

Authoritarian Leadership Politics and Conflict Export:
Insurgency and terrorism as tools of autocratic ideology
promotion

Tom Hanna
University of Houston
Department of Political Science
tlhanna@uh.edu

March 30, 2021

Abstract

Why do some regimes engage in autocracy promotion through conflict export? Many authoritarian regimes never engage in autocracy promotion, especially on a broad scale. Yet countries such as Iraq, Cuba, North Korea and Afghanistan engage in autocracy promotion through activities including interstate conflict, support for insurgencies, illicit arms sales, and state sponsorship of terrorism. What explains the difference in behavior among authoritarian regimes? I contend that the answer lies in domestic leadership politics. Specifically, I propose that ambitious, transformative ideologies increase the risk of autocracy promotion by means of state support for insurgencies and terrorism. Ambitious ideological goals erode traditional institutional and civil society constraints, while increasing demands on the regime to achieve transnational ideological goals. Rational leaders use relatively less costly conflict export as a means to achieve those transnational goals. This paper demonstrates that promotion of autocratic ideologies by conflict export does occur and that it accounts for a portion of conflict export not explained by strategic goals.

Introduction

The puzzle This project addresses a question central to the international effects of autocratic leadership politics: Why do some autocratic regimes engage in support for insurgencies and state sponsorship of terrorism? Even among autocracies, war and lower intensity forms of conflict have always been the exception in interstate relations. Yet, in recent times, countries such as Iraq, Cuba, North Korea, and Afghanistan have used a combination of conflict and cooperative behaviors to promote specific ideological goals. Governments as different as the Sunni Muslim Taliban, the Shiite Muslim Islamic Republic of Iran, and the atheist Republic of Cuba have engaged in promotion of their ideologies through the export of conflict by supporting sponsoring terrorism, supporting ideologically similar insurgent groups, or both, sometimes half a world away and with no immediate strategic consideration. I contend that conflict export, state support for rebel groups and terrorist activities, achieves regimes' objectives for ideological autocracy promotion. Specifically it allows them to promote their own or closely related autocratic ideologies, at a lower cost and risk than direct military disputes.

This research serves a parallel purpose: contributing to the debate on autocracy promotion by providing an additional measurable method. Direct conflict is the most costly method of autocracy export, putting the nation's own military, infrastructure, and population at direct risk and explicit cooperative autocracy promotion has been linked to great power politics during the Cold War. Conflict export offers the autocrat a means of pursuing transnational ideological goals at lower cost and less risk than interstate, though neither are so trivial as to signal nothing. The question remains whether autocrats would pursue promotion of their ideological goals at all and through conflict export in particular. Perhaps the most convincing explicit declaration why they would do so comes from Marxist ideology, which requires socialist states to support class struggle worldwide including armed struggle against capitalist and imperialist states (Sanchez-terry et al., 2002, p.19). Historically, nationalist and religious ideologies have also used fifth column forces to undermine

enemies and promote their own goals as well (Waite, 1969)(Paterson, 1988).

Throughout this paper, I will refer to conflict export, Non-State Armed Groups (NAGs), and transformative ideologies. While the associated variables are defined in the research design section, for clarity some definition is in order here. By conflict export, I am referring to support by the state for conflict outside its own borders by means other than involvement of the state's own military forces or alliance with other states. This could include a variety of support for NAGs including financial support, logistics help, providing weapons *gratis*, or even providing non-military supplies. The key is that this should be unambiguous support that sends a costly signal of support for the NAGs cause, at least to whomever sees the signal. Inclusion in broader trade or relief programs does not qualify because the inclusion of non-ideologically aligned groups makes it ambiguous. I borrow the definition for Non-Armed Groups from San Akca (2009): "any armed opposition group that uses violent means to pursue certain political objectives...an overarching concept used to refer to ethnic and religious insurgents, revolutionary movements and terrorists." The term is used partly to avoid drawing politically loaded distinctions or moral equivalencies between various types of armed group whose behavioral effects and incentives are similar. As Gerring (1997) noted, the concept of ideology is highly flexible and often contradictory. I focus on the idea of ideology as a coherent system of ideals with a specific plan of action and specifically to what I call transformative ideologies. Transformative ideology is an ideology based on the use of state power or regime allies to radically change the existing structure of society. An ideology limited to changing the institutions of government, but not changing society directly, could be quite radical but differ in effects from a transformative ideology as I will explain in the theory section.

The rest of this paper is divided into five parts. The first part discusses the relationship of this project to the current academic discourse. The next section develops a theoretical frame for understanding the effects of transformative ideology and charismatic leadership styles on the

promotion of autocratic ideologies through conflict export. The third part explains the models and proposed research design. The fourth section presents the results of the current research. The final section is a conclusion recapping the major issues and suggesting future avenues of research.

Significance of this research

Autocracy promotion

Though there is a rapidly growing scholarship on autocracy promotion, both its occurrence and the motives behind it are questioned (Yakouchyk, 2019). Even aside from the cases of great powers acting strategically, there are what seem to be clear cases of autocracy promotion. Yet some researchers believe there is a lack of evidence that autocracy promotion is a threat or even occurs (Way, 2015)(Way, 2016). von Soest (2015) argues that to the extent autocracy promotion exists at all, it is merely a reflexive defense against the encroachment of democracy. Other critics question why autocrats would even be motivated to promote autocracy (Bader, Grävingholt and Kästner, 2010). The short answer to these questions is that both the motives for and methods of autocracy promotion vary widely in a way that makes it easy to mischaracterize and dismiss. This research examines the ideological motive for autocracy promotion and does so using a seemingly obvious, but little addressed mechanism.

In 2010, Bader et al. asked the question, "Would autocracies promote autocracy?" Noting that there was little theoretical justification as to why autocracies would prefer autocratic neighbors, they examined the question from the standpoint of political economy and found that while there were interests in promoting similar regimes, this could be outweighed by a general interest in regional stability Bader, Grävingholt and Kästner (2010). However, their model focused on China and Russia in the early 20th century, arguably lending too much weight to modern Great Power politics. Meanwhile in 2010, Peter Burnell characterized the very idea of a new autocracy promotion

as new and ill defined, while examining it from a comparative perspective against the backdrop of Canada's new effort for democracy promotion Burnell (2010)(Burnell, 2011). Grimm (2015) argued that autocracy promotion, and active autocratic opposition to democratization efforts in their neighbors, was one of four factors impeding democratization efforts. Again the examples were limited to China and Russia, with a note that China's efforts seemed more geared to extracting resources but still undermined democracy promotion efforts, intentionally or not. In southeast Asia, Einzenberger and Schaffar (2018) argue that China's economic engagement with authoritarian regimes promotes autocracy indirectly both by economic support and more subtle emulation of and learning from the Chinese model.

Ideology and Autocracy Promotion

von Soest (2015) argued that the autocracy promotion, or cooperative behavior geared to slowing democratization, was not about an authoritarian ideology, but about geopolitical and economic realities. But von Soest also posited a generic "authoritarian ideology" that may not have been measurable simply because, as noted by Yakouchyk (2019) no such "encompassing ideology of authoritarianism" exists. Way (2016) also argues that autocrats are more concerned with geopolitical and economic interests than with promoting a generic autocratic ideology, but like von Soest does not address the demands of specific ideologies.

Weyland (2013) contends that most authoritarian regimes are driven by more mundane political motives in promoting autocracy, though there are examples of autocracies with a "dynamic, missionary ideology" explain away ideological autocracy promotion. de la Torre (2017) explores the case of the Cuban-Venezuelan alliance to explicitly promote a left leaning populist authoritarianism, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) founded in 2004. Yakouchyk (2019) notes that ideology has been associated with autocracy promotion. He contends the cases are limited with more instances of autocracy promotion attributed to economic, security, and fear of demo-

cratic contagion concerns. Interestingly, Yakouchyk's otherwise excellent review of the autocracy promotion literature does not explicitly consider ethnic or religious ideologies, or conflict export.

Existing explanations of conflict export

Lower cost alternative to conflict A consistent explanation for conflict export is that it is a lower cost tool for achieving strategic objectives than resorting to full scale interstate conflict. In the case of sponsorship of terrorism, Berkowitz (2018*b*) notes, for example, that even the relatively expensive al Qaeda September 11 operation cost approximately half a million dollars while defense budgets typically run into the billions. Bapat (2012) argues that states engage in sponsorship of armed groups as a costly signal of support for groups hostile to their rivals. The support for non-state armed groups serves as a commitment device exposing the sponsor itself to the armed group's wrath if it reneges, while also weakening the rival internally. San Akca argues that states support non-state armed groups as an alternative to traditional alliances, and mostly out of strategic concern for securing their own borders (Akca, 2009).

Ideology and conflict export

San-Akca 2009 poses three conditions for support of non-state armed groups by states: strategic value in an existing state rivalry, material capability of the supporting state, and "ideational affinity." The ideational affinity, which can include ideological, religious, or ethnic ties, is treated as secondary to the other effects. In "Supporting Non-State Armed Groups", he again notes that ideology is an important reason for state support of non-armed groups, but leaves that for future study(Akca, 2009). Berkowitz (2018*a*) notes that sponsorship of armed groups may promote strategic, ideological, or domestic political goals, while focusing primarily on strategic goals and not elaborating on the close connection between ideological goals and domestic political goals.

Theory

The theory I present addresses two parallel concerns: causes and methods of autocracy promotion, and causes of conflict export. As noted, a major question with regard to autocracy promotion concerns the lack of evidence of autocracy promotion when viewing specific cases through specific measures. I argue that this causes two problems. First, it ignores the major cause for autocracy promotion, the promotion of a specific autocratic ideology as a rational reaction of leaders to transnational ideological goals of regime supporters (Hanna, 2021*b*). Second, the measures have focused narrowly on specific types of autocracy promotion, of which conflict export is one relatively ignored type. I argue that non-state armed groups play one important role in the promotion of autocratic ideologies.¹ With regard to causes of conflict export, there have been multiple proposed causes with considerable empirical evidence and much can be explained by existing theories. But there are still gaps with many scholars suggesting but not exploring some sort of ideological effect. I argue that the promotion of autocratic ideologies is a root cause in some unexplained cases and a conditional contributor in others.

Ideology and autocracy promotion Why should ideology result in autocracy promotion? It is commonly expected that dictators will enact domestic policies consistent with their ideological type (Albertus and Gay, 2017). Some ideologies have transnational goals that call for promoting their specific brand of autocracy abroad, implicitly or explicitly. So, it should not be surprising to find dictators enacting foreign policies to support ideological goals as well. In the case of interstate conflict, this results in doctrinal wars (Jackson, 2006). It may also result in conflict export or cooperative behavior. For example, Marxism and related branches of socialism call for assistance to those engaged in class conflict and anti-imperialism (Sanchez-terry et al., 2002). This is the motive, but what is the mechanism? One possibility is that the leader is himself a true

¹It would clearly be a mistake to paint too broad conclusions about autocracy promotion with the results on conflict export alone as well. Rather, this is part of a broader project examining several methods of autocracy promotion including interstate conflict (Hanna, *ibid*).

believer as in the cases of Pol Pot or Hitler (Weerdesteijn, 2015). I argue that ideology upsets the domestic balance of power and creates new incentives for leaders to act abroad. Specifically the use of radical and transformative ideology to build and legitimate the regime erodes the power of civil society and formal institutional constraints (Hanna, 2021a). This increases the relative power of ideological support groups allowing them to demand action in support of their transnational goals, which are specifically demonstrated in the case of interstate conflict (Hanna, 2021b).

The role of non-state armed groups Conflict is so costly that, barring information problems and commitment issues, any rationalist state would prefer it to war. Yet, utility maximizing leaders acting as agents of domestic audiences have distinct incentives not explained by a unitary actor model Fearon (1995). One of these is the incentive to promote their autocratic ideologies to satisfy a particular domestic audience cost (Hanna, 2021b). It follows that the less costly means of conflict export may also be used as well. The basic hypothesis that follows if transformative ideology incentivizes autocracy promoting conflict export is ***H1: Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will have an increased incidence of conflict export compared to regimes without a transformative ideology, all else equal.*** The associated null hypotheses is ***H0: Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will have the same incidence of conflict export as other regimes, all else equal.***

The messianic autocrat Is autocracy promotion generally, and promotion by conflict export specifically, limited to *messianic autocrats* pursuing *missionary ideologies* as referred to by Weyland (ibid)? The messianic autocrat explanation falls in the first of Fearon's two non-rationalist explanations for conflict - irrational state leaders (Fearon, 1995). There is not yet a perfect measure of the messianic autocrat type. However, if autocracy promotion is limited to messianic autocrats and not the result of rational leaders responding to ideological demands of supporters, this should be associated with both a leader centered regime legitimation and a radically transformative ideology. If this is the case, we should expect to see two things. First, regimes which are heavily centered

on leader personality should be more involved in conflict export, all else equal. ***H2: Regime legitimation by the leader will have a positive effect on support of non-state armed groups all else equal.***

There are, of course, other explanations for the effects of both leadership centric regimes and ideology on conflict export which may affect conflict export in either direction. A messianic autocrat will have both qualities, a personality centric regime and a missionary ideology. So, the second thing we should expect to see is a positive effect in the presence of both a leader centric regime and a radical ideology. The stronger hypothesis if it is primarily messianic autocrats who are responsible for autocracy promotion through conflict export is: ***H2a: Regime legitimation by the leader will have a positive interaction effect with transformative ideology on support of non-state armed groups.***

Ideological and autocratic alignment My theory poses that autocracy promoting ideologues fall in the another category noted by Fearon (ibid.), rational leaders who act as agents of domestic audiences. Specifically, the ideological autocracy promoter is driven by the transnational demands of his core supporters. Promoting ideology is the primary motive; promoting autocracy may be a secondary, instrumental concern. That is, the autocratic ideologue is likely to conceive of the success of social transformation depending on the autocratic methods of his own domestic political experience. If so, he will be inclined to promote a narrower, specifically autocratic version of his ideology. For example, he may promote revolutionary Marxism over democratic socialism. Further, he may be opposed to providing ideological opponents with autocratic power or allowing for competition from democratic ideologies. The Marxist dictator is unlikely to support a fascist terrorist group except for strategic reasons and may hesitate to support a democratic socialist insurgency. For the ideological autocracy promoter, we should see alignment with non-state armed groups on two points: ideology and desire for an authoritarian regime type. Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will support non-state armed groups which promote a similar ideology

and an authoritarian regime type. ***H3: Regimes which promote a transformative autocratic ideology will be more likely to support non-state armed groups which promote an autocratic version of a similar ideology, all else equal.***

Because ideology is the overriding objective, and autocracy is instrumental, the autocratic ideologue may support ideologically similar groups which do not promote autocracy. If there are strategic or economic incentives, such as weakening ideological opponents, for conflict export, similarity in ideology should be a secondary motivator in choosing specific groups to support. I hypothesize that: ***h3a: Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will be more likely to support non-state armed groups with similar ideology, all else equal.***

Because autocracy is instrumental and ideology is the primary motivation, other strategic considerations will outweigh pure autocracy promotion in many cases. The autocratic ideologue will be especially unwilling to promote autocratic power for ideological opponents without clear short term interests that will be quickly discarded, as in the less than two year life of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact allying the Nazis and Soviets against the West. So, support for autocratic NAGs is highest when ideologies align or when strategic interests align. With two potential motives for autocratic ideologues to support autocratic NAGs, I hypothesize that ***H3b: Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will be more likely to support non-state armed groups which promote an autocratic regime type, all else equal.***

Research Design

Data

Explanatory Variables Data on the explanatory variables come from the Varieties of Democracy (VDem) Project, Jeff Colgan's Revolutionary Leaders Dataset (RDS) (Coppedge et al., 2019)(Colgan,

2012), and the Non-State Armed Groups Database (NAGs) San Akca (2015).

For the variable *Transformative Ideology*, I created a continuous variable using the *Ideology* variable, *v2exl_legitideol*, from VDem and the *categorieschanged* variable from the RDS. The Ideology variable is a continuous measure of the degree to which a regime relies on an ideology for legitimation. The *categorieschanged* variable measures the number of policies and institutions, from a total of seven possibilities, changed during the leader's tenure. Colgan has a binary variable for radicalism which usually requires that three or more of the policies changed during the leader's tenure. I wanted something closer to a continuous variable for this purpose and did not want to ignore the difference in radicalism between the minimal three changes and five, six or seven changes. As a first step to creating the new variable, I normalized both base variables to a unit scale. I then multiplied the normalized variables to gain a new, continuous variable with a range of zero to one. The VDem Project also offers variables based on five different specific ideologies: nationalism, socialism/communism, conservative/restorative, autonomist/separatist, and religious. I repeated the process to produce five new variables: Radical Nationalist, Radical Socialist, Radical Restorative (an extreme conservative ideology could not be transformative), Radical Autonomist/Separatist, and Radical Religious. To distinguish democracies from nondemocracies, I used a dummy variable from the RDS.

To quantify the degree to which a regime was leader-centric, I used a measure from VDem, *Person of the Leader* or *v2exl_legitlead*, which measures the degree to which the regime relies on the personal qualities of the leader for legitimation. That is, it measures the degree to which the leader's charisma, leadership skills, or perceived exceptional qualities legitimize the state. This is a better measure of the influence of the leader than other measures of personalist regime type, which typically measure the degree of constraints on the leader. Though the two are strongly correlated this variable measures something distinct in the degree of influence of the leader.

Several variables for characteristics of individual non-state armed groups come from the NAGS data. The measure of religious group ideology comes from the *Identity of NAG*, *NAGID*, variable, which has codes for no ID, ethno-nationalist, religious, leftist, and other which I converted to binary measures for each specific type. The measure of autocratic ideology relied on the *Objective of NAG* variable, *NAGObj*, which has codes for toppling the regime, change from autocracy to democracy or vice versa, demands for autonomy, secession/territorial demand, policy demand, or other. I created a binary variable for *Autonomist-Separatist Armed Group* based on the autonomy or secession/territorial objectives. For *Leftist Armed Groups*, I used the NAGS variable *NAGLeft*. For religious armed groups, I also use the variable *NAGLeft*, which indicates a group that seeks to establish a theocracy, as an alternative to the *NAGObj* variable.

Dependent Variables Data on the dependent variables, support for insurgencies and sponsorship of terrorism, will use the Non-State Armed Groups Database (NAGs). NAGs collects data on 9 types of state support to almost 500 non-state armed groups from 1946 to 2010. The Non-State Armed Groups in the data include both insurgencies and terrorist groups. It is not the purpose of the data set or this research to equate the two morally. Rather, they share similar characteristics as alternatives to achieving state's conflict goals through conflict export rather than more costly and risky direct conflict. In addition to types of support, data on the ideological types of the non-state groups is included. The data is organized primarily in triads of target state, supporting state, and non-state group. Several variations of monadic and dyadic data is also available organized by supporting country, target country, and armed group San Akca (2015).

I operationalize the conflict export variable in two ways. First, I examine the overall level of support for non-state armed groups using a count variable, the number of non-state armed groups receiving financial support from the supporting state, *Num_S_FinAid*, from the NAGS monadic data. I use this simple, unambiguous measure because financial support is a costly signal of regime support. As such it serves two functions. First, it constitutes a hard test of regime

support because it sends a signal of support to the group, the state's allies, and its adversaries. Second, it provides a costly signal of support to the regimes ideological supporters, in line with the theoretical justification for ideological autocracy promotion.

Second, I operationalize the level of support for armed groups with similar ideologies and autocratic regime change goals using a dummy variable for *active support*. I derived this variable from the NAGS triadic data for Financial Support, *S_FinAid*, and Weapons and Logistic Aid, *S_WeaponLog*. If a state provided either financial or weapons/logistic support, they were classified as providing active support to the group in question. This level of support was sufficient to send a costly signal of support, while not holding the same degree of cost or risk as providing boots on the ground in the form of troops or advisors.

Control variables Because the great power politics of the Cold War involved ideologically labeled alliances, I used a dummy variable for the period 1947-1991 to control for effects of the Cold War. I controlled for military capability using the *cinc* variable from RDS, which is the Composite Index of National Capabilit Score originally drawn from the Correlates of War Project National Material Capabilities Data (Dutka et al., 2005). This measure is a unit scale representation of the state's percent of the total system (world) capabilities combining six elements including military, economic, and population variables. The values range from a minimum of 0.00003 to a maximum of 0.38386 with the third quantile at 0.00699, so very small changes actually represent rather large political and economic differences. I included a control for percentage Muslim population from RDS, to isolate the effects of religious ideology from the effects of religion *per se*. Additionally work by Walter (2017) indicates that most recent civil wars are in majority Muslim nations, creating a possible confounding effect. Country fixed effects and GDP per capita are addressed in the robustness checks.

Models

Ideology and leadership hypotheses

The null hypothesis is *H0: Leadership ideology and leadership style will have no effect on conflict export, as measured by support for insurgencies or state sponsorship of terrorism*. I expect that incentives created by ideological support groups with transnational goals will encourage leaders to engage in conflict export in support of those goals. For hypotheses *H1: Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will have an increased incidence of conflict export*, I will examine the relationship of the dependent variable number of non-armed groups supported, *Num_S_FinAid*, to the main explanatory variable *Transformative Ideology*.

Num_S_FinAid, the dependent variable for the first hypothesis, is a count of the number of NAGS supported by the state with the distribution in Figure 1. The variance is 1.554937 and the mean is 0.8380821. This plus a formal test of overdispersion indicated the data was overdispersed, making a normal Poisson regression inappropriate (Winkelmann, 2000). A negative binomial model will be used to examine the effects. If the hypothesis is correct, *Transformative Ideology* should have a positive effect on *Num_S_FinAid*.

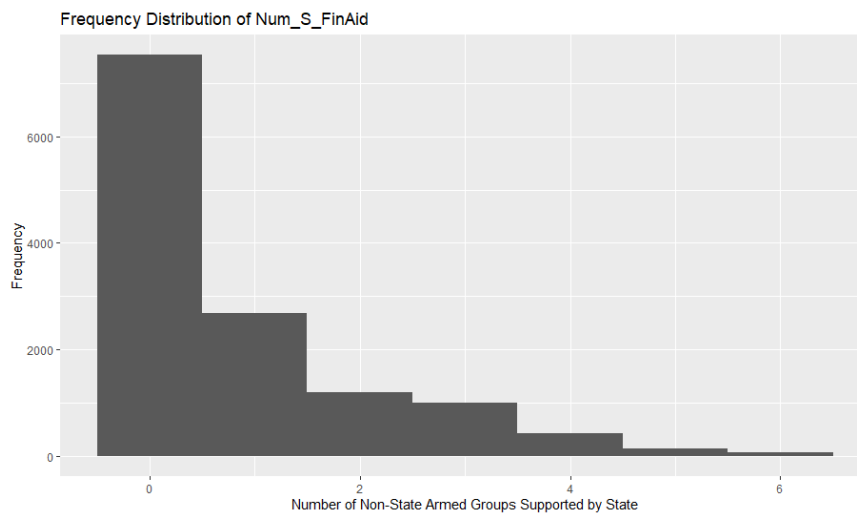


Figure 1

H2 The first messianic autocrat hypothesis **H2: *Regime legitimation by the leader will have a positive effect on support of non-state armed groups all else equal.*** will be tested with a negative binomial model with number of non-armed groups support, *Num_S_FinAid*, as the dependent variable and regime legitimation by *Person of the Leader* as the explanatory variable.

H2a The second messianic autocrat hypothesis **H2a: *Regime legitimation by the leader will have a positive interaction effect with transformative ideology on support of non-state armed groups.*** will be tested with a negative binomial model with number of non-armed groups support, *Num_S_FinAid*, as the dependent variable. *Transformative Ideology* and *Person of the Leader* will be the independent variables, with an interaction effect included. If the hypothesis is true, the interaction of *Transformative Ideology* and *Person of the Leader* should have a positive effect on *Num_S_FinAid*.

Ideological and Autocratic Alignment

H3 To test the hypothesis, **H3: *Regimes which promote a transformative autocratic ideology will be more likely to support non-state armed groups which promote a similar autocratic ideology, all else equal,*** the dependent variable will be the binary variable for Active Support of Non-state Armed Groups, *activesupport*. Explanatory variables will be the matching ideology type for the state and the NAGS, such as *Leftist Armed Group* or *Autonomist-Separatist Armed Group*, and the *Objective of NAG* variable for an autocratic regime change objective. To capture the difference between ideologies generally and their autocratic versions specifically, an interaction effect for the ideology and autocratic objective variables will be used. I will use a logit model to test this hypothesis. For the current research, I will examine the hard case of *Radical Socialist* states, which did not have an autocracy promotion effect in conflict and *Religious Ideologies* which did have a positive effect in conflict.

H3a The hypothesis that *h3a: Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will be more likely to support non-state armed groups with similar ideology, all else equal*, will be tested with the dependent variable *activesupport* and the explanatory variables *Leftist Armed Group* and *Autonomist-Separatist Armed Group*. To capture the relationship between the state and group ideology, an interaction effect will be used. The test will use a logit model.

H3b The hypothesis *H3b: Regimes which promote a transformative ideology will be more likely to support non-state armed groups which promote an autocratic regime type, all else equal*, will be tested using the dependent variable *activesupport* and the dependent variable *Objective of NAG* for change to autocracy. To test the combined effect, an interaction effect for the main explanatory variables will be used. The test will use a logit model.

Results

Ideology and leadership effects

Transformative ideology has a positive effect on the number of NAGs supported by a state and the effect is significant at the .01 level (Table 1, Model 1). The null hypothesis is rejected. For a one unit change in *Transformative Ideology*, the log of the expected count of Non-State Armed Groups receiving financial support is expected to change by 1.904, all other factors held constant. Democracy has a negative effect, significant at the .05 level. A change from autocracy to democracy decreases the expected log count of NAGS Receiving Financial Support fell by 0.242 in this model, all other factors held constant. Military capability has a positive effect on the dependent variable, significant at the .01 level. A unit change in this value is less meaningful because the minimum and maximum are only a small fraction of the unit interval. The difference between the minimum and maximum values for *cinc* would cause a shift of 5.44 in the log count of NAGS Receiving Financial Support, all other factors held constant. The proportion of Muslim

population, measured from 0 to 1, had a positive effect, significant at the .01 level. An increase of 1% in the Muslim population would cause an increase in the log count of NAGS Receiving Financial Support of 0.0878, all else held constant.

The effect of Regime Legitimation by the *Person of the Leader* was small, the opposite direction predicted by the hypothesis, and not significant at the .05 level (Table 1, Model 2). For hypothesis H2, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The effects of the control variables were similar to Model 1, with democracy's effect doubled and significance at the .01 level in this case. The interaction effect between *Transformative Ideology* and *Person of the Leader* was negative, the opposite of the hypothesis prediction, and not significant at the .05 level. The null hypothesis could not be rejected for hypothesis H2. The data do not support the concept of a *messianic autocrat* driving conflict export.

Authoritarian Politics and Conflict Export: Autocratic Ideology Promotion

Table 1: Hypotheses H1, H2, and H2a

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Number of NAGS Receiving Financial Support		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Transformative Ideology	1.904*** (0.180)		2.166*** (0.326)
Regime Legitimation by Leader's Personal Qualities		-0.029 (0.038)	-0.116*** (0.044)
Military Capabilities	14.173*** (0.703)	14.330*** (0.759)	14.372*** (0.714)
Democracy (dummy)	-0.242** (0.104)	-0.558*** (0.124)	-0.429*** (0.129)
Proportion Muslim Population	0.878*** (0.105)	1.085*** (0.111)	0.978*** (0.111)
Ideology * Leadership Legitimation (interaction)			-0.069 (0.155)
Constant	-1.952*** (0.098)	-1.748*** (0.098)	-1.935*** (0.099)
Observations	2,987	2,992	2,986
Log Likelihood	-2,013.160	-2,064.573	-2,005.090
θ	1.001*** (0.120)	0.806*** (0.093)	1.011*** (0.124)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	4,038.320	4,141.146	4,026.179

Note: Cold War omitted for space

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Ideology and Autocratic Alignment

The findings for radical socialist states and leftist armed groups are a significant, positive support for Leftist Armed Groups (Table 2, Models 1 and 2); significant, negative support for Autocratic Armed Groups (Model 1); and a significant, negative interaction effect between Radical Socialist state, Leftist Armed Group, and Autocratic Armed Group combined. The null hypothesis can not be rejected for Hypothesis 3 in the case of Radical Socialist states. Radical socialist states are less likely to support autocratic, leftist armed groups, all other factors held constant. Hypothesis 3a is also rejected. Radical socialist states are significantly more likely to support Leftist Armed Groups, as shown by the interaction effect in Model 2, and confirmed in Model 1. A unit change in radical socialism, which would reflect a complete shift, will increase the probability of a state supporting a Leftist Armed Group by about 51.2%, all other factors constant.

Transformative ideology generally has a significant, positive effect on support for Autocratic NAGS based on the interaction effect (Table 2, Model 3). A unit change, or complete switch, in Transformative Ideology will increase probability of the state supporting an Autocratic NAG by about 52.6%. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2: Hypotheses H3, H3a, and H3b

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	activesupport		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Radical Socialist	-0.053*** (0.018)	0.023 (0.017)	
Leftist Armed Group	-0.078*** (0.007)	-0.052*** (0.005)	
Transformative Ideology			0.023 (0.015)
Autocratic NAG	-0.047*** (0.006)		-0.038*** (0.006)
Radical Socialist * Leftists NAG (interaction)	0.065** (0.026)	0.048** (0.020)	
Radical Socialist* Autocratic NAG (interaction)	0.407*** (0.042)		
Leftist*Autocratic NAG (interaction)	0.078*** (0.011)		
Radical Socialist* Leftist*Autocratic NAG (interaction)	-0.306*** (0.049)		
Transformative Ideology* Autocratic NAG (interaction)			0.146*** (0.021)
Constant	0.067*** (0.006)	0.059*** (0.006)	0.046*** (0.006)
Observations	11,888	11,925	10,625
Log Likelihood	38.628	-41.399	122.370
Akaike Inf. Crit.	-53.255	98.798	-228.741

Note: Controls omitted for space

For religious ideologies I tested hypothesis H3, that autocratic states support groups with a similar autocratic ideology, using two alternative measurements (Table 3, Models 1 and 2). The Radical Religious State, Religious NAG, Autocratic NAG combination interaction had a positive, statistically significant effect on likelihood of state support for the NAG. The combination increased the probability that the state would support the NAG by 64.04%, all other factors being equal (Model 1). In Model 2, I used the alternative measure and found that there was a positive, significant effect for the interaction between Radical Religious state and Theocratic NAG. The effect was significant at the .01 level. The combination increased the probability that the state would support the NAG by 52.5%. The null hypothesis was rejected for hypothesis H3 for religious ideology on both measures.

Model 3 is a test of hypotheses H3a, that states will support NAGs with similar ideologies independent autocratic leanings, for religious states. The interaction effect shows a negative relationship between Religious NAGs and support from Radical Religious states, the opposite of the predicted effect. The result is not significant at the .05 level with a t-statistic of -1.405. The null hypothesis is not rejected for Radical Religious ideology for H3a.

Table 3

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	activesupport		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Radical Religious Ideology	0.127*** (0.021)	0.051*** (0.018)	0.104*** (0.020)
Religious NAG	0.100*** (0.011)		0.024*** (0.007)
Autocracy Promoting NAG	0.001 (0.006)		
Theocracy Promoting NAG		0.002 (0.007)	
Religious Ideology* Religious NAG (interaction)	-0.362*** (0.048)		-0.039 (0.028)
Radical Religious* Autocratic NAG (interaction)	-0.192*** (0.057)		
Religious NAG* Autocratic NAG (interaction)	-0.106*** (0.014)		
Radical Religious* Religious NAG * Autocratic NAG (interaction)	0.577*** (0.075)		
Radical Religious * Theocratic NAG (interaction)		0.101*** (0.028)	
Constant	0.040*** (0.006)	0.046*** (0.006)	0.043*** (0.006)
Observations	11,905	11,932	11,907
Log Likelihood	-21.211	-75.015	-87.928
Akaike Inf. Crit.	66.422	166.030	191.856

Note: Controls omitted for space

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Authoritarian Politics and Conflict Export: Autocratic Ideology Promotion

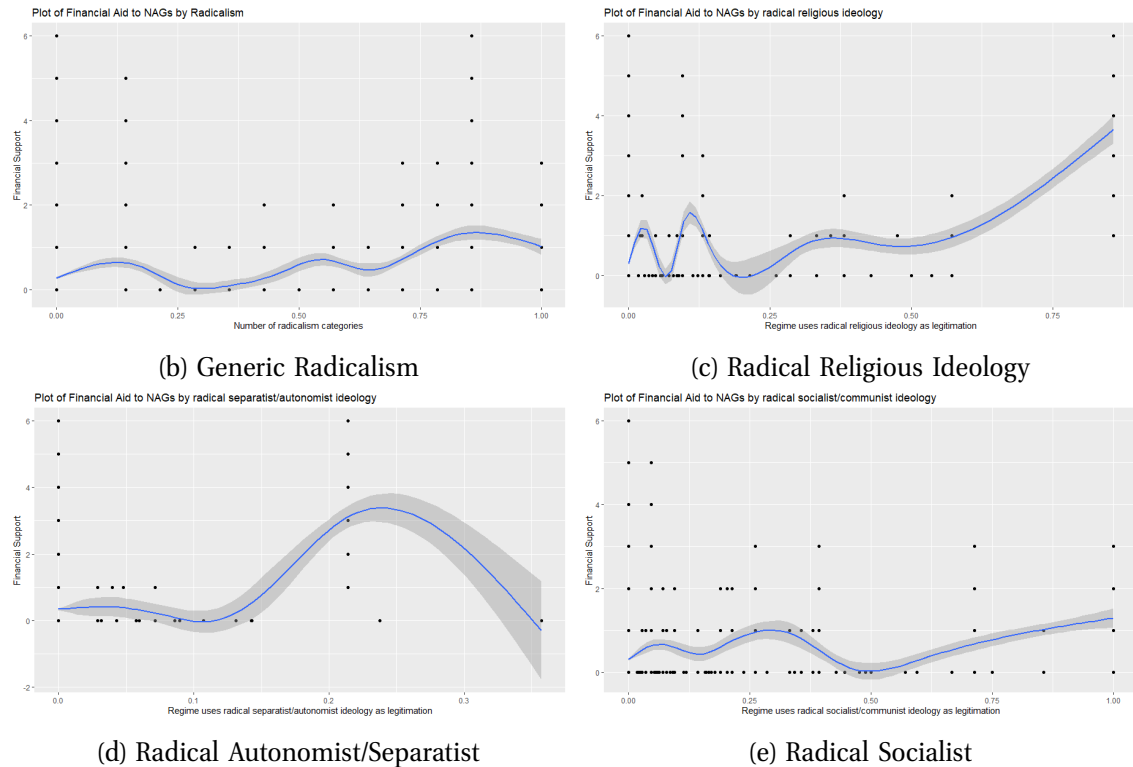


Figure 2: Radical Ideologies vs. Financial Support for NAGs

An interesting result is that the results on hypotheses H3 and H3a were opposite for Radical Socialist and Radical Religious ideologies. In models of the ideologies with controls run for comparison, every ideology except Radical Restorative was associated with an increased likelihood of support for conflict export (See Table 4). This is different than the results for interstate conflict, where only Radical Nationalist and Radical Religious ideologies were associated with increased risk of conflict Hanna (2021b). It's also interesting to note that the relationships are nonlinear and non-monotonic [See Figure 2]. This, along with the issues I discuss in the next subsection indicate that more sophisticated analysis will be useful to parse the differences.

Data treatment and methods questions

Like a number of other studies, I chose to treat the full range of regime types controlling for democracy. This may not be the best approach for separating out the effect of behaviors

specific to autocracy. There is a high association between the *Transformative Ideology* variable and nondemocratic regime type, with 2866 observations of *Transformative Ideology* above the mean value in nondemocracies and only 26 observations in democracies, out of 13,056 observations total. Still, questions remain that might be better answered by only looking at the subset of clear autocracies. First, it's not clear that democracy promotion is as highly tied to ideology as is autocracy promotion, since anecdotally at least democracies do seem interested in generic democracy promotion. Second, hybrid regimes are coded as nondemocracies but lack incentives to engage in autocracy promotion.

Methodologically, there are two related challenges: rare events and excess zeroes. Out of 13,056 observations, 12,160 had zero active support for non-state armed groups in the larger dataset, making active support a rare occurrence. In the count data, 3,285 out of 4,236 cases had zero armed groups supported, a case of excess zeroes. Rare events issues where a large portion of the dependent variable can be explained by existing theories or some unobserved variable captured by fixed effects can make it hard to distinguish even rarer causes Beck, Zeng and King (2000). In this case, *cinc*, which contains elements of military, economic, and population resources, was the single most important predictor of conflict export in every model. It is also highly correlated with country fixed effects (CFE), as are several other of the dependent, explanatory, and control variables. The related issue of excess zeroes in count data indicate a two-stage process is at play, in which some *hurdle* level must be passed for any occurrence, while a second stage process determines the variation in counts above one. Use of hurdle models as describe by King (1989) can yield more clarity as to the specific factors separating the zero cases with no support for NAGs from the one-plus cases with varying levels of support.

Robustness checks

Alternative measures Alternative measures of democracy from VDem had similar results with no effect on significance or direction compared to the RDS dummy variable. Because of the issues noted above with the high degree of multicollinearity between country fixed effects and several other variables, I did not use CFE in the primary models. I did include CFE as robustness checks for the significant logistic regression models and the models held at a minimum 95% confidence level.

Conclusion

Autocratic ideology promotion does not explain most support for non-state armed groups, much of which has already been explained and some of which is the result of still latent variables, but it is an important factor. It is not merely a conditional or secondary effect, but a significant explanation of conflict export cases in its own right. Given that other factors, such as strategic interests and alliances, explain so much, the role of ideology promotion is also masked to some extent. It is important to consider the small but statistically significant role of ideology for three reasons. First, there have previously been nebulous assertions that ideology plays some sort of conditional role in conflict export, and this research gives empirical justification to that view. Second, though it explains a small number of cases, ideology promotion as a primary motive fills in some of the unexplained gaps in existing explanations for conflict export. Finally, the case of conflict export provides further evidence for autocratic ideology promotion that has not been included in narrower considerations of autocracy promotion.

While these results show a clear relationship between transformative ideology and conflict export, work remains to further clarify ideology's role as a driver of disputes versus an incidental condition and the differences between ideologies. Conflict research offers some paths forward.

The Militarized Interstate Disputes data classifies states as *revisionist* if their demands seek to change the status quo. The revisionist states are then classified according to the types of changes they seek, including territorial and policy changes (Kenwick et al., 2013). In examining autocracy promotion through direct conflict, the *policy revisionist* classification offers a strong indicator that disputes are ideologically driven (Hanna, 2021b). A similar classification of conflict export cases is beyond the scope of the current research, but would be a useful avenue of future research. Additionally, as noted in the results section, use of hurdle models to further clarify the process driving the divide between complete non-supporters and supporters would add to the understanding.

An important finding from this research is that conflict export for autocracy promotion is utility maximizing and ideology driven, not irrational or personality driven. This does not mean that personality driven regimes never engage in autocracy promotion and it does not mean that particular messianic leaders, Pol Pot or Hitler, were instead calculating rationalists. It does indicate that the messianic leader is not a sufficient category to drive the data on conflict export generally or to account for the effect of ideology on conflict export specifically. Put another way, it lends further credence to the idea that ideology's effects on conflict export by autocrats are driven by incentives on the leader from their ideological supporters, and not from the leader's status as true believer or madman.

Table of ideologies plus controls for comparison

Table 4

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	activesupport				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
msocialist	0.039*** (0.010)				
mnationalist		0.030*** (0.010)			
mautonomist			0.545*** (0.069)		
mreligious				0.091*** (0.014)	
mconservative					-0.088*** (0.029)
cinc	0.285*** (0.048)	0.300*** (0.048)	0.288*** (0.048)	0.290*** (0.048)	0.281*** (0.048)
muslim	0.032*** (0.006)	0.027*** (0.006)	0.020*** (0.006)	0.017*** (0.006)	0.027*** (0.006)
dem	-0.028*** (0.005)	-0.029*** (0.005)	-0.032*** (0.005)	-0.030*** (0.005)	-0.038*** (0.005)
coldwar	0.011** (0.005)	0.013*** (0.005)	0.015*** (0.005)	0.015*** (0.005)	0.013*** (0.005)
Constant	0.043*** (0.006)	0.044*** (0.006)	0.047*** (0.005)	0.046*** (0.005)	0.053*** (0.006)
Observations	11,942	11,942	11,942	11,942	11,942
Log Likelihood	-91.554	-93.779	-66.997	-78.468	-93.927
Akaike Inf. Crit.	195.108	199.558	145.994	168.936	199.854

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

References

- Akca, Belgin San. 2009. "Supporting Non-State Armed Groups: A Resort to Illegality?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32(4):589–613.
URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390902987012>
- Albertus, Michael and Victor Gay. 2017. "Unlikely Democrats: Economic Elite Uncertainty under Dictatorship and Support for Democratization." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(3):624–641. ISBN: 1540-5907.
- Bader, Julia, Jörn Grävingsholt and Antje Kästner. 2010. "Would autocracies promote autocracy? A political economy perspective on regime-type export in regional neighbourhoods." *Contemporary Politics* 16(1):81–100. ISBN: 1356977100359.
- Beck, Nathaniel, Langche Zeng and Gary King. 2000. "Improving Quantitative Studies of International Conflict : A Conjecture." *American Political Science Review* 94(1):21–35.
- Berkowitz, Jeremy M. 2018a. "Delegating Terror: Principal-Agent Based Decision Making in State Sponsorship of Terrorism." *International Interactions* 44(4):709–748. Publisher: Routledge.
URL: <http://ezproxy.lib.uh.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=syh&AN=132044040&site=ehost-live>
- Berkowitz, Jeremy Matthew. 2018b. *Dangerous Delegation: Explaining the Rationales and Outcomes of State Sponsorship of Terrorism through the Principal-agent Framework* Ph.D. State University of New York at Binghamton United States – New York: . ISBN: 9780355951080.
URL: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2043474152/abstract/BE42E4B769624998PQ/1>
- Burnell, Peter. 2010. "Promoting Democracy and Promoting Autocracy:Towards a Comparative Evaluation." *Promoting Democracy Abroad* 3(2):269–293.
- Burnell, Peter. 2011. *Is There a New Autocracy Promotion?* In *Promoting Democracy Abroad*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Colgan, Jeff. 2012. "Measuring Revolution." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 29(4):444–467.
- Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Staffan I Lindberg, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Frida Andersson, Michael Bernhard, M Steven Fish and Adam Glynn. 2019. "V-Dem codebook V9." Retrieved August (April):2016.
- de la Torre, Carlos. 2017. "A Populist International?: ALBA's Democratic and Autocratic Promotion." *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 37(1):83–93.

- Dutka, Diane, Faten Ghosn, C Bradley and Dan Jones. 2005. "Correlates of War Project National Material Capabilities Data Documentation Last update : May 2005." *Technology* 0(May).
- Einzenberger, Rainer and Wolfram Schaffar. 2018. "The political economy of new authoritarianism in Southeast Asia." *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* 11(1):1-12.
- Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3):379-414. Publisher: [MIT Press, University of Wisconsin Press, Cambridge University Press, International Organization Foundation].
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706903>
- Gerring, John. 1997. "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis." *Political Research Quarterly* 50(4):957-994. Publisher: [University of Utah, Sage Publications, Inc.].
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/448995>
- Grimm, Sonja. 2015. "European Democracy Promotion in Crisis: Conflicts of Objectives, Neglected External-Domestic Interactions and the Authoritarian Backlash." *Global Policy* 6(S1):73-82.
- Hanna, Tom. 2021a. "Authoritarian Leadership Politics and Constraints on the Executive: A Mediation Analysis of Ideology, Populism, and Civil Society." *unpublished working paper* .
- Hanna, Tom. 2021b. Autocratic Leadership Ideology and the Risk of Interstate Conflict: Ideological Supporters and Audience Costs. In *Midwest Political Science Association Conference 2021*.
- Jackson, Robert. 2006. "Doctrinal War : Religion and Ideology in International Conflict." *The Monist* 89(2):274-300.
URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27903980>Accessed:
- Kenwick, Michael R, Matthew Lane, Benjamin Ostick and Glenn Palmer. 2013. "Codebook for the Militarized Interstate Incident Data, Version 4." pp. 1-8. Publisher: Correlates of War Project.
URL: <https://correlatesofwar.org/>
- King, Gary. 1989. "Event Count Models for International Relations: Generalizations and Applications." *International Studies Quarterly* 33(2):123. ISBN: 2066316679.
- Paterson, Thomas G. 1988. *Meeting the Communist Threat: Truman to Reagan*. Oxford University Press.
- San Akca, Belgin. 2015. "Dangerous Companions: Cooperation between States and Nonstate Armed Groups (NAGs)." *Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey*. <https://www.armedgroups.net/data.html> 3(2010).
- San, Belgin. 2009. Non -state violence, supporters, and targets: State support of Non -state Armed Groups as a selection process Ph.D. University of California, Davis United States - California: . ISBN: 9781109357776.
URL: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304854206/abstract/2ED5240867A04414PQ/1>

- Sanchez-terry, Shannon, Mark Peceny, Caroline C. Beer and Shannon Sanchez-terry. 2002. "Dictatorial peace?" *American Political Science Review* 96(1):15–26. Publisher: University of Houston.
- von Soest, Christian. 2015. "Democracy prevention: The international collaboration of authoritarian regimes." *European Journal of Political Research* 54(4):623–638.
- Waite, Robert G. 1969. *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany 1918-1923*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Walter, Barbara F. 2017. "The New New Civil Wars." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20(1):469–486.
- Way, Lucan. 2016. "The Authoritarian Threat: Weaknesses of Autocracy Promotion." *Journal of Democracy* 27(1):64–75.
- Way, Lucan A. 2015. "The limits of autocracy promotion: The case of Russia in the 'near abroad'." *European Journal of Political Research* 54(4):691–706.
- Weerdesteijn, Maartje. 2015. "Stopping Mass Atrocities: Targeting the Dictator." *Politics and Governance* 3(3, 1, SI):53–66.
- Weyland, Kurt. 2013. "Latin America's Authoritarian Drift. The Threat from the Populist Left." *Journal of Democracy* 24(3):18–32. ISBN: 1086-3214.
URL: http://muse.jhu.edu/content/crossref/journals/journal_of_democracy/v024/24.3.weyland.html
- Winkelmann, Rainer. 2000. "Seemingly unrelated negative binomial regression." *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 62(4):553–560.
- Yakouchyk, Katsiaryna. 2019. "Beyond Autocracy Promotion: A Review." *Political Studies Review* 17(2):147–160.