The Effect of Military-related Experiences of Authoritarian Leaders on Belligerent Foreign Policy

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Abstract

The main purpose of this thesis is to examine the connection the level of aggression demonstrated by authoritarian states in militarized interstate disputes and military-related experiences of their leaders. My research is conducted through a statistical approach with the use of logistic regression models, based on a large-N analysis, in order to measure the conflict behavior of authoritarian regimes. The scope of the study covers interstate military disputes initiated by authoritarian states between 1946 and 1999. Data collected from leaders' biographies enable me to assess the personal backgrounds' possible effect on war-related foreign policy decisions. Furthermore, the use of an already existing typology on institutional differences of authoritarian states gives an insight into the connection between the intensity of militarized disputes and domestic political structures. The key finding of the study is that although the two specific military-related attributes of authoritarian leaders have no significant impact on the intensity of aggression during militarized interstate disputes, the differences of the political structure in nondemocratic regimes, based on either military, single-party, personalistic rule, or on the combination of these, does have a significant effect on it.

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Introduction

The *"end of history,"*[1] as Fukuyama once referred to it, meaning the development of the international system towards a system that contains solely democracies, has not become true. In contrast to his claims, not every state has changed in order to be part of the U.S.-led international liberal order with the respect of the rule of law and the separation of powers. Numerous authoritarian regimes exist today and they seem to persist.[2] Although with the alternation of the international environment and globalization, the role and significance of states in international affairs have also been changing, and transnational or supranational actors have been coming to the fore, the importance of states as units is still undeniably present today. Interstate wars are still occurring from time to time, and, as proven by statistical approaches connected to the democratic peace theory,[3] authoritarian regimes are often initiators of such conflicts.

In psychology and sociology, education as a life experience has proven to have an effect on the socialization of individuals, and thus is assumed to have a certain impact on their future behavior.[4] Such experiences, connected with others not necessarily related to education, could impact politicians, too. They can never be completely objective when making decisions, on the other hand, these biases are being modified with institutions to some extent.

[1] Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992)

[2] The number of such regimes is even growing, since after waves of democratization worldwide, in the past decade reverse processes, democratic erosion and backsliding have been occurring.

[3] The hypothesis of democratic peace theory, stemming from the *"perpetual peace"* idea of Immanuel Kant, claims that democratic states generally are less likely to initiate wars against each other than non-democracies. Several approaches provide explanations to the democratic peace theory. According to structural ones, it is the domestic political structure — including regular elections, checks and balances, and transparency (Yunizar Adiputera. "Evaluating the Normative and Structural Explanations of Democratic Peace Theory." *Indonesian Journal of International Studies* Vol.1, No.1 (June 2014): 25.) — that leads to a more peaceful behavior, and can have a significant impact on decisions of specific political leaders. Normative explanations of democratic peace theory see liberal ideology as the key to preserve peace, since it is promoting non-violent conflict resolution through compromise and the persistence of the rule of law, resulting in norm-bounded competition between democratic states. (Ibid, 27.)

[4] Horowitz, Michael C. and Allan C. Starn, "How Prior Military Experience Influences the Future Militarized Behavior of Leaders," *International Organization* Vol. 68, No. 3 (2012): 528.

Belligerency of authoritarian regimes and the reasons of the outbreak of wars have been analyzed in international relations theory using several different approaches, including the examination of institutional variations. Nevertheless, scholarly knowledge on the behavior of authoritarian regime types has not provided enough information on the exact mechanisms driving aggressive state actions. Furthermore, so far only marginal space has been dedicated to theories analyzing the specific political leaders' impact on belligerent state behavior. Another gap in literature is the lack of connection between the personal and the institutional levels. This could reveal further connections and patterns regarding authoritarian state behavior, including war initiation.

The goal of my study is to provide new, specific explanatory variables to conflictual behavior of states towards others, with the statistical analysis of personal backgrounds of leaders of such closed regime types. Additionally, the importance of various institutional characteristics of authoritarian regimes is covered in the study, in connection with aggressive state behavior in militarized interstate disputes. The period covered in the study is the second half of the previous century, and the main research questions addressed in the thesis are the following:

Do professional military education or the previous combat experience of authoritarian leaders influence the degree of aggression of the state in militarized interstate disputes?
Do structural differences in the political system of authoritarian regimes have an impact on the level of aggression in militarized interstate disputes?

In order to find answers, two levels of analysis are needed, classified by Waltz. He distinguishes there levels of analysis in the context of the perpetual existence of war in his

book titled *Man, the State, and War.*[5] He outlines three levels of analysis, the so-called *"first image,"* focusing on human nature and behavior, and two other levels, the *"second image,"* describing the internal structure of states, and the *"third image,"* the level of the international system in which all states are located. He argues that these levels are connected, and that none of these alone is sufficient to explain the occurrence of wars.[6] According to the third image, the possibility of war is perpetual,[7] but similarly, looking at only one image at a time can be misleading and can lead to unrealistic presumptions.[8]

However, if we focus on the *"first image"* and accept the premise that human behavior varies under different conditions, as Spinoza claims — although he also believes that war as a political phenomena can be explained partially by *"qualities inherent in man,"*[9] — this changing causal mechanism could lead to new hypotheses and explanations for the occurrence of wars and further state actions in them.

When it comes to authoritarian regimes, it is worthwhile dedicating attention not solely to the institutional factors, the *"second image,"* but also to the *"first image,"* since the domestic political structure in these regimes enables wider rooms for maneuver for political leaders who occupy high political positions. This means that the human factor, although still connected to other structural circumstances but constrained by institutions to a lesser degree, may have a more significant impact on foreign policy decisions in authoritarian states than in democracies. In certain authoritarian states, several decisions on domestic or foreign policies,

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[5] Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War — A theoretical analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001)

[6] As Waltz writes, *"The actions of states, or, more accurately, of men acting for states, make up the substance of international relations. But the international political environment has much to do with the ways in which states behave."* (Ibid, 122-123.)

[7] Ibid, 227.

[8] Ibid, 228.

[9] Ibid, 32.

depend on the leader himself. This power may stem from various institutional circumstances. However, when it comes to decision-making processes on militarized disputes, personal factors related to military experience could similarly be impactful, however, in scholarly literature, these are often neglected.

This thesis aims at filling this gap by examining previously understudied variables related to the level of leaders, in order to test potential explanatory variables for belligerent behavior of authoritarian states in interstate disputes. To do this, the specific individual background of state leaders in authoritarian regimes are analyzed, namely, the presence of professional military education, obtained mostly in military academies, and the presence of combat experience in their careers before having gained political power as leaders. Furthermore, with the use of an already existing categorization of authoritarian regimes, the statistical analysis demonstrates connections with the aggression of authoritarian states and institutional differences within them, thus bringing variables connected to the *"second image"* as well. Two layers from the analysis of Waltz are used, which contribute to the further understanding of wars and aggressive acts occurring with the initiation of authoritarian regimes. My expectation is that all variables have a measurable impact on the intensity of aggression of authoritarian states in militarized interstate disputes.

The first chapter of the thesis summarizes key findings of existing scholarly literature on the militaristic behavior of authoritarian states in interstate conflicts. Theories based on both the first and second image are presented. In this chapter, I describe my theory and arguments, based on gaps in the literature, followed by the hypotheses on authoritarian state behavior. The first sub-chapter of the second chapter is dedicated to the research design, followed by sections on methodology and the description of the datasets and variables I use in

my models. The last sub-chapter contains the discussion of the results of the tested hypotheses.

Chapter 1 — Authoritarian Regimes and Interstate Violence

1.1 Literature Review

Existing literature on the behavior of authoritarian regimes highlights several important causal mechanisms of military aggression. These include the importance of institutional settings or prior experiences of political leaders, however, these two are not always connected. The military dimension and belligerency are also interpreted in different ways by scholars, which means that there is no consensus on the conflict propensity of states and military institutions (the *"second image"*) or the military background of political leaders (the *"first image"*).

Military and civilian relations differ in every state, and the weight of the military can be extremely significant in some regimes. Several scholars address institutional explanatory factors in nondemocratic regimes to explain aggressive foreign policy, and institutional patterns are proven to have a significant effect on the conflict propensity of states.

A game-theoretic analysis on the war waging patterns of states by Tangerås observes institutional backgrounds, comparing these within democracies and authoritarian regimes. This analysis does not detail differences between authoritarian states and separates them from democracies in a dichotomous manner, however, it still contributes to research on the foreign policy related behavior os states and internal structures. The author argues that the likelihood of interstate aggression is the highest when two authoritarian regimes are against each other. His claim is founded on an institutional explanation, on the effect of the so-called reselection policies.[10] Whereas reselection in authoritarian regimes, according to Tangerås, is independent from the rulers' behavior, decisions on war are not made according to the fear of the reaction

[10] Thomas Tangerås, "Democracy, Autocracy and the Likelihood of International Conflict," *Economics of Governance*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2009): 1-3.

of constituents, unlike in democracies in which the people can remove leaders with elections. This approach seems oversimplified, since although the level of the oppression of people or challenger parties in authoritarian regimes is much higher, the room for maneuver of the leadership can still be restricted to some extent, varying in different systems with distinctive structures. These differences and the extent to which the leader himself can influence decision-making processes, could lead to different policy outcomes when it comes to aggression in militarized disputes.

Some argue that certain types of governments within authoritarian regimes can be categorized, thus facilitating the explanation of aggression in interstate disputes. The typology of authoritarian regimes by Geddes is one of these, often being referred to by other scholars.[11] She indicates regimes as military, single-party, personalist, and the hybrid versions of two or three of these.[12] Military rule is examined as a form of autocratic governance,[13] which means *"either rule by a military strongman unconstrained by other officers or rule by a group of high-ranking officers who can limit the dictator's discretion."*[14]

The two types of military regimes, led by groups or strongmen, can behave differently when it comes to militarized disputes. Geddes *et al* state that the different organization and

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[11]Barbara Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 51.

[12] Single-party regimes, intraparty elections are held for some offices, high government office is controlled by the party, elites are not dependent on the leader, and relatives of the leader do not carry high positions within the government. In personalist regimes, the security organs are under the leader's control (Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles,* 225.) In personalist regimes, the leaders lacks the support of the party, he governs without routine elections, or, if there are elections, there is no internal or external competition, and the leader usually controls the security apparatus. (ibid, 227). As Folch *et al* argue, personalist regimes are *"characterized by weak and non-binding institutional and narrow support bases, informal links tot he rules, and a lack of unifying ideologies.*" (Escribà-Folch *et al*, "Authoritarian Regimes and Civili-Military Relations: Explaining Counterbalancing in Autocracies," Conflict Management and Peace Science, Vol. 37, No. 5 (April 2019): 4.)

[13] Other criteria include the presence of an officer or retired officer in the governing position, high-level officers influencing policies or appointments, the control of the military over the army, the merit based on seniority and not on loyalty, the possibility for the elite to stay in power even if the leader falls, etc. (Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles,* 226.)

[14] Barbara Geddes *et al*, "Military rule," *The Annual Review of Political Science* (2014) 147.

structure of regimes built on military rule, and the personal factors, such as respect of hierarchy and obedience stemming from the training and experience of military leaders, make military regimes act differently from civilian ones when they wage war.[15] Interestingly, despite the disciplined internal organization of the institutions and coercive capacities, military-led regimes tend to be relatively fragile.[16] Moreover, military strongmen themselves often risk more than military regimes led by a group of officers, and are more likely to start wars than leaders of military regimes who are constrained by other officers in the leadership.[17] The missing constraint means that decisions of military strongmen "*depend on their own preferences and expectations about their personal futures."*[18] The risks military strongmen can face when ousted from office include exile, prison, assassination, or the reaction of, or the reaction of their own oppressed people: insurgency, popular uprising, or even invasion.[19] The removal of military strongmen this way happens more often than of other leaders in other authoritarian states.[20] Belligerent behavior in this case can stem from this fear of leaders from the consequences of their actions, thus, they *"may be more willing to start a diversionary war or to refuse to negotiate a return to the barracks, even in the face of mobilized popular opposition and possible violent ouster.*"[21] When it comes to the international sphere, unconstrained decision-making processes, including the lack of negotiation with domestic

[15] Geddes *et al*, "Military rule," 148.

[16] Ibid, 148.

[17] Ibid, 160.

[18] Ibid, 154.

[19] Ibid, 158.

[20] Ibid, 147.

[21] Ibid, 160.

opponents or other officers, combined with the military background of military strongmen, lead to more freedom of choice to initiate militarized disputes.[22]

Peceny and Butler use the categories by Geddes, further elaborating on previous research that has shown more conflict propensity in the case of personalist authoritarian regimes and less in the case of single-party ones.[23] This study demonstrates that the latter types, since they have larger winning coalitions, tend to be more aggressive for various reasons. One of these has to do with accountability. According to Peceny and Butler, *"leaders who answer to a broad constituency are more easily held accountable for their public policies because the price of defection for a member of the winning coalition is limited."*[24] Private benefits individuals of the coalition can receive are also marginal.[25] On the other hand, institutional settings in personalist regimes with smaller winning coalitions result in different power-relations and rewards. Loyalty of main supporters matters more in this case, and accountability shrinks.[26] The consequences of the size of the winning coalition thus contribute to the explanation why single-party regimes initiate wars to a lesser extent than most types of authoritarian regimes. Institutions based on a militaristic system, however, are not detailed in the study. Kim, on the other hand, looks at the military dimension and does not find evidence for military regimes to be more belligerent than non-military dictatorships. The author sheds light upon cause-effect relations between military regimes and belligerency, and takes a crucial additional factor into account: hostile security environments. Military autocracies might use military force more often because of more external territorial threats, and such

[22] Ibid, 160.

[23] Mark Peceny and Christopher Kenneth Butler, "The Conflict Behavior of Authoritarian Regimes," *International Politics* Vol. 41, No. 4 (December 2004): 565.

[24] Ibid, 570.

[25] Ibid., 570.

[26] Ibid., 570.

regimes might emerge because of such threats in their neighborhood. According to this study, military regimes, independently from personalist or collegial leadership, are more likely to start militarized disputes.[27] However, if one removes territorial rivalries, this difference between military and civilian dictatorships disappears.[28]

A similar typology[29] to the one by Geddes is used by Lai and Slater who focus on the military level in authoritarian states, and their results differ from the previously listed ones. The main finding on the relationship between the institutional variation in authoritarian systems and the initiation of military disputes is that military regimes tend to initiate wars more often than single-party regimes, and that the personalized nature of such regimes do not matter in this respect.[30] This is the opposite of the claims of Peceny and Butler. Military regimes are also seen as more unstable, compared to single-party regimes. This claim corresponds to the findings of Geddes *et al*, and the reasons for this highlighted here include the lower *"institutional capacity to mobilize coercive and ideological resources"*[31] among juntas to engage in the suppression of the opposition or soldiers within the ruling elite who can menace the rulers.[32] They are proven to be less able to tackle challenges stemming from

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[27] Nam Kyu Kim. "Are Military Regimes Really Belligerent?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol 62, No. 6 (January 2017): 2.

[28] Ibid, 3.

[29] The study is underpinned by an institutional typology, created by Slater. According to this classification, the main difference that causes militarized disputes lies in regime legitimacy: *"The less legitimate the regime and the less secure the government in power, the more likely the political leadership will be to initiate military conflict."* (Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950-1992," *The American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan., 2006): 113.) The way regimes enforce decisions through their institutions, can also have an effect on dispute initiation, and there is a further differentiation between institutions: the so-called *"insfrastructural"* ones are seen as more important, and *"despotic institutions,"* collective decision-making institutions and claim that those are indifferent in this case. (Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive," 115.)

[30] Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive," 121.

[31] Ibid, 117.

[32] Ibid, 117.

wider society as well.[33] The authors also assert that those oppressive leaders who are more desperate because of the consequences of their possible removal from office, tend to initiate interstate conflicts to a larger extent.[34] This, again, is similar to the ideas of Geddes *et al*,[35] who emphasize the risk military strongmen face, and which completely contradicts the claim of Tangerås on the safety of such leaders thanks to the reselection mechanisms in nondemocratic systems.[36] Another interesting finding of the study is that not all authoritarian governments are equally likely to initiate militarized interstate disputes. Moreover, only the ones based on military institutions initiate more conflicts than democratic states.[37] This points to the importance of internal regime stability and challenges the rationale for the use a simplistic democracy-dictatorship dichotomy.

Authors who do not separate various authoritarian regimes, tend to disregard domestic constraints on foreign policy decisions, such as accountability. Weeks proves that such constraints are crucial in every regime, to a different extent, however.[38] She examines the correlation between conflict behavior of leaderships of authoritarian regimes and the costs of their decisions and their accountability, and differentiates between authoritarian regimes according to their likelihood of conflict initiation. Costs and benefits of leaders' or

[33] Ibid, 117.

[34] Ibid, 116.

[35] Geddes *et al*, "Military rule," 160.

[36] Tangerås, "Democracy," 3.

[37] Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive," 121.

[38] Accountability and the cost-benefit calculation of different regime types is detailed by Weeks in another study. (Weeks, Jessica L. "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve." *International Organization* Vol. 62.No.1 (2008): 35-64.) She points out the audience costs, and the *"factors contributing to audience costs: whether domestic political groups can and will coordinate to punish the leader; whether the audience views backing down negatively; and whether outsiders can observe the possibility of domestic sanctions for backing down."*(Ibid, 35.) According to these, autocracies can be distinguished as well, although the accountability of authoritarian leaders is less notable than the accountably of democratic leaders, since for instance the participation of the population in political life is limited.

leaderships' decisions *"shape preferences over the use of force and therefore behavior."*[39] According to the author, not only high ranking members of government, officials in military juntas or other people in high positions can influence leaders' decision-making and thus formulate policies, but, in some instances, even in closed regime types, domestic audiences can hold decision-makers accountable as well.[40] According to Weeks, preferences and attitudes to belligerency of the groups vary, depending on regime types and on power-relations between the domestic audience and decision-makers, and there also is a substantial variation between authoritarian regimes in this regard. This approach is similar to the one presented by Peceny and Butler[41] who separate the levels of accountability of regimes based on the size of the winning coalitions, but Weeks provides a more nuanced picture.

Another important finding in the study of Weeks is that regimes led by strongmen — meaning personalist leaders in military regimes — tend to be more belligerent than other authoritarian regime types,[42] and *"machines,"* as she calls non-personalist civilian regimes, are as peaceful as democracies.[43] A further hypothesis supported by the result of the study is that *"strongmen are only somewhat more likely to initiate military conflicts than juntas and*

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[39] Weeks, Jessica L. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict." *The American Political Science Review* Vol. 106, No. 2 (May 2012): 326.

[40] Ibid, 326.

[41] Peceny and Butler, "The Conflict Behavior," 570.

[42] Weeks uses the categorization of authoritarian regimes following Geddes, built up according to whether *"the regime is led by civilians or the military, and the degree of personal power of the leader,"* (Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," 329.) and identifies each regime observed with the labels of Slater. She divides regimes in the following categories: two types that are elite-constrained: non-personalist military regimes (called *"juntas"*), non-personalist civilian regimes (called *"machines"*), and two without the significant weight of an elite group: personalist military regimes (leaders indicated as *"strongmen"*), and personalist civilian regimes (leaders here are called *"bosses"*). For the measurement of the military dimension, she uses the following questions: *"whether the leader was a current or former high-ranking military officer, whether officers hold cabinet positions not related to the armed forces, whether the military high command is consulted primarily about security (as opposed to political) matters, whether most members of the cabinet or politburo-equivalent are civilians, and whether the Banks dataset considers the government to be 'military' or 'military-civilian.'"* (Ibid, 336.)

[43] Ibid, 338.

only marginally more likely than bosses [meaning leaders of personalist civilian regimes]. *"*[44] The reason for this could be that personalist dictators are *"particularly likely to view military force as necessary, effective, and hence net less costly than do either democratic voters or civilian officials in non-personalist regimes,"* or that personalist leaders are often *"tyrannical personalities"* had been able to gain power thank to their personality traits.[45] The study points out that in regime types with no powerful domestic constituents the focus is on leader's preferences and perceptions, which can create biases, since the constraints are not always clear. Weeks also urges scholars to integrate *"first*" and *"second image"* theories, i. e. the connection between the individual and the domestic structural levels.

Conflict propensity of states can be addressed using an economic approach as well, with the focus on the leadership's decision-making processes, as Jackson and Morelli demonstrate. Similarly to the previously cited study by Weeks, this one also contains some elements that can be connected to the *"first image."* The authors observe the political bias[46] of decision makers — in this case, executives, monarchs, the median members of an oligarchy, or the median voter, depending on the political regime —, as a factor when a country decides to wage war. This bias means that the interests of decision-makers differ from those of the country, and perceive the benefits and costs of war differently from the way the country does as a whole. With treaties, leaders of countries can come to an agreement regarding dissuasive transfers and thus avoid wars. However, if the risk/reward ratio of the biased leadership does not consider such transfers sufficient, conflicts erupt.[47]

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[44] Ibid, 336.

[45] Ibid, 335.

[46] As the authors describe political bias: *"ratio of share of benefits from war compared to share of costs for this pivotal agent is thus a critical determinant of a country's decisions."* (Matthew O. Jackson and Massimo Morelli, "Political Bias and War,"*American Economic Review* Vol 97, No. 4 (2007):, 1353.)

[47] Jackson and Morelli, "Political Bias and War," 1353.

The final conclusion is that unless both countries' leaders are unbiased, gains are not enough to prevent the possibility of a new war.[48] The authors also differentiate between authoritarian regimes, in which the military leadership or *"a leader can keep a disproportionate share of the gains from a war."*[49] Benefits can stem from different sources and the leadership can act accordingly, following different cost/benefit calculations.[50] In some instances, the leadership wages wars in the hope of the growth of popularity from the side of the public. Biases, however, constitute only one element of the factors on which the eruption of war depends. As the authors emphasize, war technology, relative wealth and other country-specific circumstances influence war-related foreign policy decision-making as well.[51]

This study based on economics is impressive because of its methodological approach, nevertheless, it has some shortcomings as well. It is difficult to decide on the level of analysis, since elements from the *"first"* and *"second image"* appear simultaneously. Individuals and members of an oligarchy or median voters appear, representing a whole group, thus stakeholders are not always clearly described. Furthermore, Although the structure of institutions might help in the analysis of the room for maneuver of leaders, personal preferences may still differ on the individual level, and thus can be subjective and unpredictable.

Comparing the above listed sources on state aggression, contradictory findings appear as well, which can be explained. When it comes to the composition of studies on authoritarian regime types and aggressive behavior, two major challenges arise. One is the lack of vast knowledge accumulated about *"how or even which institutions make governments*

[48] Ibid, 1353-1354.

[49] Ibid, 1353.

[50] Ibid, 1353-1354.

[51] Ibid, 1354.

more or less likely to initiate military disputes,"[52] as Lai and Slater put it, especially in the case of authoritarian regimes. Another problem which impedes scholars from conducting highly accurate and corresponding statistical analyses is that they use different definitions of regime types and data, which may lead to different interpretation of results.[53]

The above mentioned works are evidently useful for further research, since the categorization of regime types could address unanswered questions on aggressive state behavior. More attention could be dedicated not only to the inner structure of institutions, but also to the circumstances regarding domestic audiences. Thus, a more detailed picture would be elaborated on dynamics between different actors when it comes to decision-making processes and belligerent state behavior in authoritarian regimes.

The *"first image"* level could also be connected to these observations, not solely in the case of personalist regime types. The previously cited pieces of scholarly work, although they draw our attention to the importance of the observation of institutional differences within regimes, often fail to look beyond the *"second image"* level. The highlighting of the level of the leaders in personalist regimes can even lead to a more confusing description, since these leaders are often being seen as if they were on the same level with decision-making bodies of other, non-personalist regimes.

Although the inherently different institutional characteristics of various regimes is recognized by scholars, as mentioned before, the role of individuals in international relations has been quite underresearched, only limited attention has been dedicated to it, [54] not solely in the field of strategic studies. However, in order to find out the effect of personal preferences

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[52] Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive," 113.

[53] Geddes *et al, "*Military rule," 160.

[54] See for example Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* Vol. 25, No. 4 (Spring, 2001): 107-146.

of individuals — in this case, authoritarian leaders occupying the highest political positions —, more research should be done on this level. The obtained results then could be merged with or placed within the context of institutional biases mentioned above by Geddes *et al*, Lai and Slater, and Weeks.[55] Difficulties with such analyses might arise, for example the separation of all values and attitudes of individuals is impossible. Nevertheless, one can observe common characteristics of backgrounds of political leaders, and search for correlation between military and non-military experience and state-level decisions.

Some statistical approaches examine the role of the leaders' background and the impact of it on domestic political decisions. Besley *et al*,[56] for instance, conduct analysis on 185 leaders in the time frame of 1875 and 2004,[57] and prove that more educated leaders generate more economic growth. Nevertheless, no specific mechanisms are described in this piece,[58] which leaves room for further research. A similar approach is done by Dreher *et al* who observe the educational and professional background of more than 500 heads of governments between 1970 and 2002, and find correlation between entrepreneurial background and market-liberalizing reforms.[59] Even the length of tenure in office appears to be important in some cases. However, the authors argue that the *"impact of politicians' education is not robust,"*[60] from which one might assume that other *"first image"* level variables might behave in a congruent or similar way.

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[55] Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive"; Geddes *et al, "*Military rule"; Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men"

[56]Timothy Besley *et al*, "Do Educated Leaders Matter?" *The Economic Journal* Vol. 121, No. 554 (August 2011): 205.

[57] they use Archigos datasets

[58] Ibid, 219.

[59] Axel Dreher *et al*, "The impact of politicans' profession and education on reforms," *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2009): 188.

[60] Ibid, 169.

Personal attributes or experiences of leaders have been shown to have an impact on policies related to conflicts as well. Scholars use various datasets to address such connections, one of these, for instance, by Seki and Williams,[61] measuring the political orientation of leaders, and another by Brambor and Lindvall, quantifying the ideology of leaders, in connection with their economic positions,[62] and one by Keller, looking at *"the willingness* [of leaders] *to challenge potential pacifying constraints"*[63] Carter and Smith set up four models and find that instead of an all-encompassing list of experiences, theoretically relevant experiences are to be measured to reveal the dovish nature of leaders.[64] Since this study measures a latent variable, uncertainty is embedded in the results. Nevertheless, although findings may not be always measured in a very accurate way, the *"first image"* level in the case of leaders appears to be relevant not only in the domestic political realms, but in the international sphere as well.

1.2 Theory and Hypotheses

Based on scholarly work on authoritarian regimes' belligerent behavior in interstate conflicts, my theory is that two experiences related to the military — namely, professional military education and combat experience — authoritarian leaders could influence conflict propensity of states led by them. Although military education itself have never been tested as a separate factor explaining such aggression, some already existing works are indicative of the

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[61] Katsunori Seki and Laron Williams, "Updating the Party Government Data Set," *Electoral Studies* Vol. 34 (2014): 270.

[62] Thomas Brambor and Johannes Lindvall. "The ideology of heads of government." *European Political Science* Vol.17, No 2. (August 2017): 211.

[63] Jonathan W. Keller, "Constraint Respecters, Constraint Challengers, and Crisis Decision Making in Democracies: A Case Study Analysis of Kennedy versus Reagan," *Political Psychology* Vol. 26, No. 6 (December 2005):, 841.

[64] Jeff Carter and Charles E. Smith Jr, "A Framework for Measuring Leaders' Willingness to Use Force," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 114, No. 4. (November 2020): 3.

importance of it. Institutional characteristics of regimes should not be neglected, however. I also assume that military institutions also have a significant impact on patterns related to the level of aggression of authoritarian states in interstate conflicts.

To understand the importance of the military itself in authoritarian regimes, a book by Huntington, titled *The Soldier and the State,* gives detailed explanations on the institutional patterns of decision-making on military policies. Huntington states that *"military institutions of any society are shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from the threats to the society's security and a societal imperative arising from the social forces, ideologies, and institutional dominant within the society."*[65] This means that civilian and military groups have to be balanced within a state that is seeking more military security.

If the *"first image"* appears in this work, then it manifests itself in patterns of human behavior regulated by the bureaucratized military system. He touches upon the role of the officer corps, military competence, and professionalism that usually distinguishes officers from civilians. To apply violence in prescribed conditions, expertise is indispensable and that independently from any already present skills of individuals, the training of officers and experience are always needed.[66] The behavior of the officers cannot be very individualistic or irregular, since it is regulated by *"a complex mass of regulations, customs, and traditions."*[67] However, even if the focus is not on individuals, certain characteristics appear when Huntington describes the so-called *"military mind."*[68] He argues that the substance of it

[65] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State — The theory and politics of civil-military relations. (*Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 2.

[66] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State,* 12-13.

[67] Ibid, 15.

[68] The military mind is connected to the military function, for which, experts are needed, in order to secure the state. This is an idealistic definition, also because it is not solely the military ethic that is considered when it comes to decision-making by an individual or a group. (Ibid, 61.)

consist of *"the attitudes, values,*[69] *views of the military man."*[70] In some cases, bellicosity and authoritarianism are seen as characteristically military, therefore are part of such attitudes. As Huntington puts it, *"the military mind is skeptical of institutional devices designed to prevent war."*[71] This corresponds to a general assumption about the problem-solving mechanisms attributed to leaders with military past, i. e. the expectation that they would see war as a means of conflict resolution, unlike those civilians who have never had military education or combat experience. However, this does not necessarily mean the favoring of belligerency, it is rather the opposite: the man with a military mind can have a professional bias leading to the overstating of the threat, but it can also act to avoid aggressive or belligerent actions when those are not necessary.[72] In any case, people who are military professionals, because of their previous educational or combat experiences, tend to estimate threats, conflicts, and war differently from civilians. Thus the importance of military background becomes clear, however, Huntington sees military men as a certain group of people, and does no address individual characteristics. Other authors on the other hand, give detailed descriptions on the background of political leaders in the context of belligerent behavior. Some findings and elements of these studies constitute the basis of a part of my research.

Several attributes connected to the personal level have proven to be significant in state actions related to militarized disputes. It was demonstrated by scholars who have already published studies on *"first image"* aspects connected to conflictual foreign policy decisions

[69] Values can also be defined by source, but this approach can be misleading since the military source is difficult to be separated from other sources that derive from other independent *"social, economic, political, or religious affiliations."* (Ibid, 60-61.)

[70] Ibid, 60.

[71] Ibid, 65.

[72] Ibid, 66-69.

that leaders' office tenure influences conflict behavior in the international sphere.[73] According to Chiozza and Choi, the more time leaders spend in office, the less likely the occurrence of belligerent behavior is during territorial disputes.[74] They also claim that prior military career has no impact on leaders' choices when it comes to the management of territorial disputes.[75] One may assume, however, that this statement is not generalizable, and thus does not exclude the possibility for military career or other military-related experiences to have an influence on decision-making in the case of other, less specific disputes.

Colgan and Weeks, give attention to personal preferences of political leaders and demonstrate that some preferences in personalist dictatorships have an impact on international conflicts. Wars are especially more likely to break out if leaders have revisionist preferences and high risk tolerance.[76] This finding is logical, knowing that personalist regimes often leave more space for the leader because of the lack of strong institutional constraints. The study highlights the impact of individuals in militarized interstate disputes, however, does not reveal any of the possible origins of such preferences.

Another crucial contribution to the *"first image"* literature is a book written by Horowitz *et al*,[77] addressing the question about the influence of political leaders on conflicts. They dedicate chapters to the measurement of the weight of several life experiences, such as

[73] For example the following studies: Giacomo Chiozza and Ajin Choi. "Guess Who Did What: Political Leaders and the Management of Territorial Disputes, 1950-1990." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 47, No. 3 (June 2003): 251-278; Christopher Gelpi and Joseph M. Grieco, "Attracting trouble: Democracy, leadership tenure, and the targeting of militarized challenges, 1918-1992," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 45, No. 6 (December 2001):794-817.; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita,, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. *The Logic of Political Survival*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

[74] Chiozza and Choi, "Guess Who Did What," 276.

[75] Ibid, 260.

[76] Jeff D. Colgan and Jessica L. Weeks, "Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict," *International Organization* Vol. 69, No. 1 (Winter 2015): 163.

[77] Horowitz, Michael C., Allan C. Stam and Cali M. Ellis. *Why leaders fight* (New York,: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 130.

military and rebel experience, and education, of political leaders. The book's dataset[78] includes 2,400 leaders democracies and authoritarian regimes between 1875 and 2004, and concludes that leaders with prior military experience tend to be less belligerent, whereas the ones who served in the military but had no experience on the battlefield, are more likely to initiate or escalate military conflicts. This finding is contradictory to the ideas of Huntington, who, although he does not separate military education and experience, but concentrates on professionality, claims that the *"military mind,"* by being able to foresee possible losses and risks, tends to avoid participation in or the initiation of conflicts.[79] This claim, however, is generalized, and it almost entirely disregards differences between leaders.

The same dataset is used in other studies,[80] with the focus on the connection between military experience and the future militarized behavior of leaders. Horowitz and Stam demonstrate that domestic politics also have an impact on the whole process, which makes it difficult to understand how the personal layer exactly becomes significant when it comes to actual political decisions. The authors claim that *"in severely autocratic countries or regimes that lack strong civilian control of the military* (…), *leaders with combat experience appear significantly more likely to engage in militarized behavior."*[81] Observing authoritarian regimes in general, the result of their study shows that *"the leaders most likely to initiate wars are those with prior military service but no combat experience, as well as former rebels."*[82] This outcome is explained with different experiences connected to these circumstances, for example no deployment in military service might not have such deterrent effect on a person

[78] the Leader Experience and Attribute Descriptions (LEAD) dataset

[79] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State,* 66.

[80] H Horowitz and Stam, "How Prior Military Experience,"; Carter and Smith, "A Framework," 1352 - 1358.

[81] Ibid, 529.

[82] Horowitz and Stam, "How Prior Military Experience," 527.

regarding belligerency than memories of direct involvement in wars as rebels. The authors argue that not only the socialization of individual matters, but selection processes as well: in nondemocratic regimes, individuals *"with unusually high willingness to engage in violence and aggression"*[83] are being rewarded. The combination of combat experience, rebel experience and military service, although contributes much to the discourse, lacks the variable used in the previously mentioned book: professional military education. According to these findings, however, combat experience is a significant factor. What remains undiscovered is its combination with professional military education. Furthermore, neither the book by Horowitz *et al*, nor this study by Horowitz and Stam provide closer focus on different categories of authoritarian regimes.

A similar study is conducted on the *"first image"* level by Carter and Smith, observing background experiences, political orientations, and psychological traits of leaders, to measure their latent, not directly observable *"hawkishness."* In this study, elements related to the personal background of leaders are more differentiated than the book by Horowitz *et al*,[84] since the emphasis is on *"experiences closely related to conflict or risk tolerance,"*[85] which could show more accurate connections with war waging tendencies. This idea supports my approach, since I observe only two *"first image"*-related variables, both closely connected to the military.

The first four hypotheses of the thesis are based on the previous findings which prove the relevance of leaders' personal background in interstate relations, including war. My

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[83] Ibid, 529.

[84] The authors are critical towards the work of Horowitz *et al*.,("*Most notably, Horowitz, Stam, and Ellis create a measure that identifies a leader's underlying risk of initiating a conflict by estimating conflict initiation as a function of thirty-three background experiences.")* however, they also criticize their work. They claim that their measure *"should not be used to estimate conflict initiation, as it is derived from the probability that a leader will initiate a conflict."*(Carter and Smith, "A Framework," 2.)

[85] Carter and Smith, "A Framework," 1.

assumption is that military-related experiences of political leaders are also impactful when it comes to the aggressiveness of authoritarian state behavior in militarized disputes. I rely on the findings of Horowitz *et al*,[86] and Horowitz and Stam[87] who claim that combat experience and other experiences have a significant impact on the belligerency of states. I also consider the idea of Carter and Smith by observing only specific experiences, connected to the level of intensity of military acts performed by authoritarian regimes. My first hypothesis is the following:

H1: Authoritarian leaders with professional military education should be more likely than authoritarian leaders without professional military education to initiate more violent interstate disputes.

The effect of military education, however, may not be obvious. The connection of the *"military mind"* to belligerency by Huntington, because of the different way of perceiving aggression and war by professionals,[88] suggests that military education could reduce the level of aggression used by the tested authoritarian regimes. Thus, my alternative hypothesis is that

H2: Authoritarian leaders with professional military education should be less likely than authoritarian leaders without professional military education to initiate more violent interstate disputes.

[86] Horowitz *et al*, *Why leaders fight*

[87] Horowitz and Stam, "How Prior Military Experience"

[88] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State,* 66.

I also expect combat experience, similarly to military education, to shape attitudes and skills of authoritarian leaders. Several authoritarian leaders have combat experience but no professional military education, and as Horowitz and Stam point out, direct experiences with war can lead to more risk-aversion on the personal level. My second hypothesis is that this experience in leaders' past has a reverse effect on state behavior in conflicts. The hypothesis is the following:

H3: Authoritarian leaders with combat experience should be less likely than authoritarian leaders without combat experience to initiate more violent interstate disputes.

The combination of the two *"first image"* variables might highlight the relative weight of one of them. I assume that if H1 and H3 are true, meaning that these variables have opposite effects on state behavior in conflicts, then combat experience of leaders might have a higher impact on state behavior than military education. Not only because many leaders have non-professional combat experience, but also because authors such as Horowitz and Stam stress its importance.

H4: Authoritarian leaders with military education and combat experience should be less likely to initiate more violent interstate disputes than authoritarian leaders without military education and combat experience.

When it comes to the observation of leaders, it can be fruitful to be aware of the institutional backgrounds in different states. Social background, educational and career of

leaders are highlighted by Baturo[89] this way, since he does not only study democratic and nondemocratic leaders, by but he also gives importance to the *"second level."* His study is suppletory because it shows that different authoritarian regime types matter, and, in fact, there is not much difference between the background of leaders in single-party regimes and democracies, which, in this case, separates the former ones from other types of dictatorships.[90] Regarding military background, on the other hand, not surprisingly, education pursued in military and staff college is more common amongst nondemocratic leaders.[91] To give further explanations to the outbreak of conflicts, similarly to Baturo, not only the individual level should be addressed, but various regime types among authoritarian systems as well.

Although, as demonstrated in the previous section, there is no scholarly consensus about the effect of military, civilian or personalist regime types — or similar categories — on the belligerent behavior of states in militarized disputes, some inferences can be drawn from the work of Lai and Slater, and Geddes *et al*. There is significant correspondence between findings by authors examining the *"second image."* Lai and Slater show that military authoritarian regimes are more aggressive in general.[92] The conclusion of Weeks is that non-personalist civilian regimes are not belligerent, whereas states with military institutions but a personalist leader are the most aggressive ones.[93] This is similar to the ideas of Geddes *et al,* who also associate aggressive state behavior with the presence of military strongmen as leaders.[94] These already existing findings suggest that military institutions are significant

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[89] Alexander Baturo, "Cursus Honorum: Personal background, careers and experience of political leaders in democracy and dictatorship - New data and analyses," *Politics and Governance* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2016): 138.

[90] Ibid, 154.

[91] Ibid, 144.

[92] Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive"

[93] Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men"

[94] Geddes *et al*, "Military rule"

when it comes to state-level aggression or hostile behavior. Following this logic, in this instance with the exclusion of the *"first image"* from the analysis of the intensity of interstate military disputes, my last hypothesis is that

H5: Military regimes should be more likely to act violently in inter-state disputes than personalist or single-party regimes.

Chapter 2 — Data Analysis

2.1 Research Design

In this thesis, I seek to account for the intensity of interstate military disputes, initiated by authoritarian regimes. The categorization of the intensity of militarized disputes is crucial, since interstate conflicts can lead to extremely high human and economic losses. In order to understand the mechanisms of such disputes in more details, and to explain why some authoritarian leaders escalate conflicts, while others not, I undertake a quantitative study with the introduction of variables on the *"first"* and *"second image"* levels of analysis.

My research is conducted through a statistical approach with large-N analysis, in order to measure the conflict behavior of authoritarian regimes, based on the potential impact of personal characteristics of leaders and the institutional structure. Different models are analyzed to show the weight of leaders and their military background, namely their military education and combat experience, and the combination of these two, in driving conflict escalation in disputes. The classification of regimes following Geddes is used in my analysis (personalist, single-party, military, and the mixed forms of these), enabling me to draw further inferences and present a more nuanced picture on the intensity of interstate violence initiated by authoritarian regimes.

2.2 Methodology

The units of analysis are militarized interstate disputes. In total, 922 militarized disputes are listed, initiated by authoritarian regimes between 1946 and 1999. The number of examined countries is 59, and the number of leaders is 114.

To test the first four hypotheses, I run various regressions, using binary logistic models, in order to measure the connection between the intensity of military conflicts and the presence of professional military education and/or combat experience of authoritarian leaders. First I test the impact of military education of leaders and the level of aggression shown by the initiator state in interstate militarized disputes. Subsequently, I do the same with combat experience, and finally, I combine the two variables in order to see if there is relationship between the present of these in the biography of leaders them and the level of aggression demonstrated by the states led by them.

In order to test hypothesis 5, the institutional level is taken into account. An additional logistic regression model is used to test the significance of various political systems as factors when it comes to the level of aggression in state actions in militarized interstate disputes.
Hypotheses are tested with the use of two control variables, based on the literature on interstate disputes. These variables are the presence of borders between the members of the dyad, and the geographic location of states.With the help of these geography-related variables, additional analyses are conducted, revealing further connections, such as data on the distribution of leaders with various backgrounds, grouped according the geographic location of their states. This data is presented in light of the institutional variations between authoritarian regimes as well.

2.3 Dataset

Version 4.0 of the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID)[95] is used as the core of the study, containing the dependent variables for the analyses. This dataset codes the outbreak and the termination of interstate wars in a dyadic mode. The beginning of a war corresponds to the

[95] Militarized Interstate Disputes (v4.0) dataset, https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/MIDs

date of the first battle, and the end of a war means the occurrence of the last battle between the states in the dyad.[96]

In my analysis, only the date of initiation is important, since with that data, the leader in office can be identified at the starting point of the dispute. The data set is updated up to 2010, but for the analysis, actions having started before 1999 are considered, since the other additional data used, the classification of authoritarian regimes by Geddes, covers a period which ends with that year. Interstate wars are defined according to the following criteria: a state must suffer the minimum of 100 battle-deaths, and at least 1,000 troops must be deployed in battle-related activities.[97] In this dataset, belligerent actions (incidents that are not wars) are included and further categorized in 24 possible categories.[98] Value labels from 1 to 5 are also added to these actions in the MID dataset, however, since my dataset does not include all these categories, I chose to transform this variable to a dummy variable, since this already gives sufficient information on the intensity of violence. In my study, I observe the highest military confrontation action performed only by the initiator state, to measure the aggression of that side only. Thus, although the dataset provides information on the highest military confrontation action performed by either parties, the level of aggression showed by the initiator state still provides information of the extent of the escalation of interstate disputes.

For the classification of authoritarian regime types, I use the data from Geddes, derived from her book titled *Paradigms and Sand Castles.*[99] Although this typology always indicates the

[96]Zeev Maoz, Paul L. Johnson, Aaron Shreve, Fiona Ogunkoya, and Jasper Kaplan, "Dyadic MID Codebook—Version 4.0" (February 21, 2021): 1.

[97] Ibid, 2.

[98] None, Threat to use force, Threat to blockade, Threat to occupy territory, Threat to declare war, Threat to join war, Show of troops, Show of ships, Show of planes, Alert, Mobilization, Fortify border, Border violation, Blockade , Occupation of territory, Seizure, Clash, Raid, Declaration of war, Begin interstate war, Join interstate war, Use CBR Weapons (Ibid, 6-7.)

[99] Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles*

regime type of authoritarian regimes (single-party, personalist, military, and the hybrid forms of these), it names the leaders only in those cases, when the type is personalist. Because of this shortcoming, I inserted the missing names in the data base from other sources, such as biographies of leaders. These leaders are those who occupy the highest position in the political system of their country (usually they are presidents, or, for instance in China's case, during and after the Mao era, have the title of Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party).

2.4 Variables

2.4.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable serves as indicator whether more aggressive acts have been committed by the initiator authoritarian state in a militarized intestate dispute. The MID dataset is used, which indicates the state that first uses military force or threatens with it. It also categorizes the possible acts, which are the following: threat to use force, fortify border, no military action, border violation, mobilization, show of troops, show of planes, show of ships, alert, seizure, raid, clash, occupation of territory, blockade, join interstate war, begin interstate war. I chose to code these as dummy variables, in order to separate acts that are more severe from those that are less menacing, in a simple way. The first nine categories therefore are coded as 0, the all the others are coded as 1. This classification enables me to compare the intensity of military actions and personal attributes of political leaders, and authoritarian regime types, thus to observe belligerent behavior not regarding the presence of conflict initiation, but by looking at the magnitude of violence used by the initiator in interstate disputes.

2.4.2 Independent Variables

Variables from the *"first"* and *"second image"* levels of analysis of international relations are used in my study. Data for the first category is derived from biographies of political leaders.[100]

The first measured variable, professional military education covers studies pursued in military academies. Guerrilla training and training within the military are not counted, since rising in ranks and military experience cannot be coded efficiently, partially because of the lack of exact data on exact time frames of careers in the military. Biases stemming from self-appointments are taken out as well, and civil service or administrative posts in the army are not counted either. Although the extended data base that I built up with data on leaders, contains the exact length of leaders' professional military education, in the models of my thesis I use military education as a dummy variable.

The second independent variable to be observed is the combat experience of leaders before having gained power as the leaders occupying the highest positions in political systems. In the measurement of combat experience, unlike in the case of the educational background, professionality does not matter: if the person participated in partisan activities, rebellions, revolutions and fights even with no professional military background, these activities are still considered as examples for combat experience. This variable, similarly to the other one regarding military education, is coded as a dummy (1, if any of these experiences are present and 0 if none of them).

[100] With the lack of detailed data on the exact period of some leaders in office and their exhaustive biographies, some elements of the data base were deleted (overall, this should not distort the analysis, since it is an insubstantial amount).

A third variable is created with the criteria of the presence of both military education and combat experience in a leader's past. This is supposed to show the —probably counterbalancing — effect of the two, coded as 0 and 1 again.

The measured *"second image"*- related variable is the institutional structure of the political system of authoritarian regimes. The categorization of Geddes is used, meaning that there are seven possible combinations of regime types: the three pure forms (military, single-party, and personalist), and the combinations of two or three of these. In the database, each element is coded as a dummy variable (if, for example, we look at a hybrid regime type containing the personalist and military elements as well, then two out of three columns, indicating the regime type, receive 1).

2.4.3 Control Variables

Control variables used in the analyses are two geography-related factors. The first one is a dummy variable for the shared borders between states, that appears significant in hostile interstate relations.

Several studies point out the importance of borders when it comes to interstate wars.[101] Uncertain borders resulting in militarized interstate disputes can exist because of inappropriate topographical terms, vague geographical features, intricate human and cultural features, and inconsistent or contradictory statements, for example contradictions in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).[102] The relationship between contiguous land

[101] Manici's study focuses on Asia and argues that *"of all interstate disputes, those over territory tend to be nearly twice as likely as other issues to lead to armed conflict."* (Francesco Mancini, "Uncertain borders: territorial disputes in Asia," *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale* Analysis No. 180 (June 2013): 1.) Relative frequency of interstate conflict over state boundaries are highlighted by Domínguez *et al*, with a closer focus on Latin America. Interestingly, in most cases, these conflicts do not escalate into full-scale wars (Jorge I. Domínguez, David Mares, Manuel Orozco, David Scott Palmer, Francisco Rojas Aravena, and Andrés Serbin, "Boundary Disputes in Latin America," United States Institute of Peace (September 2003): 5.)

[102] Manicni, "Uncertain borders," 4.

borders and conflict behavior is non-linear, however, as Starr and Thomas demonstrate it.[103] In some cases, the presence of certain types of borders can increase the likelihood of the outbreak of conflicts, and in others it does not lead to militaristic state behavior.[104] Nevertheless, the connection between wars and borders is undeniable and justifies the control variable on land borders to be used in this thesis.

The second variable is the geographic location of the initiator states. Continents on which states are or were located are separated in four categories(Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe), coded as dummy variables.[105] From the diversification of continents, patterns can emerge and show more detailed information on the level of aggression of authoritarian states in different geographic locations, thus bringing us closer to the predictability of their behavior.

2.5 Data Analysis

The statistical analyses on variables connected to both levels result in unexpected findings. The analyses show that the statistical effects of authoritarian leaders' military-related experiences go against my expectations and do not provide support for the first four hypotheses. Although the test of the fifth hypothesis proves that regime types do matter when it comes to the intensity of interstate militarized disputes, it does not support my previous claims.

In the first four cases assessing the personal level, association was found neither between the level of aggression in militarized interstate disputes and the presence of previous professional education, nor between disputes and combat experience of leaders. Thus, none of

[103] Harvey Starr and G. Dale Thomas, "The Nature of Borders and Conflict: Revisiting Hypotheses on Territory and War," *International Studies Quarterly* Vol 49, No. 1 (March 2005): 17.

[104] Starr and Thomas, "The Nature of Borders," 18.

[105] According to my classification, Russia and Turkey fall into the category of European states.

the hypotheses based on the *"first image"* approach are supported by the data collected. This means that although Horowitz *et al*[106] and other authors[107] point out the importance of personal characteristics and experiences when it comes to certain policies, in this instance, these two experiences and their combinations do not contribute to the explanation of the intensity of such complex militarized actions. Furthermore, these authors use different datasets, with more regime types, more variables regarding leaders, and different units of analysis. In the case of the militarized intestate disputes listed in my model, other internal and external factors which are not connected to the personal level, probably have more significant effect on policy decisions, even in personalist regimes in which rulers face less institutional constraints.

In the regression model ran on the *"second image"* level, testing the connection between the three authoritarian regime types and the level of aggression demonstrated by initiator authoritarian states, coded as a dummy variable, a particularly interesting pattern emerges. Observing the results on the intensity of aggression by the initiator state, regime types evidently matter. Aggression is the most likely to manifest itself in actions of single-party regimes, followed by personalist ones. Thus, hypothesis 5 is not supported by this model, which means that although the military is often seen as source of aggression, and military institutions led by officers are frequently perceived as institutions which are unable to bargain or unwilling to cooperate with civilians, the behavior of such regime types is often more peaceful than the behavior of the other two.

106 Horowitz *et al*, *Why leaders fight*

107 Seki and Williams, "Updating the Party Government Data Set"; Brambor and Lindvall, "The ideology of heads of government"

Table 1 shows the results of the bivariate regression model ran to test the connection between the intensity of militarized intestate disputes and authoritarian regime types.

Table 1.

```
Coefficients:
                          Estimate Std. Error z value Pr(>|z|)
(Intercept)                0.4951     0.1885   2.627  0.00861 **
Data$personalist.binary    0.2867     0.1686   1.700  0.08907 .
Data$single.party.binary   0.3573     0.1700   2.102  0.03557 *
Data$military.binary       0.1988     0.1841   1.080  0.28029
---
```

This finding goes completely against the ideas of Lai and Slater, Weeks, and Geddes *et al*,[108] who all consider military regimes to be more belligerent (usually with an emphasis on personalist military regimes). Since the authors cited in the literature review mostly focus on the connection between domestic political institutions and war initiation, drawing inferences between those works and my findings could be misleading. The assessment of the elements of militarized disputes and in some cases, whole disputes or even full-scale wars, might not show similar results either. From a methodological perspective, contradictions with other findings cannot only appear because of the slight difference in the measured variables, but also because of the binary coding of variables on the institutional level. Since every element is treated as a dummy variables, even in the case of hybrid regime types, containing two or three elements of all possibilities (single-party, military, personalist), this can result in biases in the outcomes.

Nevertheless, there are some additional explanations for this result. My findings correspond to the claim of Huntington that explains the more conflict avoidant behavior

[108] Lai and Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive"; Jessica L. Weeks; "Strongmen and Straw Men"; Geddes *et al*, "Military rule"

because of the the special knowledge of people with military background, who tend to avoid conflicts because they are aware of the possible damage they can do or suffer.[109] Even if Huntington, when he writes about the *"military mind,"* does not separate democracies and other regimes, his claim about the decisions made or influenced by military professionals seems to be correct in this instance, even if one observes only authoritarian regimes.

When it comes to the control variables, as expected, the shared borders among authoritarian states participating in militarized disputes, are statistically significant. In disputes initiated by authoritarian states between 1946 and 1999, in which the two opposing states in the dyads did not share land borders at the time of the war or aggressive behavior, often shared maritime borders or had colonial relations. Some distant states had hostile relations because of the bipolar world order and rigid alliances during the Cold War. Nevertheless, most of the states examined in dyads shared land borders with each other. This leads to the conclusion that despite the acceleration of globalization and technological developments in the military, which enabled states to attack geographically more distant ones, the causes for war are still often connected to disagreements on territorial questions. The single-party variable, however, retains its significance, even after including this control variables, and the second one on the regional location of regimes.

Further analyses can be conducted with the use of these geography-specific variables. First, running a regression analysis on the regions, including the border dummy variable and the dependent variable, i.e. the highest military action performed by the initiator state, Asia appears to be an outstanding region. This means that if an authoritarian regime is in Asia, the likelihood of escalation of disputes into violence increases. Similarly, contiguity remains significant in this case. *Table 2* shows the results of this regression model.

[109] Huntington, *The Soldier and the State,* 66-69.

Table 2.

```
Coefficients:
                   Estimate Std. Error z value Pr(>|z|)
(Intercept)         0.61765    0.18451   3.348 0.000815 ***
neighbouring.binary 0.32913    0.15688   2.098 0.035902 *
regionAM           -0.05144    0.28508  -0.180 0.856807
regionAS            0.37646    0.18598   2.024 0.042947 *
regionEU           -0.43428    0.24971  -1.739 0.082014 .
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```

These regional differences may have various explanations. One of these is may be the presence of different strategic cultures of regions. Different dispute types may also be more frequent amongst specific countries, or may last longer and thus lead to more severe actions. Another possible explanation may have to do with specific countries in the continent. Iran and Iraq for instance, two states that share border and that often have disputes with each other, thus are illustrated in numerous days in the MID, may contribute to these results to a certain extent. In this case, as Asia as is significant, authoritarian states in this continent are worth to dedicate more attention to, in order to find further explanations.

The categorization of regimes and their leaders according to geographic location reveal further patterns. The ratio of states in which the leader was subject of professional military education is the highest in the Americas, and the lowest in Europe. The former could be explained with the influence of the United States in Latin America, since several authoritarian leaders in the region received military education from the United States-financed School of the Americas. Africa is in between, with several leaders who had neither military education, not combat experience. This is not surprising because in several African countries,

with the end of the colonial period, technocrats were elected with higher education often pursued in Western countries.

The frequency of elements (personalist, single-party, or military, and the combination of these) in regimes led by leaders with previous military education also differ to a large extent, if one looks at different continents. Whereas in Africa and Asia, personalist regime types dominate, in the Americas it is the military regime type which can be mostly connected to leaders with professional military education.

When it comes to combat experience, several leaders have it in their biographies, even without the presence of professional military education. In general, combat experience is a more frequently appearing variable than military education in the database of leaders of authoritarian regimes. Interestingly, most leaders who have combat experience but no professional military education, are amongst European and Asian politicians. This is a surprising finding, knowing that the ratio of military education was outstandingly high in the American continent. In Africa, leaders with previous combat experience, if one does not exclude the combinations of combat experience and military education, can be found in all regime types, with not much difference. The ratio of leaders with such experience is higher, however, in the other three continents, but with institutional variations: in Asia and Europe, single-party regimes dominate with such leadership, whereas in the Americas, military regimes are outstanding.

To understand these ratios better, we have to see the ratio of regime types in these continents and compare the previously obtained results with these. Where the outcomes differ the most with the consideration of the total ratio of regime types of the continent as a whole, is Africa, where, although the majority of regime types are led by single-parties or contain the single-party element, the ratios of military education and combat experience do not follow the

same pattern and are almost equally distributed. Another similar phenomenon is the case in Europe and Asia, where the combat experience of leaders in single-party regimes is higher than the ratio of those in total.

These geography-specific results could mean that depending on the geographic location, possibly different requirements have to be fulfilled by leaders to obtain and maintain their positions, or different traditions can exist within institutions. Thus, people with certain background experiences are more likely to rise into power than others. In my study, only four continents are identified, but further typologies on smaller regions can lead to different, more specific results, showing additional findings on their relationship with state aggression as well.

As both *"first"* and *"second image"* variables were analyzed in this study, one can conclude that the former has proven insignificant in this instance, and institutional backgrounds of authoritarian regime types dominate interstate affairs to a higher and more easily measurable extent than personal experiences and characteristics of leaders. As Dreher *et al* state in their study on the education of politicians, the weight of it in domestic political decisions is not too significant.[110] In the case of aggressive foreign behavior of states, even if it can be measured, this significance possibly shrinks further.

My findings, however, do not necessarily mean that the personal attributes of state leaders should be neglected. It rather means that possibly different combination of experiences or different policy choices should be assessed, in order to obtain significant results. Authors have proven the effects of the personal level and militaristic personality traits

[110] Dreher *et al*, "The impact of politicans' profession," 169.

— for instance, hawkishness[111] —, in several, not always domestic political areas, which means that the further investigation of this level can be justified.

Conclusion

This thesis observed the conflict behavior of authoritarian regimes in militarized interstate disputes, with the focus on personal experiences of their leaders, such as professional military education and combat experience. Having taken institutional differences within authoritarian state types into account, the level of aggression of countries in militarized disputes was also addressed accordingly. To obtain a more nuanced picture on aggression demonstrated by these state types, differences stemming from the geographical location of authoritarian regimes were considered as well.

Findings show that variables connected to the personal level, previous professional military education of leaders and combat experience, do not have a significant impact on the intensity of how states wage war. The institutional level, on the other hand, has proven to be significant. With the use of the typology which classifies authoritarian states in three *"pure"* categories — personalist, single-party, and military regimes — and the combination of these, the result of my analysis shows that military regimes tend to act less aggressively than other regime types in interstate disputes. This finding is somewhat unexpected because it goes against the assumptions of other scholars who look at tendencies of war initiation in military regimes led by *"juntas"* or *"strongmen,"* and argue that these regimes tend to be more aggressive when it comes to war initiation or conflict-related state behavior.[112] In my study, shared borders between states participating in these militarized disputes have also been

[111] Carter and Smith, "A Framework," 1.

[112] See for example Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men" and Geddes *et al*, "Military rule"

confirmed to be significant. Furthermore, tendencies connected to the geographic location of initiator states matter, too.

These findings of the thesis describing the impact of variables connected to the *"first"* and "*second level"* analyses in international relations, and combining data from these two levels, contribute to the further understanding and predictability of future military conflicts, and complement strategic studies literature on the impact of the personal and institutional level in interstate wars.

Nevertheless, the scope of the research has limitations. First of all, the analysis on the *"first image"* level is restricted to the military education and combat experience of leaders occupying the highest positions in authoritarian states. On the personal level, other experiences in connection with the military are not observed either. Furthermore, the study of military conflicts is limited to interstate conflicts and does not address internal violence, such as civil wars, and only authoritarian regimes are examined. The time frame of the analysis is limited as well, since it covers the second half of the past century, thus further studies should be conducted on the assessment of more contemporary conflicts in connection with leaders' personal experiences and regime types.

Further research could consider other state types as well, for instance the so-called *"hybrid regimes,"* thus providing a more nuanced picture on the effect of institutions on policies, and on institutional constraints on leaders. More emphasis should be placed on the *"first image"* level, and the interplay between these two levels of analysis, thus further causal mechanisms could be revealed which are not explicable with the use of data derived from only one of the levels.

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