sector fractionalization

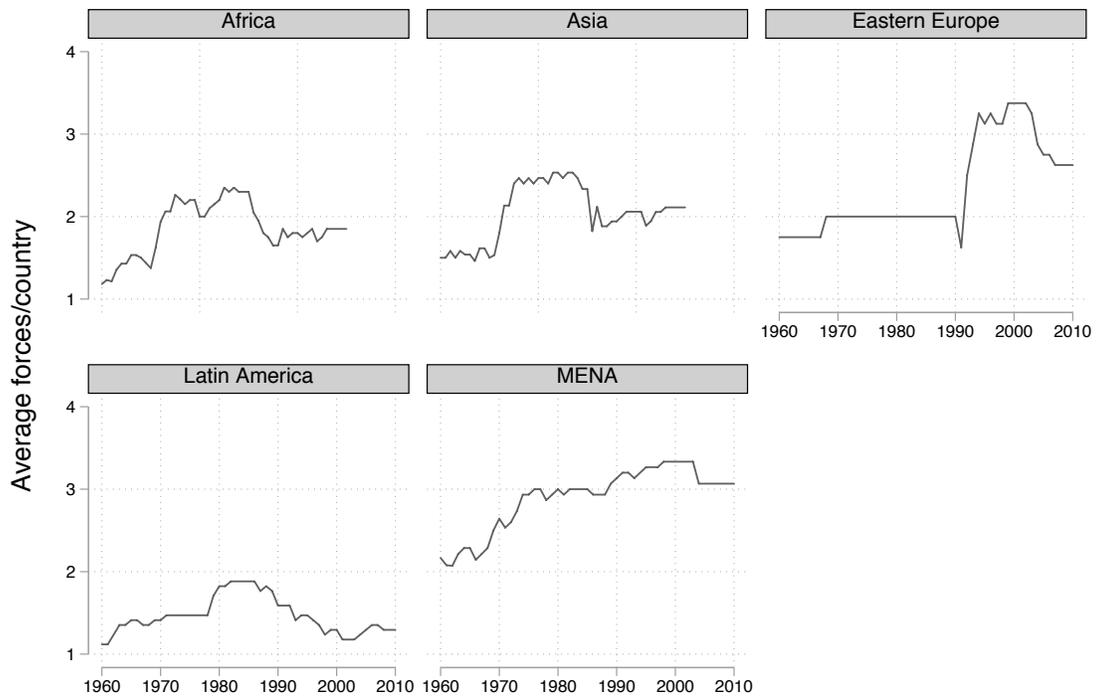


FIGURE 3: Variation over time in security sector fractionalization, by region

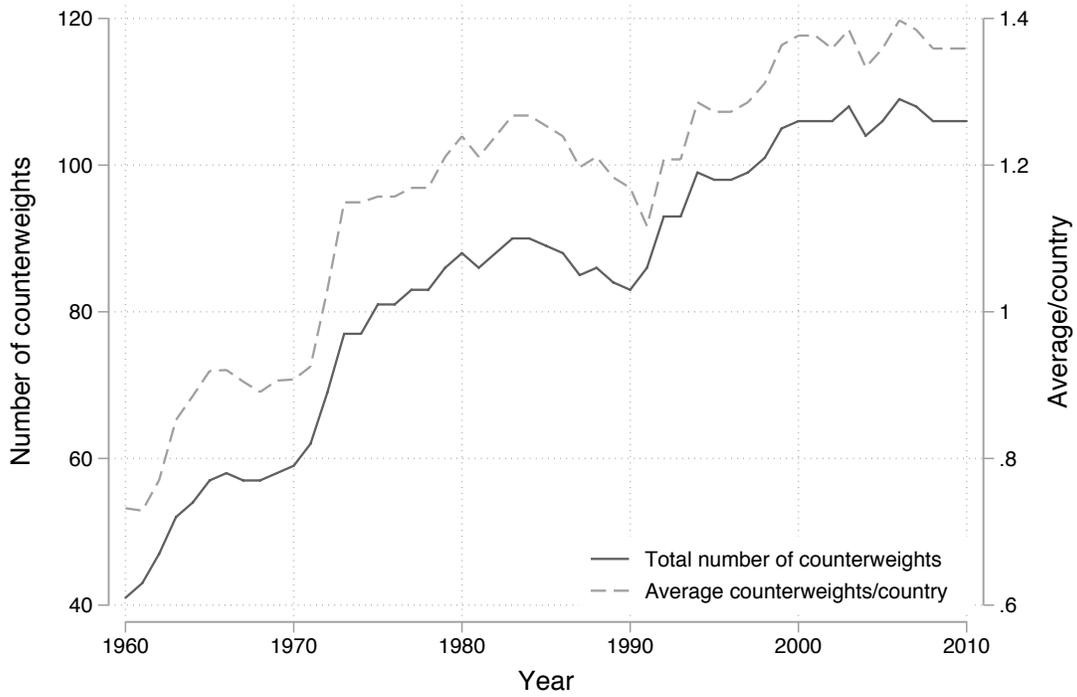


FIGURE 4: Variation over time in counterbalancing

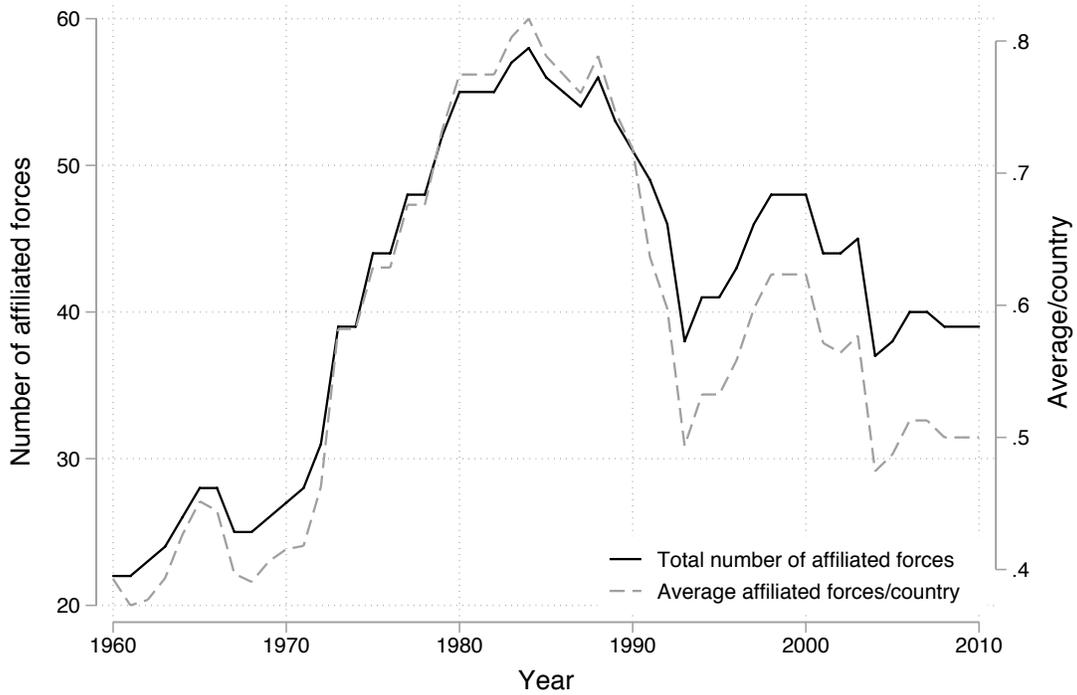


FIGURE 5: Variation over time in politicization

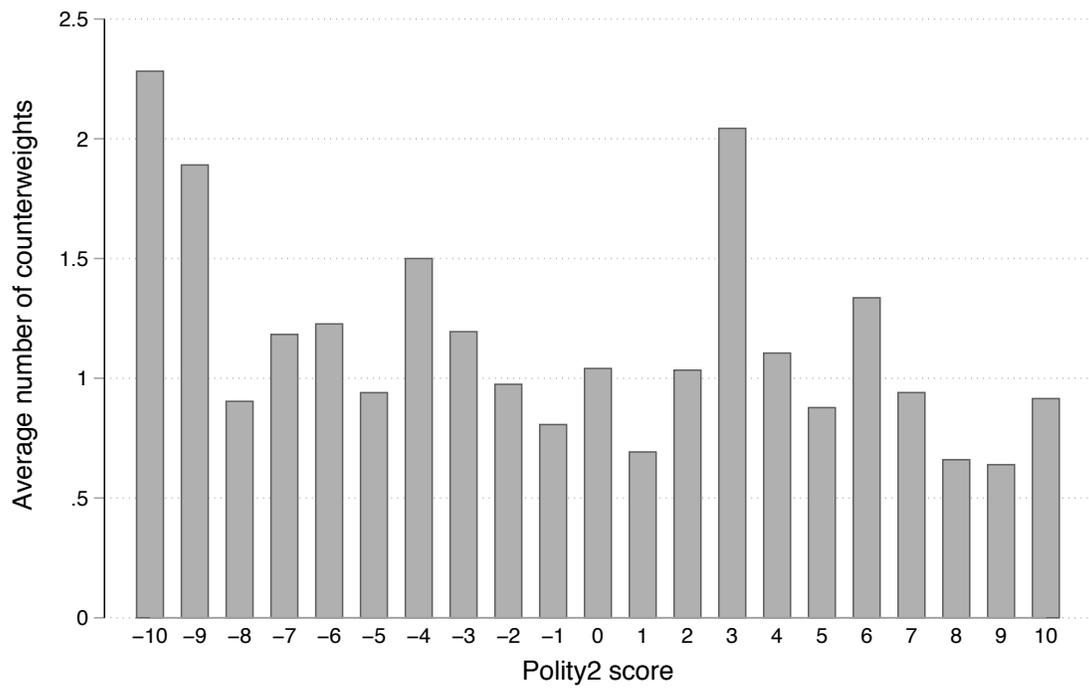


FIGURE 6: Counterbalancing by Polity score

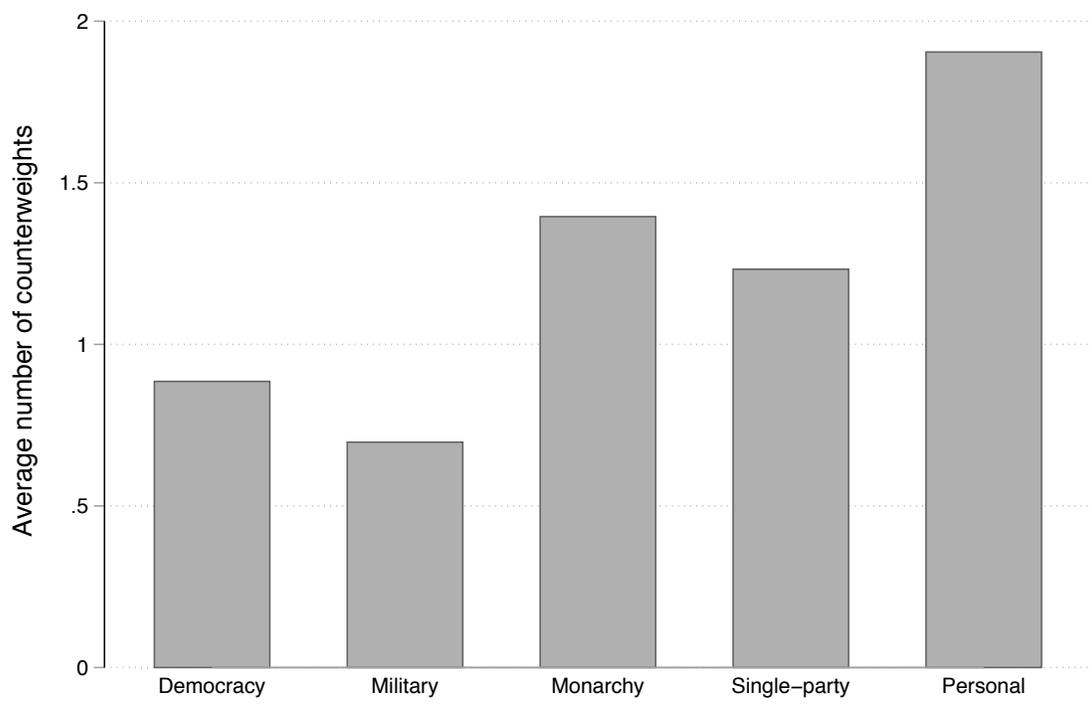


FIGURE 7: Counterbalancing by regime type

TABLE 1: Countries in the State Security Forces Data Set

Africa	Asia	Europe & North America	Latin America	Middle East & North Africa
Angola	Afghanistan	<i>Austria</i>	Argentina	Algeria
Benin	Bangladesh	<i>Azerbaijan</i>	Bolivia	Bahrain
Botswana	Cambodia	Belarus	Brazil	Egypt
<i>Burundi</i>	China	<i>Bulgaria</i>	Chile	Iran
Cameroon	Fiji	<i>Canada</i>	Colombia	Iraq
Cape Verde	<i>India</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	Cuba	Israel
Central Afr. Rep.	Indonesia	<i>France</i>	Dominican Rep.	Israel
Chad	<i>Japan</i>	Georgia	Ecuador	Jordan
Cote d'Ivoire	Kazakhstan	<i>Germany</i>	El Salvador	Lebanon
Djibouti	Korea, DPR	Hungary	Guatemala	Libya
Ethiopia	Korea, Rep. of	Latvia	Haiti	Morocco
Ghana	<i>Malaysia</i>	<i>Poland</i>	Honduras	Saudi Arabia
Liberia	<i>Mongolia</i>	<i>Portugal</i>	Mexico	Sudan
Mali	Myanmar	Russia	Nicaragua	Syria
Mauritius	Nepal	Serbia	Panama	Tunisia
Mozambique	Pakistan	<i>Slovakia</i>	Peru	Turkey
Niger	Singapore	Ukraine	Venezuela	
Nigeria	Sri Lanka	<i>United States</i>		
Rwanda	Taiwan			
Sierra Leone	Tajikistan			
Swaziland	Timor-Leste			
Tanzania				
<i>Uganda</i>				

Note: Coding for countries in *italics* is still in progress.

TABLE 2: Security Forces in Cuba: Comparing the *Military Balance* & SSF Data Set

Security Force	<i>Military Balance</i>	SSF Data Set
Border Guard**	1970-2010	1963-2010
Civil Defense Force+	1985-2010	Excluded
National Militia of the Revolution*	1962-1968, 1973-1979	1960-1966
Special Operations Troops	Missing	1963-2010
State Security Troops	1970-2010	1979-2010
Territorial Troop Militia	1981-2010	1980-2010
Youth Labor Army+	1981-2010	Excluded

Notes: *Called the “People’s Militia” 1976-1979 in the *Military Balance*

**Called the “Frontier Guards” in some years the *Military Balance*

+Unarmed forces

TABLE 3: Descriptive Statistics on Numeric Variables

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>Force-level</i>					
Command: Executive	7,053	0.189	0.391	0	1
Command: Interior Ministry	7,053	0.437	0.496	0	1
Command: Defense Ministry	7,053	0.372	0.483	0	1
Command: Intelligence Agency	7,027	0.019	0.136	0	1
Command: Other government body	7,027	0.066	0.248	0	1
Command: Unknown	7,550	0.075	0.264	0	1
Independent from military	7,253	0.705	0.456	0	1
Affiliated with regime	6,362	0.331	0.471	0	1
Heavily armed	6,527	0.566	0.496	0	1
Civilian membership	7,231	0.149	0.356	0	1
Capital deployment	7,263	0.819	0.385	0	1
Mission type: Internal	7,292	0.938	0.241	0	1
Mission type: External	7,292	0.251	0.433	0	1
<i>Country-level</i>					
Fractionalization	3,630	2.079	1.469	0	9
Politicization	3,630	0.580	1.013	0	5
Counterbalancing	3,630	1.180	1.169	0	9

APPENDIX: SAMPLE CODING DOCUMENTATION

Central African Republic: Presidential Security Unit

Unité de Sécurité Présidentielle, USP

Previous names:

1965 Republican Guard (*Garde Republicaine*);

1966-1975 Presidential Guard (*Garde Présidentielle*);

1976-1978 Imperial Guard;

1979-1980 Praetorian Guard;

1981-1996 Presidential Guard (*Garde Présidentielle*);

1997-2000 Force for the Defense of the Institutions of the Republic (*Force spéciale de défense des institutions républicaines, FORSDIR*);

2000-today Presidential Security Unit (*Unité de Sécurité Présidentielle, USP*)

Start Date

1965

End Date

N/A

Origin/Dissolution

“As an added precaution, he created a brigade of presidential security guards under the command of Prosper Mounoubaye. These men, 120 in all, were feared as an incipient secret police. Mostly, however, they stood on guard around the Palais de la Renaissance, the futuristic presidential palace in the center of Bangui” (Titley 1997, 24). Titley describes this as occurring in 1965.

Command

Dacko established two forces, the presidential guard and gendarmerie, “whose commanders reported directly to him—outside the control of the standing army” (Rupiya 2015, 124)

“Issued with the best uniforms and weapons, the formation was completely independent of both the police and the army, and it was commanded by the gargantuan General Josephat Mayomokila” (Decalo 1989, 227)

“Despite its formal subordination under the chief of staff, the unit was always a de facto instrument of the head of state. This has not changed under Bozizé, who now commands approximately 750 members of this guard” (Mehler 2009, 10)

“In early 2000, President Patasse appeared to give in to international pressure. He decreed that FORSDIR be disbanded, transformed into a Presidential Security Unit (PSU) and placed under army command” (Faltas 2000, 92). Brought under military command by presidential decree on 31 January 2000 (UNHCR 2005).

However: “while technically under the command of the army chief of staff with its elements to be drawn from the various units of the army (article 10 of law No. 99. O17 pertaining to the general organization of the army), this brigade actually answers only to the president through the direct supervision of a trusted person/officer” (N’Daiye 2007, 15). “Although on paper the USP was supposed to report to the chief of staff of the armed forces [after Patasse put it under army command in 2000] and ultimately to be accountable to the minister of defense, in reality it continued to report to, and take orders directly from, the president and remained autonomous” (Berman and Lombard 2008, 18)

“Supposed to be part of the FACA, but in practice comes under the direct authority of the head of state through a highly trusted senior officer” (N’Daiye 2009, 60)

Deployment

Majority in Bangui (Spittaels and Hilgert 2009)

Affiliation

1966-1978 Bokassa/Ngbaka/Southerners

Under Bokassa, “reserved spots...for people from his home village (Decalo 1989, 157)” (Berman and Lombard 2008, 17)

“The elite Presidential Gard (later the Imerial Guard) was likewise a Mbaika force, with most of its personnel actually drawn from Bokassa’s home village” (Decalo 1989, 227)

1981-1992 Kolingba/Yakoma/Southerners

“General Kolingba particularly favoured his family and his ethnic group, the Yakoma...It is in the army, and in particular in the Presidential Guard, that the ethnic policy of Kolingba was most obvious” (Bagayoko 2010, 43)

1993-2002 Patasse/Sara-Kabas/Northerners

“After three presidents who were natives of the South (David Dacko and Jean-Bédél Bokassa both Nbaka, and André Kolingba, of Yakoma origin), Patassé was the first president stemming from the North. The new Head of State widely aggravated the division between Northerners and Southerners, by setting ‘people of the savanna to people of the river’. Patassé largely distrusted the army, and particularly the Presidential Guard, seen as Kolingba’s personal militia. First, he tried to guarantee his personal safety by putting the Yakoma Presidential Guard back into the ranks of the FACA. Privileged under the previous regime, soldiers and officers from the Yakoma ethnic group sunk then into dissatisfaction. The new Presidential Guard also turned out to be a tribal militia, this time quasi-exclusively constituted by Sara-Kabas, Patassé’s northerly ethnic group. The rivalries between this new Presidential Guard and the FACA, who were increasingly neglected, were largely the origin of the mutinies of 1996–7” (Bagayoko 2010, 44)

Patasse “made sure that the presidential guard, now called the Force for the Defense of the Institutions of the Republic (FORSDIR), was loyal to him by filling it with fellow *savanners* (i.e. savanna-dwellers from the North). ... Then he banished 250 Yakoma members of FORSDIR to the army, further increasing the predominance of southerners in the military (Balancie 1999, p. 476)” (Faltas 2000, 83)

When in 1999, the Special Representative of the UNSG called on Patasse to curtail the Praetorian Guard, FORSDIR, he replied “FORSDIR was the only loyal and operational arm of the security forces on which he could rely. He categorically stated he could not take any of the measures recommended by my Special Representative except at risk to his own safety” (UNSG 1999, 2)

2003-2013 Bozize

“They have the status of a personal militia, and maybe regarded as a paramilitary loyalist force that takes orders from the president only” (Boggero 2008, 22). Under the command of one of Bozize’s nephews (ICG 2007, 1).

“After the 2003 change of regime, an important contingent of the ‘liberators’ (also so-called ‘patriots’) came to make up this force, and its ethnic character soon reflected that of the head of state, continuing an established tradition. These features did not change after the 2005 elections” (N’Ddaiye 2009, 60)

Professionalism

Professional (ICG 2007:15, Boggero 2008, 22)

Equipment

Heavily armed

“The best equipment was reserved for the Presidential Guard, the name of which was changed several times (1997: Force spéciale de défense des institutions républicaines/FORSDIR; 2000: Unité de Sécurité Présidentielle/USP7)” (Mehler 2009, 9)

“They are not only better paid than the rest of the armed forces, but also better armed, supplied with better equipment and are better trained” (Boggero 2008, 22)

“The GP is the only branch of the FACA possessing armoured support vehicles armed with 15.4 mm caliber machine guns. Almost every military operation launched by the FACA is therefore accompanied by a BSPI unit” (Spittaels and Hilgert 2009, 12)

Under Bokassa’s rule, “except for the loyal Mbaika Presidential Guard, which was heavily armed, regular troops were not issued live ammunition” (Decalo 1989, 226).

Mission

“The force was used not only as a Presidential Guard but also as a combat force that could be relied on to undertake the most gruesome tasks” (Decalo 1989, 227)

“...Garde présidentielle [Presidential Guard] is often called in to deal with any matters extending beyond mere traffic accidents” (Boggero 2008, 22)

Guarding the president, prisons, other sites of strategic interest (Spittaels and Hilgert 2009)

“In addition to FACA troops, he [Bozizé] sent units from the presidential guard to fight the rebellion in the region. Both groups, but in particular the presidential guard, showed little inclination to directly confront the rebels, opting instead for an extremely brutal campaign against the civilian population suspected of supporting them” (Berg 2008, 23)

Central African Republic: Gendarmerie

Start Date

1965

End Date

N/A

Origin/Dissolution

“Dacko could see other African civilian regimes tumbling to military coups, and he hoped to avoid a similar fate by balancing the army with an armed police force of five hundred men, the gendarmerie”; he appointed Jean Izamo, “a man he trusted,” to head the force in 1995 (Tittley 1997, 24).

“Dacko also created a parallel security agency, the gendarmerie, to protect himself against Bokassa and possible reprisals from discontented members of the political elite” (Markum and Brown 2016, 273); “deliberately cultivated the gendarmerie as a means of counteracting the influence of his kinsman, Colonel Bokassa, the Commander of the Army” (Lee 1969, 78).

Command

“Suspicious of Bokassa, Dacko appeared to be convinced that the existing force represented a threat to his rule. As a result, the head of state proceeded to establish two units—a 120-man presidential guard and a 500-man gendarmerie, paramilitary police force, who commanders reported directly to him—outside the control of the standing army” (Rupiya 2015, 124)

“While under the command of a Director General and the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense, the Gendarmerie enjoys a certain autonomy granted to it by decree no. 95.369 passed on January 1st, 1996” (N’Ddaiye 2007, 14).

Deployment

Largely in rural areas (Andrade 1985, 41); however, also in the capital (Tittley 1997, 108).
“Throughout the national territory” (N’Ddaiye 2007, 14; also see N’Ddaiye 2009, 59).

Affiliation

“Ethnic stacking started under Kolingba [tenure 1981-1993], who packed the government with Yakoma” (Faltas 2000, 82-83)
Ethnic recruitment (N’Ddaiye 2009, 59)

Professionalism

Professional force

Equipment

Small arms only. “Gendarmes are principally armed with pistols, MAT-49 sub-machine guns, MAS-36 bolt-action rifles, and Kalashnikov assault rifles. In 2002 forces loyal to Gen. Bozize ransacked many of their depots, and their armament in 2004 consisted mostly of MAS-36 rifles. Gendarmes dispersed throughout the country find themselves outgunned by highway bandits

who may carry Kalashnikovs or light weapons” (Berman and Lombard 2008, 16). “Both the police and gendarmerie are notorious for deficient equipment and training” (Boggero 2008, 22).

“Dacko had long favored the gendarmerie over the regular army, both in fiscal allocations and in supplies of materiel—a fact that drove a wedge between the two arms of the security forces” (Decalo 1989, 208).

Mission

Internal security. The gendarmerie now has the task of fighting banditry in capital and elsewhere; it recently received some support and training from France (Faltas 2000, 92)

Additional information

Resisted the December 31, 1965, coup staged by Col. Jean Bedel Bokassa (Le Vine 1968).

Central African Republic: National Security Police

Surete Nationale

Start Date

1997

End Date

N/A

Origin/Dissolution

The National Police as a whole are not militarized; included in the data set as of 1997 with the creation of a special paramilitary unit, the Central Office for Combating Banditry (*Office central de répression du banditisme*, OCRB)

Command

Under the Ministry of Interior and Security (N'Ddaiye 2007, 16)

Deployment

Access to the capital. Urban areas (Andrade 1985, 41). “The national police is only present in the 8 subdivisions of Bangui and in a few outside the capital” (N'Ddaiye 2007, 15).

Affiliation

1966-1978 Bokassa/Ngbaka/Southerners

“As with other state security forces, the composition of the police force has reflected the ethnicity of the executive in power. Bokassa, for instance, packed the police with Ngbaka kinsmen” (Berman and Lombard 2008, 18)

“The police force, too, was packed solid with Bokassa’s ethnic kinsmen; by the 1970s, in fact, it had become an overwhelmingly Mbaika [Ngbaka] force” (Decalo 1989, 227)

Professionalism

Professional

Equipment

Small arms only. The police outside the OCRB are particularly poorly armed. “Finally, the police force totals approximately 1,600 members, mostly badly (or not at all) armed with the exception of a special unit, the Office central de repression du banditisme [Central Office for the Repression of Banditry] (OCRB)” (Mehler 2009, 10).

“Both the police and gendarmerie are notorious for deficient equipment and training” (Boggero 2008, 22).

“Because of their weak technical, human, and material situation, CAR’s National Police has not been able to play that role for a long time. They have also borne the brunt of the destruction that accompanied the most severe episode of the security crisis, as their offices and physical

infrastructures were pillaged and sacked in the capital and throughout the country” (N’Ddaiye 2007, 15).

By 2004, the national police were effectively unarmed as their weapons stores were looted (Berman and Lombard 2008, 18).

Mission

Internal security

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