Regime security and transnational threat in post-Cold War Africa

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Abstract

Structural adjustments since the 1980s, changes in the international system with the end of the Cold War, and the accompanying shifts in international norms have transformed the vulnerability of African states and altered the nature of conflicts and coups. In this context, what causes illegal and forced leader exits – coups and regime seizures by rebel groups, and why? I present a theory that emphasizes the connection between coups and conflicts and underscores the significance of transnational non-state actors, due to the vulnerabilities of African states. Specifically, the presence of foreign-mobilized rebels before the onset of an insurgency increases the likelihood of fatal consequences for regime leaders. The result suggests that threats to African leaders are not solely a product of domestic vulnerabilities but are also influenced by the vulnerabilities of neighboring countries and international hostilities.

Introduction

Max Weber defined the state as "the form of human community that (successfully) lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate physical violence within a particular territory" (Weber 2004, 33). Based on this definition, the state is intrinsically dependent on the military which is a state organ holding legitimate physical violence. On the contrary, however, the executive of the state needs to control the military adequately. How to solve this dilemma has been the fundamental question of civil-military relations (Feaver 1996).

In weak states, this dilemma takes the most extreme form. First, there exists a potential threat of a military coup due to the absence of established rule of law. Second, the risk of a rebel challenge is heightened by the lack of control over the territory. Furthermore, attempting to address one of these two risks increases the risk of the other. Threats from outside the regime increase the likelihood of a coup, and coup-proofing increase vulnerability

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to conflict.

Strengthening the military to put down an insurgency increases the military's ability to carry out a coup and increases the likelihood of military intervention in politics (Svolik 2013). Also, another study pointed out that that coups may occur when political leader and the military hold different beliefs about the threat facing the state (McMahon & Slantchev 2015). Civil wars increase the risk of coups as soldiers become more dissatisfied (Bell & Sudduth 2017). On the contrary, coup-proofing would weaken the military and increase the likelihood of a challenge by the rebels. Counterbalancing, which lowers the risk of a coup by creating parallel forces, such as presidential guards and gendarmerie, in addition to regular forces, increases the probability of conflict (Powell 2014; 2019). Ethnic exclusion within the regime for coup-proofing also increase the probability of civil war (Roessler 2016).

The link between conflict and coups has been studied, but there are some points that have not been elucidated. First, what types of insurgencies are more likely to trigger coups? Conflict can give room to the military to get some benefits through the conflict economy or corruption in arms trade. Thus, there is room for further exploration of what kind of rebel could cause more damage to the military and lead to a coup. Second, what causes divergent threat perceptions between political leader and the military? McMahon & Slantchev (2015) found that divergence in threat perceptions can cause coups. If that is the case, there is room for further exploration on what causes divergent threat perceptions.

In this paper, I argue that a type of rebel can cause a divergence in threat perception between the leader and the military and diminishes soldiers' welfare and creates uncertainty about the future of the state. Eventually, that heightened the probability of coups. I am particularly interested in rebel groups that mobilize abroad prior to the start of the insurgency. As these rebels are mobilized abroad before the insurgency begins, it is difficult to predict the scale of the insurgency in advance, and they tend to be more powerful, and they tend to be more powerful. This characteristic leads to underestimation by government leaders, which increases the wear and tear on the military and makes it easier to stage a coup.

Our theory assumes weak states that lack the ability to govern their territories and the rule of law, and that are tormented by the dangers of both conflict and coup. Post-Cold War Africa has been noted to have increased vulnerability on many fronts, which is consistent with the analytic focus of our theory. First, structural adjustment programs, notably by the IMF, demanding fiscal austerity and public sector downsizing, reduced resources for patronage networks, increasing coup risks and spawning new rebel groups (Casper 2017; Kaldor 2013; Reno 2011). Second, the Cold War's end diminished superpower involvement, shifting conflicts to weak government forces and rebel groups in sub-Saharan Africa (Kalyvas & Balcells 2010). On the contrary, government revenues increased since the 2000s, driven by

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the war on terror (Van de Walle 2010, 8-9). However, it has also been assessed as being less effective and failing to suppress Islamic extremism (Van de Walle 2010, 11-16; Kisangani & Pickering 2022, 73). Chinese aid and other forms of economic engagement were also sharply on the rise in Africa since the 2000s (Brautigam 2011). However, in recent years, the scale has been shrinking due to the slowdown of the Chinese economy. In addition, many countries that used to receive loans from China have defaulted on their debt due to financial crises, pandemics, and wars, and have come to rely on loans from the IMF with high conditionality (Kern & Reinsberg 2022), resulting in shorter tenures for their leaders (Kern et al. 2023).

This paper is organized as follows. In the next section, I review previous studies that focus on the linkage between conflict and coups and point out a research gap. To fill this research gap, Section 2 presents a theoretical model. Section 3 presents the research design for testing this theoretical model, and Section 4 describes the data used in the analysis. Section 5 presents the results of the analysis and some brief narratives, and final section concludes with theoretical implications.

Conflict-coup nexus

Traditionally, conflict and coups have been explained by separate theoretical frameworks. Conflict studies are commonly explained by analyzing structural factors (Fearon & Laitin 2003), as well as by supporting bargaining theory to explain the onset, duration, recurrence (Walter 2009). Similarly, coups have been subject to examination alongside the analysis of structural factors (Belkin & Schofer 2003; Powell 2012). Some studies approach coups as coordination games within the military, concentrating on the factors contributing to successful coordination (Singh 2014; Little 2017).

However, in weak states that are at risk of both conflict and coups, these two threats are inextricably linked, and the relationship is such that countermeasures against one threat increase vulnerability to the other. Understanding this linkage requires an analytical framework that integrates both conflict and coups. In recent years, an increasing number of studies have pointed to the linkage between coups and conflicts. Such studies include those that argue that conflict drives the occurrence of coups and those that argue that coup-proofing drives the occurrence of conflicts.

Studies using formal models suggest that reliance on the military to put down an insurgency increases the military's ability to intervene in politics, and the military's likelihood of intervening in politics is highest when the risk of insurgency is moderate (Svolik 2013). Also, while facing a powerful external threat in itself increases the military loyalty, research suggests that coups may occur when political and military elites hold different beliefs about

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the threat facing the state (McMahon & Slantchev 2015).

Furthermore, it has been noted that civil wars increase the risk of coups as soldiers become more dissatisfied (Bell & Sudduth 2017). There are also different pathways for the effect of such civil wars on the occurrence of coups: leaders responsible for initiating the conflict are more likely to face coups by those outside the regime center as the number of deaths on the battlefield increases, while leaders not responsible for initiating the conflict are more likely to face coups by those within the regime (Sudduth 2021). In addition to this, different types of challenges to the regime are said to trigger coups through different pathways, with terrorism prompting the occurrence of reshuffling coups and protests and insurgencies prompting the occurrence of regime change coups (Aksoy et al. 2015).

Thus, in addition to studies showing that conflict increases the probability of a coup, there are also studies showing that coup-proofing increase the probability of conflict.

Counterbalancing, which lowers the risk of a coup by creating parallel forces, such as presidential guards and gendarmerie, in addition to regular forces, increases the probability of conflict (Powell 2014; 2019). The division of ground forces through counterbalancing makes information sharing among units and joint operational actions difficult and undermines the commander's initiative and leadership that enables the creation of local advantages through maneuver in small, agile units and concentration of forces, which are important in combat, and the above actions (Pilster & Böhmelt 2011, 333-335).

Ethnic exclusion within the regime for coup-proofing also increase the probability of civil war (Roessler 2016). First, excluded ethnic groups naturally increase their discontent; second, regime leaders also lose information and support in areas heavily populated by excluded ethnic groups, thereby reducing their counterinsurgency capacity; and third, this cycle of exclusion and mobilization increases mutual distrust and exacerbates commitment problems.

Thus, the link between conflict and coups has been studied in the past, but there are some points that have not been elucidated. In particular, the claim that conflict increases the probability of a coup would require further exploration. Conflict is not always undesirable for the military, for in some cases it can become welcome, as it benefits the military through the conflict economy and the increased room for corruption associated with increased arms trade (Bareebe 2020). Indeed, it has been noted that peace agreements that undermine the military interests increase the likelihood of coups (White 2020; De Bruin 2024). Thus, there is room for further research on what types of insurgencies are more likely to trigger coups.

The effects of divergent threat perceptions between leaders and the military also require elaboration. McMahon & Slantchev (2015) found that when leaders underestimate external threats to the regime, they are safer from coups but more vulnerable to external

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enemies, and when they overestimate external threats to the regime, they are that the risk of a coup increases (306-307). However, in light of claims by Bell & Sudduth (2017) and others that civil war increases soldier discontent and leads to coups, underestimating threats outside the regime also increases the risk of coups. In other words, underestimating external threats may increase vulnerability to external threats, which may increase soldier dissatisfaction and lead to coups. And most importantly, it can be pointed out that what creates the divergence in threat perception between leaders and the military is unresolved.

In the next section, based on the above research gap, I will present a theory of what kind of insurgency creates a divergence in threat perception between leaders and the military, and how a leader's underestimation of external threats can increase soldier dissatisfaction and lead to the outbreak of a coup.

Theory

What types of rebels lead to more severe losses of soldiers and more discontent? And what creates divergence in threat perception between leaders and the military, leading to underestimation of rebellion? In this section, I present a theory that a certain type of rebels creates a divergence in threat perception between leaders and the military. This disparity in beliefs leads to a mismatch in resource allocation, resulting in increased soldier dissatisfaction and potentially paving the way for a coup.

First, what are the conditions under which a divergence in threat perception occurs? Possible conditions include the difficulty in predicting the strength of the insurgency and the likelihood that the threats faced are more severe than perceived by the leaders.

However, the difficulty of making predictions regarding the strength of an insurgency does not necessarily mean that only the military can obtain correct information in advance. Rather, the difficulty of prediction contributes to a divergence in threat perception after the insurgency begins. Since soldiers in the field actually engage in combat, the strength of the insurgency they face is directly related to the damage they will suffer. Therefore, the divergence in threat perception does not mean that soldiers can correctly recognize the strength of the insurgency in advance, but rather that they will quickly learn firsthand the strength of the insurgency after the insurgency begins.

In contrast, regime leaders make decisions based on information they receive indirectly and after considering various other factors. In addition to the potential for inaccuracies in the information transfer process, they will take great care not to reinforce the military more than necessary if there is a risk of a coup, and in a corrupt regime there may be incentives to engage in last-minute corruption in the name of increasing military spending

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(Bareebe 2020). If intelligence is functioning before the insurgency begins, and if some predictions can be made in advance about the scale of the insurgency, regime leaders will have more information to consider and will be more likely to make the right decisions. For example, it has been noted that some insurgencies develop from protests in urban areas (Uzonyi & Koren forthcoming), and if there are precursor events such as this, or if it is known that a large number of ethnic groups with growing discontent reside in the periphery of the country known, there would be less room for divergence in threat perception due to the wealth of information available prior to the start of the insurgency. However, if such predictions are difficult to make, they can contribute to divergent threat perceptions after the insurgency begins.

This divergence in threat perception is created by the difficulty of making predictions regarding the strength of the insurgency and the fact that the threat faced is actually more serious than perceived by leaders. The divergence in threat perception then makes it difficult to deploy adequate supplies and personnel to the field, thus reducing the effectiveness of counterinsurgency operations on the battlefield. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of creating conditions favorable to the insurgents and raises the risk of a coup by discontented military personnel.

So when is it that predictions about the strength of an insurgency are difficult to make, and when is the threat faced actually more serious than leaders perceive? This paper argues that rebels who mobilized more than a certain percentage of their forces abroad before the insurgency began are more likely to meet these two conditions. Rebels who move across borders are more difficult to gather information on in terms of intelligence, and the problem of information asymmetry is more likely to be pronounced (Slehyan 2009). In particular, rebels mobilized abroad before the rebellion begins have difficulty predicting the scale of the rebellion in advance, and delays in response make effective counterinsurgency operations difficult, and soldiers are likely to suffer heavy losses.

There are several specific types of such rebel groups. For example, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia in 1991, was supported by the Liberian rebel group The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). When the invasion began in 1991, the RUF consisted of a small core of members trained in Libya in 1987-88, lumpen Sierra Leoneans recruited in Liberia, and NPFL fighters on loan to the RUF (Abdullah 1998, 225-226). In the face of such an insurgency, the Sierra Leonean military failed to demonstrate effective counterinsurgency capabilities, leading to a coup by junior officers who were significantly frustrated on the battlefield (Zack-Williams & Riley 1993, 94-95).

The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), a Tuareg force in

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northern Mali that launched an insurgency in 2012, was largely composed of armed and experienced Tuareg soldiers returning from Libya following the fall of the Gaddafi regime (Ronen 2013, 554-555). In a coup in March 2012, after the uprising in northern Mali, the leader of the coup legitimized it by pointing to a dysfunctional public education system, irregularities in civil service recruitment, high costs of living, and joblessness, as well as the Malian state's failing campaign against northern separatist rebels, which had caused troops to lose confidence in their leadership (Whitehouse 2012, 94).

In addition, organizations that have already launched insurgencies in neighboring countries may expand and change targets and move their base of operations across borders. The Islamic extremist group al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), originally an Algerian rebel group, has expanded its targets to include the entire Islamic Maghreb, including Mali, and, due to increased military pressure in Algeria, has moved to Mali (Benjaminsen & Ba 2019, 5-7). Furthermore, when it merged with other Islamic extremists in 2017 to form Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), it later expanded its targets to Burkina Faso, Niger, and other countries. It has been noted that the coup in Burkina Faso in January 2022 was triggered by security concerns, including JNIM and other Islamic extremists[1].

Because these insurgent groups have already mobilized to some extent in foreign countries before launching their insurgency, they are difficult to predict in advance and are likely to be of a substantial size. This is likely to create the aforementioned divergence in threat perception and increases the likelihood that it will lead to a coup. Thus, the following hypotheses are derived.

H1: If challenged by rebels mobilized abroad prior to the start of the insurgency, the military soldiers are more likely to become disaffected, increasing the likelihood of a coup.

Moreover, since the actors in such coups are soldiers whose discontent is heightened by the conflict, they are more likely to be initiated by soldiers of relatively low rank than by military officials closer to the regime. On the contrary, senior military officials in the capital may in some cases be the actors on the side of underestimating the insurgency. For example, the April 1992 coup in Sierra Leone that followed the 1991 RUF uprising was initiated by a disgruntled young junior officer. In addition to the constraints imposed by the structural adjustment program, the Momoh regime at the time was unable to devote resources to

[1] ICG Q&A: The Ouagadougou Coup: A Reaction to Insecurity, 28 JANUARY 2022. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/burkina-faso/linsecurite-facteur-determinant-du-putsch-de-ouagadougou (last accessed 11 January 2024.)

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fighting the RUF because of corruption among high-ranking military officials, resulting in unpaid wages for soldiers, which has been pointed out as one factor that led to the coup d'etat (Reno 1995, 174).

Thus, the following hypotheses are derived.

H2: If challenged by rebels mobilized abroad prior to the start of the insurgency, the junior officers in the military are more likely to become disaffected, increasing the likelihood of a coup by junior officers.

Finally, consider the case in which underestimation of the insurgent threat leads to an insurgent seizure of power. An underestimation of the insurgent threat can lead to military vulnerability and heavy losses of soldiers. And when such vulnerability is significant, rebel seizure of power occurs, although it is a rare event. The occurrence of a coup and the seizure of power by rebels are not mutually exclusive events, but the occurrence of one event will have some impact on the probability of the other. Therefore, I will simplify the composition of the problem and consider the divergence as to whether a coup or a rebel seizure of power would occur if challenged by a foreign mobilized rebel group prior to the start of the rebellion.

The focus here is on the weakening of the military by coup-proofing. Coup-proofing are believed to essentially weaken the military. First, the rebel forces created as a result of purging and expelling a part of the military are stronger than general rebel forces; second, the fragmentation of the military through counterbalancing weakens the military; third, military resources are reduced and equipment becomes poorer; and fourth, the quality of military personnel declines because personnel are judged by loyalty, not competence. (Powell 2014, 331-332).

Regime seizures by rebel forces are fairly rare events. However, when the military is severely weakened due to these coup-proofing, underestimation of transnational rebels can lead to a fatal defeat on the battlefield, and the possibility of a rebel seizure of power becomes a reality. Thus, the following hypotheses are derived.

H3: *When challenged by rebels mobilized abroad prior to the start of the insurgency, if the military is significantly weakened by coup-proofing, a seizure of power by rebels is more likely to occur than a coup.*

Research design

In this paper, I test the theory presented in the previous section using country-year panel data

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for post-Cold War African countries. Our theory assumes weak states that lack the ability to govern their territories and the rule of law, and that are tormented by the dangers of both conflict and coup. Post-Cold War Africa has been noted to have increased vulnerability on many fronts, which is consistent with the analytic focus of our theory.

Several pathways have made African states more vulnerable to coups and conflicts in the post-Cold War period. First, the impact of structural adjustment programs, which have increased since 1980, such as those by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The structural adjustment programs, which demanded fiscal austerity and downsizing of the public sector, have led to a decrease in resources allocated to patronage networks. This has made it challenging to sustain the existing patronage network. The impact of these structural adjustment programs has been noted to have increased coup risks (Casper 2017) and the emergence of new types of rebel groups (Kaldor 2013, 79-90; Reno 2011, Ch. 5).

Second, the end of the Cold War led to a decline in superpower engagement. During the Cold War, conflicts were mainly fought between strong government forces and rebel groups with the support of superpowers. However, post-Cold War, there was a decline in superpower involvement, leading to an increase in conflicts involving both weak government forces and weak rebel groups, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Kalyvas & Balcells 2010). In addition, France, which had special relationships with former colonial powers and other countries with which it had interests, exerted a strong influence through its three pillars, the monetary regime, development assistance, and defense agreements or military assistance agreements. Nevertheless, following the end of the Cold War, French involvement dwindled, notably after 1994 (Clapham 1996, 93-95; Vallin 2015, 85-87).

In contrast, several factors have increased government revenues since the 2000s. One of these is the war on terror: the positioning of Africa as a key hub in the post-9/11 war on terror and the linking of development and security in that strategy has resulted in an increase in development aid with relaxed conditionality (Van de Walle 2010, 8-9). This increase in aid may have provided room for African leaders to distribute resources in a patronage network. On the flip side, however, the increased U.S. involvement in Africa was viewed with deep skepticism from many African countries, resulting in the establishment of the AFRICOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany (Kisangani & Pickering 2022, 69). It has also been assessed as being less effective and failing to suppress Islamic extremism (Van de Walle 2010, 11-16; Kisangani & Pickering 2022, 73).

In addition, Chinese aid and other forms of economic engagement were sharply on the rise in Africa since the 2000s (Brautigam 2011). However, in recent years, the scale has been shrinking due to the slowdown of the Chinese economy. AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0 shows that development finance flows from China

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to Africa in recent years peaked in 2016 and have been declining (Custer et al. 2023). In addition, many countries that used to receive loans from China have defaulted on their debt due to financial crises, pandemics, and wars, and have come to rely on loans from the IMF with high conditionality (Kern & Reinsberg 2022), resulting in shorter tenures for their leaders (Kern et al. 2023).

Data

Dependent variable

The dependent variable is a binary variable, whether or not a coup attempt occurred. Data are from the Colpus 1.1 Dataset (Chin & Kirkpatrick 2023), which is transparent because it provides comprehensive narratives of coup attempts and potential coup events for most countries except for a few microstates. In addition, it contains a wealth of information on the types of coups and the coup plotters. According to Colpus, a coup détat occurs when the incumbent ruling regime or leader is ousted (or a presumptive regime leader is blocked) from power due to concrete, observable, and unconstitutional actions by one or more current, active civilian or military members of the incumbent ruling regime (Chin et al. 2021, 1042). In this analysis, I exclude Non-Military Coups, as the focus is specifically on Military Coups. In aggregating the data to the country-year level, if more than one coup occurred in a year, I include in the data the one that occurred first if the outcome was the same, and the one that succeeded if the outcome was different.

In the analysis for H2, the dependent variable is whether the coup was carried out by junior officers or not, and for this I use the variable whether the coup was carried out by military officers of rank below Major, which is included in Colpus 1.1. Since this variable contained many missing values, I independently supplemented the missing values mainly from secondary literature and news media.

The independent variables included in the panel data cover the period 1989-2020, while the dependent variable is lagged by one year and thus covers the period 1990-2021. In the data aggregated to the country-year level, there are 82 samples with a dependent variable of 1, 39 coups by junior officers, and 43 coups by military personnel with higher rank than junior officers.

Independent variable

The independent variable of interest is the binary variable of whether a government is facing a conflict with rebels who have mobilized abroad at least a certain percentage before the insurgency began. To create this variable, I first created a list of rebel groups that rebelled

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against African governments during 1989-2020 from the UCDP Dyadic Dataset (Davies et al. 2022). In order to avoid overlap with the dependent variable, conflicts that developed from coups were identified as part of the Colpus and excluded from the list. Based on this list, I conducted our own coding based on the UCDP Encyclopedia and secondary sources. In this data, 60 of the 166 government-rebel combinations (about 36%) were coded as 1. This data was then aggregated to the country-year-level.

I also created a variable for the 126 government-rebel combinations coded 0 in this list, aggregated to the country-year level. To distinguish the conflict variable into two different variables, I can show that a rebels who have mobilized abroad at least a certain percentage before the insurgency began were particularly important, rather than the effect of the conflict in general. These two variables are not mutually exclusive, as they may be challenged by more than one insurgent group at the same time.

An important part of the argument of this paper is that the power of rebels who mobilized in a foreign country before the rebellion began is often difficult to predict or stronger than predicted. This does not simply mean that the rebel is strong; it is more important that it is stronger than predicted. Therefore, I also analyze a model that controls for the binary variable of whether the challenging rebel is stronger when the government is facing conflict. Here, I use the indicator of relative strength of the rebel contained in the Non-State Actor Data version 3.4 (Cunningham et al. 2009). If the relative strength of the insurgency in the NSA Data is coded as "parity," "stronger," or "much stronger," it is set to 1 and aggregated to the country-year level. In other words, the index is set to 1 if the country is challenged by a rebel whose relative strength is parity, stronger, or much stronger, and to 0 otherwise. However, since NSA Data version 3.4 only covers the period up to 2011, the model including this variable only covers the period 1989-2011. In addition, the correlation between this variable and the independent variable of interest is not high. In the data aggregated to the country-year level, there are 102 samples that are coded as being challenged by the transnational rebel, of which 19 are coded as being challenged by the strong rebel. Conversely, there are 46 samples that are coded as being challenged by strong insurgents, of which 19 are coded as being challenged by transnational rebel.

It is also conceivable that if the government is being challenged by a larger number of rebel groups, it may be more difficult for the government to cope with the challenge. Therefore, I also analyze a model in which I control for a variable that represents the number of rebels when the government is facing conflict. This variable was created from the UCDP Dyadic Dataset. It is 0 when there is no conflict, with a maximum value of 7 and a mean value of 0.31.

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Control variable

Coup-proofing is thought to reduce the probability of a coup. The most commonly used coup-proofing variable is the counterbalancing index (Böhmelt 2018). This indicator is the inverse of the Herfindahl index for the personnel share per organization of ground forces. In other words, the more the ground forces are divided among more organizations and with more equal personnel shares, the larger the number, which can be interpreted as a greater degree of counterbalancing. In the present sample of African countries for 1989-2020, the minimum value is 1, the maximum value is 4.44, and the mean value is 1.62.

There is also ethnic exclusion, which politically excludes certain ethnic groups as a coup-proofing (Roessler 2016). In this analysis, I use the Exclusion by Social Group index from V-Dem version 13 (Coppedge et al. 2023) as a proxy variable for the degree of ethnic exclusion. This variable is a continuous variable in the closed interval [0, 1] that is an indicator of the degree to which a particular ethnic, religious group, or other social group is politically excluded. In the present sample of African countries for 1989-2020, the minimum value is 0.1, the maximum value is 0.97, and the mean value is 0.53.

As indicators of capacity of the coup plotter, I also control for the natural logarithm of the number of military personnel and the natural logarithm of military spending per military personnel. These variables explain the idea that soldiers can be pacified by military expansion and generous spending and are therefore less likely (though better equipped) to carry out a coup attempt. These data were obtained from the National Material Capabilities version 6.0 (Singer 1987) of the Correlates of War project. However, this dataset only covers the period through 2016, so for the 2017-2020 data, I referred the Military Balance[2], published annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, which is referenced by the NMC as a data source, and supplemented independently.

In addition, I control for Freedom House's Civil Liberty Index and Political Right Index as the political regime indicators[3]. These variables are natural numbers with a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 7, with higher scores indicating more liberty. I also use the Military dimension index from V-Dem version 13 (Coppedge et al. 2023) as a measure of the leader's dependence on the military. This index is based on whether the "chief executive" was (a) appointed through a coup, rebellion or by the military, and (b) can be dismissed by the military. A continuous variable present in the closed interval [0, 1], with a minimum value of 0, a maximum value of 1, and a mean value of 0.26 for the present sample of African countries for 1989-2020. For variables related to the economy and country size, I control for the natural

[2] https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/tmib20 (last accessed 12 January 2024.)

[3] https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world (last accessed 12 January 2024.)

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logarithm of GDP per capita based on the 2015 U.S. dollar, GDP per capita growth rate, and the natural logarithm of population. These variables were obtained from World Bank data[4]. To account for the duration dependency, I include years after coup which measures how many years have passed since the previous coup attempt, and a square of years after coup.

Result

Because my dependent variable is dichotomous, all models are estimated using a logit model. Table 1 reports the results of five models. Model 1 includes my core explanatory variables and controls. Model 2 adds the country fixed effects. Model 3 includes controls, along with both country and year fixed effects. Model 4 includes controls, country and year fixed effects, and additionally controls the number of rebels. Finally, Model 5 examines controls, both country and year fixed effects, and also controls the strength of the rebel. The complete regression tables for all five models can be found in Appendix. I discuss each of my core explanatory variables in turn.

The coefficients for conflict with transnational rebel are positive and statistically significant at the $p < 0.1$ level across all five models, providing strong support for Hypothesis 1. Figure 1 shows that the predicted probability that a coup attempt will occur is four percentage points higher when a government is challenged by transnational rebel. The analysis shows that, after excluding samples with missing values, the coup occurred in 63 (about 4.6%) of the total sample of 1366, which is a relatively rare event. Thus, a 4% difference would not be a negligible number.

On the other hand, the coefficients of conflict for rebel groups that have launched domestic insurgencies are negative except in Model 4 and not statistically significant in all models. This result casts doubt on existing studies that conflict in general increases the likelihood of a coup and supports our argument that focuses on the importance of transnational insurgency.

[4] https://data.worldbank.org/ (last accessed 12 January 2024.)

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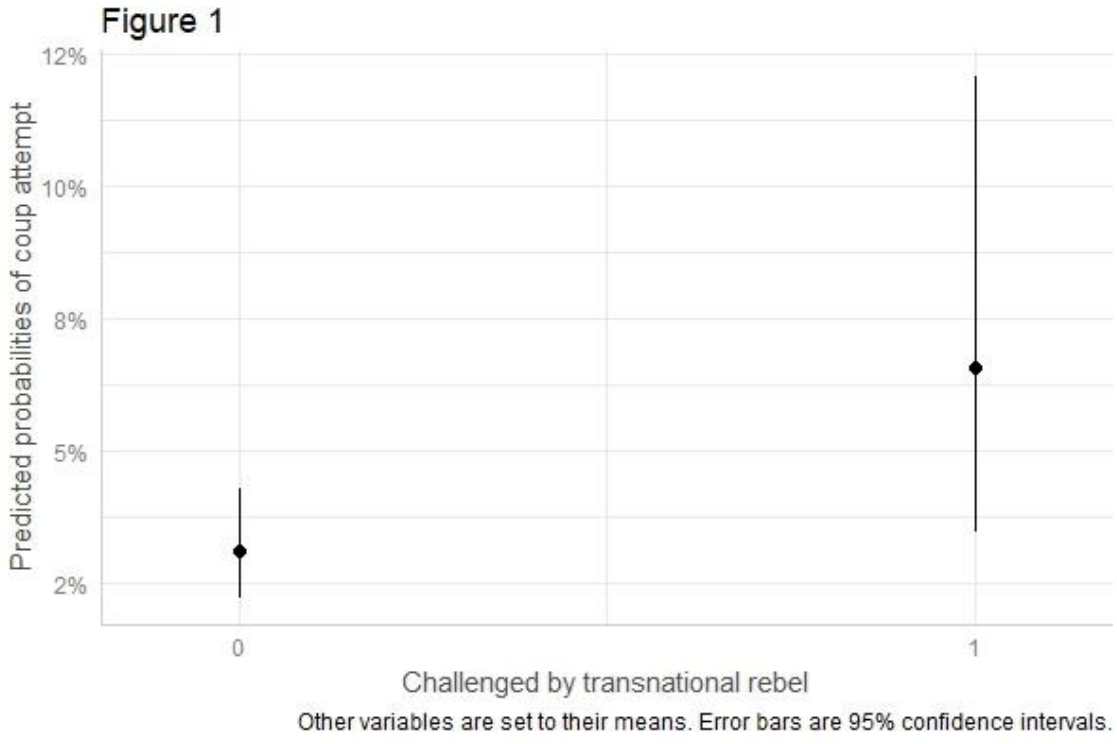
Table 1: Results of Logistic Regression

	Dependent variable: coup attempt				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
conflict_trans	0.786**	0.835*	1.109**	2.882***	1.445**
	(0.349)	(0.432)	(0.494)	(0.971)	(0.612)
conflict_notrans	−0.415	−0.655	−0.477	1.204	−0.509
	(0.441)	(0.528)	(0.581)	(0.969)	(0.690)
n_rebel				−1.438**	
				(0.704)	
conflict_str					−1.657
					(1.427)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,366	1,366	1,366	1,366	983
Log Likelihood	−232.144	−150.434	−129.802	−126.834	−92.433

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01



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The effect of transnational rebel challenge is robust to both Model 4, which controls for the number of rebels in a conflict, and Model 5, which controls for the strength of the rebels in a conflict. These results suggest that the effect of challenge by transnational rebels is not simply because rebels tend to be more numerous, nor is it simply because transnational rebels are stronger. The strength of the rebel is particularly important. I agree that transnational rebels are often more likely to be powerful, but more importantly, they are stronger than expected, not simply stronger. The result of Model 5 supports our contention that transnational rebels do not increase the likelihood of coups merely because they tend to be stronger, but because they tend to be stronger than expected, making it more difficult to make ex ante prediction about power.

The Angolan case may suggest that strong rebel forces do not necessarily lead coups. Angola has not experienced a coup since the 1977 failed coup attempt. This may be due to the long-standing civil war between the government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Angola's civil war was a typical Cold War proxy war, with budding conflicts from before independence manifesting themselves immediately after independence. That is, the Soviet Union and Cuba supported the government, and the U.S. and South Africa supported UNITA; although the timing of the start of the UNITA insurgency is beyond the scope of this paper's analysis, it is unlikely to be a rebel that mobilized in a foreign country before the insurgency began. Although it used foreign territories such as present-day Namibia and the Democratic Republic Congo (DRC) (Hoekstra 2018), UNITA was already organized from the time of the War of Independence.

In the NSA Dataset, UNITA is coded as weaker or much weaker in relative strength most of the time, but the period coded as parity is the post-Cold War period 1992-1997, the subject of this paper's analysis. With the end of the Cold War, external support began to decline, and a peace process involving the international community began, leading to a peace agreement in May 1991 (Hoekstra 2018, 993-994). However, failure to demobilization led to a resumption of fighting in 1992 (Pearce 2012, 459-460); 1997 was the timing of a change in leadership in Congo-Brazzaville and the DRC, which led to a decrease in support for UNITA and an increased offensive by government forces (Le Billon 2001, 64).

However, I have not seen any description of such a temporary increase in UNITA's relative power that led to increased military discontent and a coup being plotted. In such a prolonged civil war, one always pays much attention to information about one's opponent, and it is unlikely that an ex-post power shift in the balance of power would create a divergence in threat perception between the leaders and the military.

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Coup by junior officer

Next, to test H2, I analyze the coup attempts for the dependent variable separately for those made by junior officers (Model 6) and those made by military personnel with higher ranks than junior officers (Model 7). The results are shown in Table 2.

Though the coefficients for conflict with transnational rebel are positive in both Model 6 and 7, statistically significant in only model 6. For challenges from domestically mobilized rebels, the coefficient is negative and statistically significant at $p<0.05$ in Model 6. In contrast, in Model 7, the coefficient is positive but not statistically significant. These results provide support for H2, the transnational rebel increases the likelihood of a coup by a junior officer but does not increase the likelihood of a coup by a senior officer.

Table 2: Results of Logistic Regressions

	Dependent variable:	
	coup attempt by junior officer	coup attempt not by junior officer
	(6)	(7)
conflict_trans	2.292**	0.634
	(0.918)	(0.761)
conflict_notrans	−3.258**	0.468
	(1.385)	(0.801)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,366	1,366
Log Likelihood	-43.254	-72.724
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Several narratives also support this result. On April 1992, President Momoh was ousted in the military coup by disgruntled junior officers led by Captain Valentine Strasser, a 27-year-old soldier who had been fighting against RUF. Strasser's interview confirms that the coup was motivated by his harsh experiences in fighting with the RUF. “In his first interview since ousting Momoh, Strasser told of how they fought the enemies with 'obsolete guns that will not fire', and how his friend died by his side. He was brought to Freetown with shrapnel in his leg and had to be operated on without anaesthesia, as none was available at the main hospital. To add insult to injury, the authorities refused to send Strasser and other injured soldiers overseas for treatment, because the country could not afford it” (Zack-Williams & Riley 1993, 94-95). Also, after the March 2012 coup in Mali, coup leader Sanogo spoke briefly about the Malian state's failing campaign against northern separatist rebels, which had caused troops to lose confidence in their leadership (Whitehouse 2012, 94). And Sanogo was also a

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Captain by rank.

Regime seizure by rebel

To test H3, I conduct further analysis using a multinomial logit with leader exit due to coup and leader exit due to rebel government takeover as the dependent variables. The dependent variable was identified and coded for coups using the Colpus Dataset (Chin & Kirkpatrick 2023). For rebel seizures of power, I identified samples from the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset (Kreutz 2010) that were coded as rebel victory and further identified and coded those that resulted in rebel seizures of power. Since H3 accounts for bifurcations when challenged by transnational rebels, the sample is limited to those challenged by transnational rebels. The independent variables of interest are variables that represent coup-proofing, this time I focus on the counterbalancing index and the ethnic exclusion indicator. These two variables are the same as those used as control variables in the analyses in Table 1 and Table 2. The results of the analysis including all variables are presented in Appendix 3.

Table 3 shows the result of multinomial logit. Base category is no leader change and other forms of leader change. Both the coefficients of the indices of counterbalancing and ethnic exclusion are negative and not statistically significant in Model 8-1. On the contrary, they are positive and statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. This result provides support for H3.

Table 3: Result of Multinomial Logit

	Dependent variable:	
	leader exit by coup	leader exit by rebel victory
	(8)-1	(8)-2
counterbalancing	−0.362	19.05***
	(0.812)	(1.698)
ethnicstacking	−2.399	45.79***
	(3.510)	(1.401)
Controls	Yes	
Observations	136	
Log Likelihood	−30.06	
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

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The case of the Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo (AFDL)'s 1997 takeover of power in the DRC provides a narrative consistent with the results of this analysis. Established in October 1996, the AFDL was a coalition of several DRC opposition groups and included Rwandans and Ugandans, who received support from their respective national governments. Although some Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers apparently participated, many Banyamulenge soldiers seem to have marched from training camps on Rwandan territory (Sterns 2011, Ch 7). Of course, the AFDL was a coalition of several forces and had strong support from neighboring governments. But the DRC government forces were not defeated in a good fight against a powerful enemy. At the start of the war, the political–military class in Kinshasa did not take the issue seriously. They were not concerned by what was happening in faraway Kivu. On 2 November 1996, following the fall of Goma, the army Chief of Staff General Eluki belatedly blamed the government for not having done anything to provide the army with the means necessary to wage the war. Only after defeat followed defeat did the regime attempt, in moves that were too little too late, to organize some resistance against the advancing rebellion (Reyntjens 2009, 110).

This incompetence of the national army is due in part to the consequences of the coup-proofing taken by President Mobutu under the fear of a coup (Sterns 2011, Ch 8). Mobutu sidelined or eliminated competent officers he deemed to be a threat and personnel appointments were made on a nepotism basis. In addition, he has also balkanized the military, creating numerous military units and intelligence agencies with different chains of command and overlapping missions. Except for the presidential guard, the most important for Mobutu's security, most soldiers did not receive salaries and sold much of what they could sell, including weapons and ammunition, on the black market.

Conclusion

Weak states such as those in post-Cold War Africa are threatened by rebel forces due to imperfections in territorial governance, and at the same time, the lack of rule of law makes them vulnerable to coups. Furthermore, they face the dilemma of increased reliance on the military as a response to rebel forces and military dissatisfaction due to the conflict itself, which increases the risk of a coup, while coup-proofing measures increase their vulnerability to rebel forces.

In this paper, I focus in particular on the impact of conflict on coups, arguing that a certain type of rebel challenges increases the risk of a coup. In other words, rebel forces mobilized abroad before the insurgency begins make it difficult to predict the scale of the

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insurgency in advance in terms of intelligence, creating a gap in threat perception between political leaders and the military. As a result, necessary resources are not distributed to the military, which increases military dissatisfaction and leads to coups. This argument was confirmed by the predicted correlation through analysis of panel data from post-Cold War African countries, and several narratives confirm the mechanism.

Several theoretical implications can be drawn from the analysis in this paper. First, illegal regime change may not be solely the result of domestic vulnerability. The conditions under which rebels mobilized abroad before the insurgency began, which I focus on, are born depend on the foreign country where the mobilization takes place. The vulnerability of neighboring countries and the hostility between the parties to the conflict and their neighbors are important for the creation of such rebels. Although this transnational aspect of conflict has been noted in previous studies, for example, in studies of external support (Meier et al. 2023), this paper identifies a causal pathway through which this aspect can lead to coups and rebel seizures of power. This implication can also be interpreted as a mechanism for creating instability in entire regions where weak states are clustered, providing one explanation for geopolitical changes such as the recent instability in West and Central Africa and the expansion of Russian influence that has taken advantage of this situation.

Second, our analysis sheds light on more diverse aspects of the threat posed by Islamic extremists in weak states. In this analysis, our conceptualization of transnational rebel includes the rebels who have already mobilized and are active in other countries and later expand or change their targets beyond their borders. Such rebels include Islamic extremist groups that are expanding and changing targets with the aim of establishing a caliphate. So far, the characteristics of Islamic extremist forces have been compared to those of the Marxists, with some similarities, but the Islamic extremist forces are weaker than the Marxists due to the lack of support from countries like the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Kalyvas 2018). However, the analysis in this paper suggests that the nature of these rebel groups to suddenly expand and change targets and move to other countries poses a significant threat to the regime security in weak states.

Third, I also raise the need to focus attention on the phenomenon of cross-border movement of soldiers, which is triggered and spilled over by political changes in neighboring countries. Although identity has been the explanation for the participation of foreign soldiers (Malet 2013), the trigger factor could be political changes in the neighboring country. For example, there are cases such as the highly armed and well-experienced Tuaregs who returned to Mali after the fall of the Gaddafi regime (Ronen 2013). Also, the elite and civilian support for the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) rebellion in Djibouti in 1991 was purely domestic, although detailed figures are not available, a certain number of

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soldiers were from Ethiopia and Eritrea's Afar residential areas. This was at least partially due to the aftermath of the overthrow of the Mengistu regime in May 1991, when large numbers of Ethiopian government troops, refugees, and most importantly light weapons and arms poured into Djibouti (Schraeder 1993, 212-213).

Finally, there are theoretical implications for studies of external support. Most studies to date have generated and analyzed data in the form of adding information on supporters and forms of support in the conflict dyad year data (Meier et al. 2023). Therefore, inevitably, the focus of the analysis was after the conflict had begun. However, our theory raises the need to look not only at information after the start of the conflict, but also at support prior to the start of the insurgency.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

The full results of Table 1.

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Table 4: Full Results of Logistic Regressions in Table 1

	Dependent variable:				
	coup attempt				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
conflict_trans	0.786**	0.830*	1.106**	2.865***	1.438**
	(0.349)	(0.432)	(0.494)	(0.973)	(0.614)
conflict_notrans	−0.415	−0.755	−0.614	1.032	−0.760
	(0.441)	(0.525)	(0.587)	(0.966)	(0.702)
n_rebel				−1.421**	
				(0.705)	
conflict_str					−1.650
					(1.441)
cbscore	0.536**	−1.265**	−1.420**	−1.652***	−1.992**
	(0.210)	(0.514)	(0.589)	(0.626)	(0.903)
v2xpe_exlsocgr	−0.312	−3.776	−5.389**	−7.277***	−6.089*
	(0.766)	(2.576)	(2.646)	(2.810)	(3.235)
gdp_pc_ln	−0.390	0.697	1.314	1.758	0.753
	(0.244)	(0.937)	(1.065)	(1.106)	(1.469)
gdp_pc_g	−0.026	−0.024	−0.021	−0.028	−0.029
	(0.023)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.037)
pop_ln	−0.212	−1.699**	2.658	2.941	5.991
	(0.205)	(0.809)	(2.333)	(2.300)	(3.933)
milex_per_ln	−0.057	0.083	0.099	0.064	−0.081
	(0.160)	(0.234)	(0.280)	(0.276)	(0.397)
milper_ln	0.017	−0.786	−0.797	−0.756	−1.154
	(0.205)	(0.516)	(0.605)	(0.595)	(0.754)
v2x_ex_military	1.413**	−0.474	−0.447	−0.365	−0.988
	(0.616)	(0.810)	(0.901)	(0.906)	(0.999)
e_fh_cl	−0.142	−0.349	−0.447	−0.406	−0.537
	(0.221)	(0.297)	(0.347)	(0.352)	(0.408)
e_fh_pr	0.228	0.306	0.354*	0.403*	0.451*
	(0.166)	(0.190)	(0.214)	(0.217)	(0.257)
coupyear	0.001	−0.137**	−0.166**	−0.195***	−0.169*
	(0.033)	(0.062)	(0.065)	(0.069)	(0.087)
coupyear2	0.00000	0.008***	0.010***	0.010***	0.010***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Constant	1.705				
	(3.422)				
Country FE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,366	1,366	1,366	1,366	983
Log Likelihood	−232.144	−150.140	−129.578	−126.691	−92.087
Note:					*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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Appendix 2

The full Results of Table 2.

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Table 5: Full Results of Logistic Regressions in Table 2

	Dependent variable:	
	coup attempt by junior officer	coup attempt not by junior officer
	(6)	(7)
conflict_trans	2.284**	0.611
	(0.916)	(0.752)
conflict_notrans	−3.269**	0.039
	(1.379)	(0.818)
cbscore	−3.785***	−1.134
	(1.312)	(0.810)
v2xpe_exlsocgr	−11.462**	−6.715
	(5.126)	(4.129)
gdp_pc_ln	−2.566	2.888*
	(2.046)	(1.597)
gdp_pc_g	0.061	−0.059
	(0.068)	(0.046)
pop_ln	11.123*	2.388
	(5.907)	(3.001)
milex_per_ln	0.375	0.155
	(0.643)	(0.406)
milper_ln	−1.933	−0.361
	(1.437)	(0.877)
v2x_ex_military	−2.068	1.009
	(1.519)	(1.274)
e_fh_cl	−0.419	−0.629
	(0.634)	(0.470)
e_fh_pr	0.407	0.262
	(0.385)	(0.306)
coupyear	−0.258*	−0.222**
	(0.140)	(0.092)
coupyear2	0.023***	0.010***
	(0.007)	(0.003)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,366	1,366
Log Likelihood	−43.194	−72.889
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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Appendix 3

The full result of table 3.

Most variables are explained in the Data section. The variable not accounted for in the data section is the number of deaths in conflict. The number of deaths in conflict was taken from the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (Davies et al. 2022).

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Table 6: Full Results of Multinomial Logit in Table 3

	Dependent variable:	
	leader exit by coup	leader exit by rebel victory
	(8)-1	(8)-2
cbscore	−0.362	19.05***
	(0.812)	(1.698)
v2xpe_exlsocgr	−2.399	45.79***
	(3.510)	(1.401)
gdp_pc_ln	1.315	−5.279**
	(1.040)	(2.502)
gdp_pc_g	0.013	0.815***
	(0.053)	(0.152)
pop_ln	−1.669**	−5.359***
	(0.649)	(1.227)
milex_per_ln	1.105*	−5.396***
	(0.642)	(1.477)
milper_ln	0.247	−7.357***
	(0.665)	(1.844)
v2x_ex_military	2.421	−0.232
	(1.792)	(1.954)
e_fh_cl	−0.256	12.547***
	(0.869)	(2.195)
e_fh_pr	0.410	−1.351
	(0.597)	(1.438)
coupyear	0.531**	4.147***
	(0.238)	(0.677)
coupyear2	−0.015**	−0.254***
	(0.007)	(0.043)
brd	0.001*	0.004**
	(0.000)	(0.002)
n_rebel	−0.593	2.528***
	(0.847)	(0.888)
constant	2.858***	26.893***
	(0.234)	(0.172)
Observations	136	
Log Likelihood	−30.06	
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

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