Leadership Survival and Hired Guns: Repression, Counterbalancing, and Pro-Government Militias

Clionadh Raleigh†
Roudabeh Kishi‡

†Department of Geography, University of Sussex

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Abstract. This article presents a ‘violence management’ framework through which to understand why, where, and when states employ pro-government militias (PGMs). Regimes in developing states engage in practices of ‘violence management’ that involve both offensive and defensive strategies to contain, repress and curtail various domestic threats. Some of these strategies include public repression, counterbalancing, the creation of paramilitary forces, and supporting PGMs to combat opponents within and outside the regime. The most ‘effective’ strategy for a leader to ensure his/her survival is to establish counterbalancing forces, implement PGMs, and initiate state repression strategies. These different organizations and responses are specifically designed to deal with various types and scales of threat. PGMs coexist with counterbalancing efforts, suggesting that PGMs and paramilitaries are specifically designed to deal with different scales of threat. A new pro-government militia dataset – PGM-Set – is introduced and is used to test the impact of PGM activity, repression, and counterbalancing on leadership survival.
Introduction

Increasing attention is being paid to the variation and multiplicity of armed, organized groups operating across developing states, and their role in control, repression, and dominance (Raleigh, 2014, 2016; Choi and Raleigh, 2015). Much of the recent literature has concentrated on civil war environments, and the rate of splintering (Bakke, Cunningham, Seymour, 2012; Cunningham, 2013); alliance (Christia, 2012); supplemental forces for both rebels and governments (Raleigh, 2016); local ‘predators’ taking advantage of conflict environments and ‘protectors’ operating as local security providers (Abbink, 1998, 2000; Hagmann and Mulugeta, 2008; Guichaoua, 2010). But less attention is paid to contexts outside of war. These periods are often characterized by high rates of political violence emanating from competition between political elites, conflict within regimes, and violence by the regimes upon citizens.

This article offers a framework through which to interpret and understand the emergence and use of pro-government militias – hereafter PGMs. These agents operate outside of formal forces, yet act in accordance with the needs and wishes of regimes. The use of PGMs follows a larger trend in political violence across developing states: political militias now represent the largest category of armed non-state agents, and their actions and proliferation has occurred in and for periods of domestic political instability, rather than civil war. As civil war has declined across African states (Pinker, 2011), the political environment has become populated with armed groups with specific ‘political competition’ objectives. Recent research has confirmed that these groups engage more often as proxy forces for political elite competition over the terms of inclusion within government, rather than exclusion or marginalization faced by large ethno-regional communities (Raleigh, 2016).

PGM activity is explained by this logic: regimes engage non-state groups to contest other political elites using similar groups to advance political agendas. Increasingly, states rely on informal militias allied to regimes or other government figures to represent their interests in subnational conflicts; these proxy forces are highly localized and augment the role of regime forces, if necessary. PGMs offer several attractive benefits to regimes:

- PGMs are a flexible and inexpensive force that can be deployed when necessary (e.g. election periods) (see Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell, 2012).

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1 Despite these benefits and advantages, PGMs can also face drawbacks; namely, their informality implies that they are not necessarily suited to perform the tasks of traditional armed forces, and may suffer from a lack of professionalism (Ash, 2016).
• PGMs provide local knowledge and representation, especially in cases where the state relies on indirect rule via local intermediaries in areas within its territory in which it has inconsistent control (see Mann, 2004; Gerlach, 2010; Ahram, 2014).

• PGMs are flexible in their use, formality, and instruction, and do not require formalization and associated responsibility (see Carey et al., 2012).

The perpetual rate and widespread presence of political and social violence across developing states suggest one of two conclusions: regimes and their security forces are either unable to contain and mitigate the drivers and agents of violence – the ‘weak’ state argument – or regimes expect and, to some degree, accept a degree of conflict, from public protests and uprisings, local and regional violent competition, to more organized threats to central power. To distinguish between these explanations, and the security consequences and policy responses, the role of the state in the multiple, concurrent, distinct conflicts and protests requires elaboration. Developing – and specifically African – states actively engage in domestic ‘violence management’ to address persistent and multiple domestic threats. African states face a higher rate of domestic military threats, compared to international risks (Roessler, 2011), and therefore domestic violence management shapes the structure of security.

Violence management refers to the range of strategies and agents employed to counter, repress, and contain the varied threats a government may face. Military forces actively battle armed groups operating within and outside national territories to threaten the state; both police and military forces are employed to counteract and repress local, regional, and national threats in various forms, including insurgents, opposition parties, public protests, and threats from within (Clapham, 1996; Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski, 2010; Escribà-Folch, 2013). To mitigate coup and internal

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2 A considerable amount of the protest and conflict that occurs may not involve or concern the state, and as a result, the state may avoid directly interfering or interjecting itself into local competition.
troubles, regimes counterbalance their military and police forces (Pilster and Böhmelt, 2012; Powell, 2012).\(^4\)

Domestic violence management necessitates multiple strategies and agents specifically because states with different rates of territorial and political legitimacy and military size have multiple ‘pressure points’. The nature of developing and transitioning governance means that choosing one strategy over another leaves regimes exposed. For example, a state that builds its military to effectively counter domestic and international threats allows for the possibility that a strong, cohesive military will be a threat to the regime (Frisch, 2002; McMahon and Slantchev, 2015). A state that invests in supporting multiple, informal political militias at the detriment of formal forces will risk those forces allying to challenge the regime. But a complex calculus of threat balancing in the form of violence management within the state suggests that in addition to the use of counterbalancing and repression, PGMs are crucial for periods and spaces of violent political elite competition both in and outside of ‘war’ scenarios. The spatial and temporal dynamics of PGMs, trends in their behavior, and fixtures in the security and political environments within developing states, are designed to fight ‘similar’ groups, including other militias and civilians. PGMs rarely interact with state forces that constitute ‘internal’ regime threats. The separate realms of violence management produce a cohesive strategy that allows most regimes to stay in power despite years of sustained threat.

Militias perform critical functions for the regime during war, and are active participants in crisis (Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger, 2015), but they also exist in non-crisis situations. All manner of political elites – including but not limited to regimes – use militias (see Raleigh, 2016). Examples include political party militias (e.g. the Amal movement in Lebanon from the 1970s; the Anti-Balaka during the Djotodia presidency and after in the Central African Republic; the Badr organization in Iraq; the Mombasa Revolutionary Council in Kenya; the Unified Democratic Patriots Party in

\(^3\) Counterbalancing is defined as dividing a “country’s coercive power between multiple, overlapping security forces” in an effort to sap military morale and undermine effective battlefield coordination; this is often done by staffing the military with regime loyalists (DeBruin, 2015:2). This is done in coup prevention, and can also be referred to as ‘divide and rule’ or ‘hedging’.

\(^4\) Others have suggested that ministry dynamics provide a vital insight into domestic politics: for example, in cases where governments create multiple similar ministry positions, Arriola (2009) notes that this ‘ministry packing’ is a form of patronage and co-option, or ‘coup-proofing’, as regimes create formal and public alliances with different elites (see also Goldsmith, 2001; Roessler, 2011).
Tunisia), community militias (e.g. the Turkana militia in Kenya; the Mayi-Mayi in DR-Congo), and those affiliated with political elites and politicians (e.g. the Yau Yau militia of South Sudan and the George Athor Militia of South Sudan; the Séléka militia in the Central African Republic; the Green Bombers in Zimbabwe; the Bakassi Boys in Nigeria; the Kibir Militia in Darfur). These varied examples attest to the larger role of militias in producing violence on demand for elites who do not want full responsibility and association in conflicts that may ‘benefit’ them (e.g. harassing voters or killing opponents) (see Raleigh, 2016). This abbreviated list demonstrates the commonality of PGM actions outside of war contexts, and the multiple domestic contexts (e.g. post-war, post-revolution, fragmented polity, or state repression) in which they operate.

Across African states from 1997 through 2014, just 7% of civil war events are committed by PGMs, while over half of all militia activity outside of civil war periods are committed by PGMs. The rates of activity outside of traditional civil war contexts suggest that PGMs are far more than a replacement force for incapable state militaries (see Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe, 2013). PGMs and their activities are of concern as they constitute a grave threat to civilian safety generally: of all active militias operating on behalf of political elites (e.g. rebel leaders, politicians, political parties, warlords, military, government officials, etc.), those associated with the state have the most pervasive and negative impact on civilians. Over 10% more PGM conflict activity targets civilians relative to non-PGM militias; and these actions are more lethal relative to other militias. On average, each instance of civilian targeting by a PGM leads to three times more civilian deaths than those carried out by other militias.5

This research both contributes to and deviates from existing work on PGMs in several ways. It builds on the existing work by explaining why PGMs are employed, the circumstances under which they emerge and are deployed, and their functions in those environments. Interpreting PGM violence as an extension of internal government competition in patronage states is in line with recent research: Mazzei (2009) on Latin America, Ahram (2011a, 2011b, 2014) on the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and Raleigh (2016) on Africa present political competition as a robust explanation for modern violence processes. Under scenarios of economic or political hardship – including significant declines in state income, or elections with multiple parties – the use of political militias

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5 These statistics come from the new PGM dataset created by the authors for this research. The dataset will be introduced and explored in more detail below, within the Data and Research Design section of the paper.
should increase and be targeted at opposition members and supporters within and outside of the government.

By identifying a roster of PGMs through reported violent actions and extending the period of their use outside of civil wars, researchers can now fully account for their role within developing states. This new dataset provides widespread support for the ‘violence management’ hypothesis that extends the delegation debate (Carey et al., 2015), and addresses the simultaneous presence and use of paramilitary, counterbalanced, and informal state forces (Lyall, 2010; Clayton and Thomson, 2014; Böhmelt and Clayton, 2015).

**Agents of Violence Management**

Political militias are armed groups using violence or the threat of violence to influence an immediate political process; while they are rarely organized in a formal or rigid hierarchy, they are closely affiliated with a political elite patron who dictates the goals of violence (Raleigh, 2016). Examples of these militias include the Séléka militia in the Central African Republic, and RENAMO of Mozambique.

PGMs are an armed, active group with ethnic, regional, or party ties to the regime, which operate as a local force to pursue the political aims of the regime elites without official ties to military forces, but with support (financial, social, military) from government forces. When this definition is applied to Africa from 1997 through 2014, 247 distinct PGMs are identified. Of these, 113 have an allied association with a state force in one or more reported conflict events, 144 have a political link to the regime or the President specifically, and 26 are from the same region or ethnic group as the regime.

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6 See Carey et al. (2013) for previous lists of PGM forces globally.

7 Violence management is used in previous work related to wartime group organizations and alliances (Staniland, 2013).

8 As PGMs can have ties to the government in more ways than one, certain groups can be classified as having multiple pro-government connections (e.g. ZANU-PF has both a political link to the regime and President, as well as an allied association with state forces in reported conflict events; the Dinka ethnic militia in South Sudan shares an ethnic affiliation with the regime, and has also been linked politically to the regime and President). This is explored in further detail in the Methodology section. In line with our contention about civil war and other periods of contestation, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project provides conflict data, coding conflict dynamics and locations within states (Raleigh, Linke, Hegre, and Karlsen, 2010).
This tally of PGMs differs from those reported by others: for the same time period and region, Carey et al. (2013) report 99 PGMs, or 40% of the total identified here.⁹

Other conflict actors that do or may have links to the state include paramilitaries, local defense forces, mercenaries and private security forces. Table 1 highlights the purposes of these groups and the circumstances under which they emerge, as well as the extent of their links to the regime. These terms describe organizations that are often informal, violent, and operating with a criminal or political agenda; the distinctions arise from contrasting the goals, actions, and relationships of groups to each other, the state, and other violent actors. However, these categories often assume, rather than confirm, how and why these groups arise, who they ‘work for’, where and who is targeted, and their motives.

**How do these groups vary?** These groups differ primarily in their emergence, the contexts of emergence, their formality (ranging from formal structures to informal ones), and the extent of their links to the state. PGMs may emerge during periods of political contestation (such as an election period) where the leader and/or regime seeks to use repression to ensure survival; local defense forces may emerge during periods of state decay in areas with limited or absent government control; private security forces are found during periods of necessity when the government finds itself against a powerful challenger and is in need of supplementary forces to ensure its survival.

Paramilitary groups are more formally organized, sharing similarities to their military counterparts, as are private security forces, which are organized to mirror military organization in order to be most effectively integrated as supplementary forces; relative to paramilitaries, PGMs lack the same level of formality in their structure as they are not directly linked to the state. In terms of links to the state, paramilitaries have the most direct links to the state – as they are technically an auxiliary state force, performing regular security functions; while PGMs do hold ties to the state, their link is informal or semi-official, and as such the state is arguably less accountable for their actions.

⁹ From Carey et al.’s (2013) report, 332 Pro-Government Militias are identified from 1981 to 2007 across all countries. 118 are in Africa, with 99 of that total operational between 1997 and 2007 (the period of direct overlap with the data presented here).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Circumstances</th>
<th>Links to Government</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paramilitary Groups</strong></td>
<td>Militarized police units, domiciled in part in barracks, equipped with light military weapons and military vehicles, and organized under the central government (Janowitz, 1988); “forces whose training, organization, equipment, and control suggest they may be used to support or replace regular military forces” (IISS, 2015); these groups are at least partially militarized and operate as auxiliary forces (1) in place of, (2) as a supplement to, or (3) as a balance against regular military units (Böhmelt and Clayton, 2015)</td>
<td>An auxiliary state force (i.e. not a part of the regular army), usually performing regular security functions (as they often replace or balance the official armed forces) while addressing domestic threats; as such, state capacity is a somewhat necessary requirement for building these groups</td>
<td>Directly linked to the government (hence with minimal autonomy from the government); mobilized by the incumbent, and so the state is more accountable for these groups</td>
<td>• Presidential Security Unit in South Sudan • Gendarmerie Nationale of Madagascar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Militias</strong></td>
<td>Armed groups using violence or the threat of violence to influence an immediate political process; rarely organized in a formal or rigid hierarchy, but are closely affiliated with a political elite patron who dictates the goals of violence; operate at the subnational level, and often in a localized area (Raleigh, 2016)</td>
<td>Competition and fragmentation within regimes and between opponents encourages political elites -- seeking to increase their position, influence, and/or power within governance processes -- to use these groups as private armies (Raleigh, 2016)</td>
<td>These groups are affiliated with political elites and/or parties, and in that way may have a link to the regime; when working on behalf of the regime, they are categorized as &quot;PGMs&quot;</td>
<td>• Séléka militia in CAR • RENAMO in Mozambique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pro-Government Militias</strong></td>
<td>Organized armed groups aligned informally or semi-officially with the government and not part of the regular armed forces; receive explicit or implicit support from the state; disconnected from the state's central command and control structure, so have greater autonomy; as such, usually less well-equipped and trained than paramilitaries or regular state forces (Böhmelt and Clayton, 2015)</td>
<td>An auxiliary state force (i.e. not a part of the regular army) performing a wide range of 'irregular' duties while addressing domestic threats; given the loose/indirect links to the regime, state capacity is not a requirement in order to build these groups; as such, they are an attractive security option for politically unstable regimes</td>
<td>Semi-official/informal link to the government (hence with more autonomy from the government); mobilized by the state rather spontaneously</td>
<td>• ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe • Janjaweed in Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Defence Forces</strong></td>
<td>Often found in areas of state decay where elites create militias to dominate local politics in response to absent or limited government control; rarely act outside of immediate localities (Raleigh, 2016)</td>
<td>Where the provision of security is localized, either through a failure of national security services, an autonomy of local security elites and/or particular issues relevant to local areas (e.g. raiding, cattle rustling)</td>
<td>Contingent on local elite and regime relationships grounded in regional, ethnic, party and/or strategic basis</td>
<td>• Bakassi Boys in Nigeria • Karamajong Ethnic Militia in Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mercenaries / Private Security Forces</strong></td>
<td>Armed agents or groups hired to carry out violence; individuals are not a national or a party to the conflict, yet are motivated to take part in the hostilities by the desire for private gain</td>
<td>Contexts where security or some facet of military actions have been privatized</td>
<td>These groups can be hired by the state to carry out security measures and in this way may have a link to the regime</td>
<td>• Executive Outcomes (South African) active in Angola and Sierra Leone • Specialized Tasks, Training, Equipment and Protection (STTEP) (South African) active in Nigeria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PGMs have more informal ties, and as such have greater autonomy, relative to paramilitaries; while they can receive explicit or implicit support from the state,\(^\text{10}\) “they are not aligned with any component of the command-and-control system of a country or its executive” as paramilitaries are (Böhmelt and Clayton, 2015:6).\(^\text{11}\) How strongly these groups are associated with the ‘state’, individuals and organizations that may temporarily rule has important implications for what their role is within the larger political and conflict environment, the nature of competitive politics therein, and when and where they pose a risk. These groups often have loyalties to individual leaders, and can hence be used toward leadership survival (Ash, 2016). Within the large and growing universe of political violence agents, pro-government groups are a diverse community with unique responsibilities for regimes and political violence.

**Delegation and Violence Management**

Early research on PGMs argued that they serve as supplements to formal government forces locally (Carey et al. 2013) and performed a range of activities, such as sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and genocide violence that the state did not want to be associated with (Ron, 2002; Alvarez, 2006; Mitchell, Carey, and Butler; 2014). The ‘accountability’ argument suggests that PGMs conduct offenses that governments cannot or do not want to be deemed accountable for (see: Ron, 2002; Alvarez, 2006; Staniland, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2014; Carey et al., 2015). States may engage such forces to avoid high domestic or international scrutiny (Carey et al., 2015) and salvage aid or neighboring relations. But to avoid responsibility, states could employ many options including anonymous armed groups. Recent work has both rejected (see Cohen and Nordås on dispelling the SGBV link) and complicated the role of PGMs in carrying out this type of violence by positioning them within the wider context of developing government and violence strategies.

‘Delegation’ theory very broadly covers the ways in which any number of state responsibilities are ‘contracted out’ to non-state agents and possibly informal or illegal groups (Jentzsch et al., 2015). Using this framework, PGM emergence is associated with the security apparatus of ‘weak’ states as modern developing states face institutional limitations and constraints on how they can employ state forces and state rents. Dire economic fortunes face many, if not most, developing states,

\(^{10}\) These groups may be supported and financed by business elites who require the state to protect interests (Mazzei, 2009).

\(^{11}\) PGMs are not paramilitary groups within these definitional parameters.
simultaneous and often-independent political shifts occur which upset the centralized control once associated with developing, and particularly African, states. In the post-Cold War era, the power of the central authority has waned across Africa, and is now subject to both internal (i.e. regime and party) and external competition from challengers. Political militias operating for the state may be a crucial security and offensive component for this system of high-level competition and fragmentation.

An alternative framing of governance, security, and violence agents suggests African states have logics and strategies for governance and ‘violence management’ that grow from elite negotiation (Raleigh and Dowd, 2016). PGMs play an increasingly larger role within violence management strategies due to the changing nature of threats to developing world regimes. Most African states do not have a monopoly on violence within their territory, but they may not actively seek it or require it for daily governance. A monopoly is expensive, difficult to build and enforce, and increases the support and strength of militaries, which can increase the risk of coups (Böhmelt and Clayton, 2015), and as a result, the state may be giving away its monopoly willingly (Roessler, 2005). Given a lack of a monopoly, governments can face multiple threats: rebel forces targeting state power (see Buhaug, Cederman, and Gleditsch, 2014), militias using violence to negotiate the terms of inclusion (Raleigh, 2016), coup risk (Roessler, 2011), riots and protests (Zimmermann, 1989), and other non-state local actions (Raeymaekers, Menkhaus, and Vlassenroot, 2008). These multiple risks engage state forces and attention in different ways. Given the constraints, states engage in a wide variety of strategies to deal with violent and opposition threats, including repression, counterbalancing, and the creation and employment of extra-legal, informal forces – namely, PGMs. The most effective violence management strategy involves states engaging in all three forms of response, simultaneously.

**Repression.** States may use repression as a tactic to enforce their hold on power and to reaffirm their authority, thereby ensuring a form of security. The use of repression tactics helps regimes to remain in power (Escribà-Folch, 2013); intimidating, targeting, and/or killing potential opposition is effective in quelling threats from organized groups (Hafner-Burton et al., 2010). These tactics are common across many regimes. While repression may be seen more readily under autocratic regimes, there are differences in the level of repression seen within autocracies (Davenport, 2007a), and across democracies (Davenport, 2007b). African regimes often use repression to eradicate
competition and subordinate civilian reform and revolt in order to ensure their survival (see Clapham, 1996). Repression activities generally can be carried out by formal and informal, non-state forces (see Butler and Mitchell, 2007), in line with the transparency of the regime interests and strength of the opposition.

**Counterbalancing.** To mitigate or lessen the threat from the military or otherwise aligned internal forces, developing country regimes often decentralize security forces, thereby limiting the ability of the military to overwhelm the executive. This threat is persistent as many leaders “come from a military and security background themselves, and usually divide the armed forces into separate entities that must compete for resources and influence … they often command them personally or through trusted family members” (Barany, 2011:25). Counterbalancing results in multiple, overlapping agencies that are accountable to various members of the government, and become ‘their’ force: some examples include the presidential guard (often populated by soldiers from the home area of the President); intelligence forces with no security relationship (as seen in Pakistan, Kenya, and Zimbabwe); ‘anti-terrorist’ units; and the often poorly paid and coordinated army and police forces. The result, according to Hills (2000:2), is that “African armies bear little resemblance to the Western organizational prototype, being more akin to armed camps owing clientalist allegiances to a few officers, tends to be overlooked, as does the strength of neopatrimonialism.” Further, she records in reference to a classic case in Nigeria:

Policing must be understood in relation to the activities of the military, some eight or more paramilitary units, various palace guards, numerous quasi-official units in various states and miscellaneous thugs associated with strongmen … [And] the creation of special units may also confuse relationships, with presidential guards, republican guards, general service units, paramilitary or intelligence units and informal networks of spies acting as counterweights to the regular forces. President Nkrumah, for instance, distrusted both the police and the army, who with their adherence to British traditions of professionalism and impartiality could not fulfill his security needs. Accordingly, he created a complex civilian-military security force, the National Security Service (NSS), which was directly responsible to him. He also deliberately encouraged police-military competition (2000:6-7).

Mehler (2012) confirms that unbalanced Special Forces and dominance of a few ethnic groups characterize African militaries. For example, in the Central African Republic, former President
Kolingba created an armed force from his own minority group (Yakima), while other Presidents – notably President Patasse – increased the presidential guard relative to all other forces. Infighting amongst the security services continues in states in part because of the favored and polarizing conditions of some sectors over others, but also anarchical recruitment, an absence of basic training, barracks, and equipment (Mehler, 2012). Further, the politicization of defense and security forces and the use of non-conventional forces suggest, “the heteroelite composition of the security forces would lead to the absence of cohesion and discipline” (Mehler, 2012:58).

The reasoning behind the multiplication of forces is that should any political elite challenge the regime with mutinous troops from one segment of the security forces, others would be able to counter and protect the established regime. Poorly coordinated and decentralized political forces are frequently found in states, including those with violent liberation histories (e.g. Zimbabwe) as well as those without (e.g. Nigeria, Sudan); in states with present or recent civil wars (e.g. DR-Congo); and in those without these specific forms of threat (e.g. Kenya). In contrast, those few African states which face a greater threat from outside rather than inside their borders are uniformly regarded as operating strong, centralized, and effective forces – such as those present in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Egypt.

Counterbalancing does not protect leaders from all forms of instability: Barany (2011:26) notes that the likelihood of surviving popular rather than internal (i.e. coups) regime challenges is strongly related to security services that are centralized and “cooperate rather than distrust each other, and that are free from internal cleavages (over regime performance, for instance) … and should likewise be more steadfast in defending the established order.” This supports the notion that PGMs can emerge from counterbalancing. But in Yemen, former President Saleh relied on the “better equipped and trained Republican Guard, Central Security Forces and elite army units, whose loyalty he retained” (Barany, 2011:29). The clear divisions in military and security forces reflected the deep-seated fragmentation in their respective societies and elite power structures, and demonstrated that formal counterbalancing is sufficient to deal with most threats, even in ‘weak’ states.

These episodes and examples reinforce the view that the “frequent reshaping of security forces in line with the directives of new heads of state creates a loyal core, but a frustrated mass, of security forces” (Mehler, 2012:50). Further, this “within-military coup proofing can backfire, as military
leaders realize that measures are being taken to prevent their organization and subsequently become more likely to carry out a coup or to defect to outside challengers (Makara, 2013)” (Ash, 2016:11).

**Informal forces (PGMs):** Why would regimes use PGMs in conjunction with formal, fragmented forces? Are these forces designed to ‘offset’ coup risks as substitutes for unreliable regular state forces, as argued by Carey et al. (2015), or does the presence of both counterbalanced forces and PGMs indicate that violence management strategies are differentiated to respond and manage distinct, separate threats?

Given the concurrent threats a state may face, the best strategy is for a leader to simultaneously implement both ‘defensive’ and ‘offensive’ strategies. Defensively, a leader should establish both counterbalancing paramilitary forces as well as PGMs at his/her disposal to guard against both internal and external threats. Offensively, a leader engaging in repression – intimidation, targeting, and killing of potential opposition (Hafner-Burton et al., 2010) – can minimize the rate of opposition they may experience, as this tactic can aid in a state’s reaffirmation of authority (Escribà-Folch, 2013).

By the ‘informal counterbalancing’ logic, PGMs should support regime security in the wider population and serve as a counter to formal forces, which are largely ‘unreliable’ in part because of formal counterbalancing. Outsourcing some security tasks offers efficiency gains (as force multipliers; providing specialized information; contributing to maintaining the legitimacy of the government) when governments anticipate a threat from rebel groups (Carey et al., 2015). In particular, “semi official militias are beneficial in situations where the government urgently needs a relatively low cost and flexible force, specialized information and legitimacy” (Carey et al., 2015:9).

Militias can operate as counter-weights to coup forces (De Bruin, 2015), especially where large popular forces can protect regimes (e.g. the Chavez Bolivarian National Militia in Venezuela). More typically, paramilitary forces, rather than PGMs, are employed as a counterbalancing strategy as they aid in thwarting this threat (Belkin and Schofer, 2006) and are established to conduct the same type of operations as formal state forces.¹²

¹² Carey et al. 2015 include ‘paramilitaries’ and PGMs together as counter-coup forces.
A ‘violence management’ perspective suggests that formal and informal forces serve different constituencies of state and elite power; what is ‘delegated’ to each is dependent on the pressures within a state, and from where such military pressures emanate. The role, support, and activity of PGMs are complex and dependent upon the political environments in which they are found. PGMs emerge to combat similar opposition organizations, or to engage with opposition supporters, while the military and police engage with other distinct, but similarly situated threats. They are present within contexts and periods of heightened state repression (Carey and Mitchell, 2011), modernization (Chabal, 2005; Forrest, 2006; Bates, 2008), the new world order (Kaldor, 2001; Williams, 2008), security privatization (Ero, 2000; Bates, 2008), greed (Kaplan, 2001; Collier and Hoeffler, 2002; Goldstone, 2002; Urdal, 2005), ethnicized grievance (King, 2001; Guichaoua, 2010), state failure (Reno, 2007; Bates, 2008), and democratization (Mueller, 2008; Raleigh, 2016). Regardless of the institutional character of the state (e.g. autocratic, semi-democratic, or otherwise), governments augment their capacity for coercion with groups who are a critical component of everyday governance (Svolik, 2012; Ahram, 2014); in such countries, this amounts to collaboration with non-state agents.

Violence management of diverse interests and agendas through a network of associated groups with whom the regime has stronger or weaker alliances suggests that militias are not exclusively – or even primarily – created to deal with state ‘crisis’, but rather perform a significant role in ‘banal’ governance (Ahram, 2014). The nature of modern developing state threats requires a multifaceted management and response strategy. When responding to militia threats from opposing and competing political elites, it is more efficient to use PGMs as a response rather than employing more expensive paramilitaries if they are not necessary. This leads to the first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1**: PGM activity occurs simultaneous with other counterbalancing efforts.

PGMs are a consequence of governance structures and practices across developing states, and function as a critical component in upholding power structures. Regime violence ‘management’ emphasizes that informal, private armed groups are a necessary component of modern governance where political competition is lethal, positions on government hierarchies are determined by coercive potential and force, and the state is actually a collection of often competing interests and
agendas (see De Waal, 2009). African regimes face a higher risk of internal over external threats; this internal risk is exacerbated in states with recent histories of one-party dominance and limited party or external competition. Since the avenues for competition through democratic elections are still often severely curtailed, competition becomes internal to parties, regimes, and governments. Effectively, political competition has been relocated to within internal governance structures. Acts central to elite competition on the local, regional and national levels are ‘contracted out’ to these groups.

In rare cases, they function as a replacement for state forces; more commonly they function in coordination with these forces. Their rise rarely represents evidence of a fragile or failed state with little control over its territory (see Reno, 1998; Herbst, 2000; Kaldor, 2001). The multiple roles of PGM suggest the varied logic to illegal and informal processes. Depending on the strength of the state in local areas, these groups may function as both a supplement and a replacement. PGMs can act as local self-defense units or Civilian Defense Forces (CDFs), who act to facilitate and consolidate regime territorial control and leverage their superior linguistic, topographical and social skills for an influx of intelligence for regimes (Peic, 2014). Similarly, Jones (2012:3) finds that the state may ‘employ’ militias to “help pacify key areas of the country, especially rural areas where state control is minimal or non-existent”, especially when its own security forces are weak.

Local knowledge and local representation are critical to states which may have inconsistent control over their territory and rely on a form of indirect rule via local intermediaries in both conflict and non-conflict periods (Mann, 2004; Gerlach, 2010; Ahram, 2014). Intermediary or indirect rule is a frequent practice of almost all African states, and regimes vary in the extent to which they employ strategies of incorporating political elites into their control strategy. In these cases PGMs operate as replacement forces where the state is not active, and are tasked with carrying out violence on behalf of the state. Therefore, the comparative patterns of activity between state and PGM forces ought to be similar, but conducted in different spaces and locations. While Peic (2014) and Jones (2012) find supporting results for their theories within their case studies of Afghanistan, Peru, Colombia, Greece, Guatemala, Vietnam, Iraq, and Turkey, the broad application of the delegation theory does not account for why PGMs are seen in spaces in which the state itself is co-active (see Figure 1). Relative to other conflict actors, PGMs do not necessarily operate in unique spatial areas. Figure 1 maps the locations of all organized, armed conflict events in Africa between 1997 and 2014,
specifying between PGMs and state conflict agents, suggesting that the state is largely active in all of the same areas as PGMs. Figure 2 maps the locations of all organized, armed conflict events in Africa between 1997 and 2014 involving PGMs relative to all other non-state actors. The comparison suggests again that non-state, non-PGM actors are active in all of the same areas as PGMs, suggesting that these groups are not necessarily used as replacement forces spatially.

**Figure 1.** Organized Armed Conflict Involving Pro-Government Militias and State Conflict Actors, Africa, 1997-2014.

In states such as Sudan or Zimbabwe, militias operate alongside strong and able militaries, and often conduct similar activity. For states with less military capacity – including DR-Congo, Somalia, and Nigeria – PGMs supplement, rather than replace, state forces. These contexts are also characterized
by multiple other groups, often working at the behest of specific ministries (e.g. Libya), politicians (e.g. Somalia), and local leaders with regime affiliations (e.g. DR-Congo). Indeed, even in the recent case of the Central African Republic – where the state military has all but collapsed and is responsible for fewer than 5% of all conflict activity in the past five years – two political militias have engaged in conflict, and both are believed to operate in association with political parties that have been official regimes at various points of the conflict.

**Figure 2.** Organized Armed Conflict Involving Pro-Government Militias and Other Non-State Conflict Actors, Africa, 1997-2014.

From a violence management framework, decentralization and democratization periods have increased both violent and non-violent threats to regimes and centralized power. The co-occurring
and simultaneous actions of PGMs is a product of political fragmentation around party, regional, ethnic, or religious divisions during these changes. Political elites support and bolster their power by associating with an armed organization; this leads to a proliferation of groups designed to protect elites over providing internal or external communities. Hence, PGMs are an equal and separate component of purposefully decentralized and overlapping forces, and are used for a specific purpose therein. While there are multiple official agencies that – to a greater or lesser degree – can deal with threats to the state (e.g. rebel forces), PGMs are used by governing political elites to combat personal, local political and party competition. This would imply that a state leader uses PGMs when alternative political contenders compromise his/her personal power or position through specific circumstances that do not necessitate a state response. As other political contenders employ their own militias, so too do regimes cultivate these groups to counteract violent threats from political elites at different scales. This leads to the next hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 2:** PGM activity is positively correlated with the number of armed, active, named opposition groups.

The goal of any violence management strategy is the perpetuation of regime power. As evidence of successful offensive and defensive strategies, PGM violence should contribute to regime longevity, and aid in securing a leader’s survival (Ash, 2016). In combination, counterbalancing, PGMs and repression should be directed towards separate threats, and should in combination secure the position of leaders and regimes. This leads to the final hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Regimes ensure their survival and longevity by establishing counterbalancing strategies, implementing PGMs, and enforcing state repression strategies.

**Data and Research Design**

PGM-Set is a new dataset of pro-government militias active in Africa between 1997 and 2014. PGM-Set is created to account for the intricacies of the ties between PGMs and the state. Three types of PGMs are identified, based on the strength of their relationship to the state and the patron of that relationship. This wider understanding of what may constitute a PGM is important when examining the conflict dynamics of these actors.
All militias coded in the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project\(^\text{13}\) (Raleigh, Linke, Hegre, and Karlsen, 2010) are first isolated and distinguished as ‘political’ or ‘communal’ (ethno-regional) groups. Each PGM group is categorized in a context-specific role, whether locally (i.e. communal, co-ethnic relationship with regimes), politically (i.e. tie to a high-ranking politician, including the President), or a noted alliance to the military forces of the state. The individual groups are then investigated to determine whether they have a reported ‘pro-government affiliation’. These ‘pro-government affiliations’ consist of:

1. A political link to the regime or President.\(^\text{14}\)
2. An allied association with state forces.\(^\text{15}\)
3. A regional or ethnic ties to the regime or President.\(^\text{16}\)

Groups with a political link to the regime or President, and groups that have an allied association with state forces, are involved in a larger proportion of violence against civilians relative to involvement in other conflict activity (approximately 53% and 55% of their conflict activity, respectively). For example, in Sudan, the Janjaweed and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (pre-2014) are PGMs categorized as having both of these affiliations, and are responsible for the majority of violence against civilians carried out by PGMs (over 84% of all instances of civilian targeting in Sudan). For groups with regional or ethnic ties to the regime or President, however, interactions with other armed agents comprise over 58% of their conflict activity, with approximately 41% of conflict activity made up by civilian targeting. For example, groups such as the Abala, Arab, Maaliya, Mundari, Murle, Rizaygat, and Salamat ethnic militias are together responsible for less than 7% of all civilian targeting carried out by PGMs in Sudan. There is hence a difference in which pro-government ties and relationships facilitate greater violence. Table 2 describes the conflict activity of these various PGMs.

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\(^{13}\) Version 1 of the PGM-Set here relies on ACLED, Version 5.

\(^{14}\) Groups that have a stated link to the regime or President in media sources are categorized as having a pro-government affiliation in PGM-Set.

\(^{15}\) Militias that are reported to have allied with state forces at any point are specified as having pro-government affiliations in PGM-Set.

\(^{16}\) Ethnic militias sharing an ethnic affiliation with the President are coded as having pro-government ties in PGM-Set in line with notions that patronage politics so often lay along ethnic cleavages in Africa (for example, see: Eifert, Miguel, and Posner, 2010).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PGMs having an allied association with state forces</th>
<th>46.1%</th>
<th>1.1%</th>
<th>52.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PGMs with a political link to the regime or President</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGMs with regional or ethnic ties to the regime or President</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 247 unique African PGMs are identified in PGM-Set. In comparison to another PGM collection, between 1997 and 2007 the Carey et al. (2013) dataset of active PGMs identifies 99 unique groups active in Africa. While many of the identified PGMs overlap across the two datasets, there are differences in spatial coverage. For example, between PGM-Set and Carey et al. (2013) in Kenya during the overlapping years of 1997 to 2007, PGM-Set identifies seven unique PGMs (to Carey et al.’s three groups), and approximately 14% of all organized, armed conflict involved the seven named groups.

The unit of observation for testing Hypotheses 1 and 2 is country-year. The differences across states and within states over time can illustrate and test the conditions of emergence and PGM use by different regime types and leaders. Conflict data come from the ACLED project (Raleigh et al., 2010), from which armed, organized conflict events were extracted; this information is also used to create lagged variables accounting for organized, armed conflict events occurring within a state the prior year, as well as occurring within bordering African countries the prior year. Additionally, data surrounding the number of named, armed conflict actors taking up arms against the state are also extracted.

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17 Groups that exist in Carey et al.’s (2013) PGM dataset are crosschecked against conflict actors that are listed within the ACLED dataset; groups who share (similar) names and dates of conflict activity are included in PGM-Set as having a political link to the regime or President.

18 A number of these ten groups were active in late 2007 during President Kibaki’s election bid; however none of these groups are recorded by Carey et al. (2013).

19 These PGMs active in Kenya between 1997 and 2007 in PGM-Set are: the Kalenjin ethnic militia, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the Kikuyu ethnic militia, the Mungiki Militia, the Pokot ethnic militia, the Samburu ethnic militia, and the Turkana ethnic militia.

20 Conflict variables are normalized for analysis.
Counterbalancing data (Pilster and Böhmelt, 2012:360) “incorporate information on both the number of rivaling military organizations and their respective strengths to capture the degree to which a state divides its military manpower into rivaling organizations.” This measure identifies all ground-combat compatible military organizations within each country, and includes both regular forces (e.g. regular and active army and marine corps troops), as well as paramilitary organizations. The index calculates the degree to which a country engages in counterbalancing in a given year, as a result of the effective number of ground-combat compatible military organizations the country has.

Additional data are also included as controls. Annual state population is used as a proxy for state productivity; these data come from the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2015) and are logged for analysis. An election year dummy (i.e. whether it is an election year within the state) is also included; these data come from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset (Coppedge et al., 2015). State fixed effects are also included within these models.

The unit of observation for Hypothesis 3 is country-leader, as it explores the additional effect of PGMs, counterbalancing efforts, and repression on leader survival. Conflict data on state repression efforts (i.e. battles against armed opposition groups, and targeting of civilians) are from ACLED (Raleigh et al., 2010). Information surrounding the length of leader survival in tenure comes from the Archigos dataset (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza, 2009). These data are used to determine the number of days as well as years a leader was in office.

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21 This measure of counterbalancing differs from Belkin and Schofer’s (2003, 2005). It accounts only for ground-based forces, “as these are the only forces whose independent coercive capacities can be used to balance any military unit considering or trying to overthrow a regime” (Pilster and Böhmelt, 2012:360). It does not include navies and air forces within counts of military and paramilitary organizations of a state, as these organizations were arguably not created “with the purpose of using their coercive capacities to balance military units aiming at overthrowing the regime” (Pilster and Böhmelt, 2012:360). Only instances of marine units within navies and paratroopers within air forces are included. See Pilster and Böhmelt (2012) for further discussion of the calculation of this index.

22 Population data is only available up to 2013; values for 2013 are used to fill missing values for 2014.

23 The five instances where a leader took office for a second, distinct time are treated as unique instances here in regard to country-leader observations. These instances include: Kabbah of Sierra Leone, Vieira of Guinea-Bissau, Sanha of Guinea-Bissau, Gnassingbé of Togo, and Abdel Aziz of Mauritania.
Additional data are also included as controls here. Annual state population is included, and data come from the World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2015) and are logged for analysis. A dummy variable accounting for whether a state experienced civil war during a leader’s tenure is also included; this information comes from ACLED (Raleigh et al., 2010). Lastly, a measure of government effectiveness is also included; this information comes from the World Governance Indicators (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, 2013).

A number of negative binomial regression models and fixed effects linear models are run for analysis. See Table 3 for an extensive description of the variables and data sources outlined above.

**Results**

Results for ten negative binomial and OLS regression models are below. Models 1 and 2 test Hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively. Models 3 through 10 test the effects of PGM conflict activity, counterbalancing, and state repression – separately and jointly – on leadership tenure, measured as both the number of days and years in office, respectively.

First, Hypothesis 1 is tested – whether PGM activity co-occurs with counterbalancing efforts. Model 1 in Table 4 finds that the rate of armed conflict events in which PGMs are involved is positively correlated with counterbalancing efforts. This is in support of Hypothesis 1, suggesting that these organizations are specifically designed to deal with different scales of threats as one does not replace the other. Figure 3 depicts states’ counterbalancing efforts and rates of PGM activity, and Table 5 provides examples of states where counterbalancing rates may be high/low and the rate of PGM activity may be high/low, and vice-versa.

Hypothesis 2 asks whether opposition to the state affects the rate of PGM activity. Model 2 in Table 4 relays that the number of named, armed actors taking up arms against the state is positively

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24 This measure “captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government’s commitment to such policies” (Kaufmann et al., 2013). The range of this variable was altered to 0-5, changed from its original state of -2.5 to +2.5. The World Governance Indicators (Kaufmann et al., 2013) only offer governance data up to 2012, and are missing data for 1997, 1999 and 2001; missing values for 1997, 1999, 2001, and 2013 were filled in with country averages for analysis here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Armed Conflict Events</strong></td>
<td>Number of organized, armed conflict events that occurred in a given state in a given year (normalized)</td>
<td>1997-2014</td>
<td>2.70 (1.86)</td>
<td>0 - 7.18</td>
<td>ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PGM Conflict Events</strong></td>
<td>Number of organized, armed conflict events involving PGMs that occurred in a given state in a given year (normalized)</td>
<td>1997-2014</td>
<td>2.11 (1.66)</td>
<td>0 - 6.41</td>
<td>PGM-Set; ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Armed Actors Against State</strong></td>
<td>Number of distinct, named, armed actors against the state in a given year (normalized)</td>
<td>1997-2014</td>
<td>0.92 (0.84)</td>
<td>0 - 3.37</td>
<td>ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counterbalancing (country-year)</strong></td>
<td>Index capturing the degree to which a state engages in counterbalancing in a given year; based on the number of rivaling military organizations and their respective strengths</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>1.63 (0.61)</td>
<td>1 - 4.45</td>
<td>Pilster &amp; Böhmelt, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counterbalancing (country-leader)</strong></td>
<td>Index measuring the average degree to which a state engages in counterbalancing during the tenure of a leader; calculated as the average value of the country-year counterbalancing index during the tenure of a leader</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>1.69 (0.64)</td>
<td>1 - 3.83</td>
<td>Pilster &amp; Böhmelt, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader Survival (Days)</strong></td>
<td>A measure of leadership survival and tenure captured by the number of days a leader remains in office</td>
<td>1961 - 2014</td>
<td>3165.66 (3730.92)</td>
<td>1 - 15331</td>
<td>Archigos, Goemans et al., 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader Survival (Years)</strong></td>
<td>A measure of leadership survival and tenure captured by the number of years a leader remains in office</td>
<td>1961 - 2014</td>
<td>8.67 (10.22)</td>
<td>0.0027 - 42.0027</td>
<td>Archigos, Goemans et al., 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion of PGM Conflict</strong></td>
<td>Proportion of all organized, armed conflict events involving PGMs occurring during the tenure of a leader</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>0.12 (0.16)</td>
<td>0 - 0.80</td>
<td>PGM-Set; ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion of State Conflict</strong></td>
<td>Proportion of all organized, armed conflict events involving state forces occurring during the tenure of a leader</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>0.40 (0.22)</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Variable</strong></td>
<td>Interaction variable -- accounting for (1) the proportion of all organized, armed conflict events involving PGMs, (2) the counterbalancing indicator, and (3) the proportion of all organized, armed conflict events involving state forces -- occurring during the tenure of a leader</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>0.06 (0.09)</td>
<td>0 - 0.49</td>
<td>PGM-Set; ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010; Pilster &amp; Böhmelt, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Election Year</strong></td>
<td>Dummy variable capturing an election year in a given state</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>0.04 (0.34)</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>V-Dem, Coppedge et al., 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior Armed Conflict</strong></td>
<td>Number of organized, armed conflict events that occurred in a given state in the previous year (normalized)</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>2.65 (1.84)</td>
<td>0 - 7.18</td>
<td>ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior Bordering Conflict</strong></td>
<td>Spatial lag variable capturing number of organized, armed conflict events that occurred in bordering states in the previous year (normalized)</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>4.99 (1.51)</td>
<td>0 - 8.37</td>
<td>ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil War</strong></td>
<td>Dummy variable capturing a civil war during the tenure of a leader</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>0.36 (0.48)</td>
<td>0 - 1</td>
<td>ACLED, Raleigh et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government Effectiveness Index</strong></td>
<td>Index capturing average &quot;perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies&quot; during the tenure of a leader</td>
<td>1997 - 2014</td>
<td>1.92 (0.56)</td>
<td>0.73 - 3.30</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), Kaufmann et al., 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
correlated with the rate of armed conflict events in which PGMs are involved. This is in support of Hypothesis 2, pointing to the need for PGMs to fend off domestic threats against the regime.

Table 4. Results for Hypotheses 1 and 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Counterbalancing Indicator</th>
<th>(2) Armed Conflict Involving PGMs (ln)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Armed Conflict Events Involving PGMs (ln)</td>
<td>0.0223* (0.0125)</td>
<td>0.219* (0.132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Armed Actors Against the State (ln)</td>
<td>-0.0319** (0.0150)</td>
<td>0.612*** (0.0938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Armed Conflict Events (ln)</td>
<td>-0.0319** (0.0150)</td>
<td>0.612*** (0.0938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterbalancing Indicator</td>
<td>0.448 (0.338)</td>
<td>0.448 (0.338)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (ln)</td>
<td>0.184* (0.0974)</td>
<td>-0.0178 (0.577)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Armed Conflict Events in Prior Year (ln)</td>
<td>0.00434 (0.0130)</td>
<td>-0.00615 (0.0824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Armed Conflict Events in Prior Year in Bordering States (ln)</td>
<td>-0.00216 (0.0158)</td>
<td>-0.115 (0.101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Year (dummy)</td>
<td>-0.0248 (0.0315)</td>
<td>0.392** (0.185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.822 (1.589)</td>
<td>1.118 (9.294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of States</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5. PGM Presence and Counterbalancing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low PGM Presence</th>
<th>Low Counterbalancing</th>
<th>High Counterbalancing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>• Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Swaziland</td>
<td>• Niger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High PGM Presence</td>
<td>• DR-Congo</td>
<td>• Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Libya</td>
<td>• Ivory Coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The accountability theory argues that PGMs are kept distinct from state military forces, as opposed to being absorbed by the military, to distance state forces from responsibility for particular brutal or shameful acts of violence (e.g. increasingly lethal civilian targeting). However, this does not account for why so many distinct PGMs exist within the same state, or why states may carry out brutal attacks in combination with PGM activity. Findings here suggest that PGMs may be kept separate from state forces because engaging PGMs, establishing counterbalancing strategies, and enforcing state repression strategies simultaneously result in the most ‘effective’ strategy for state leaders to ensure their survival and longevity in power.

Models 3 through 10 in Table 6 test this in light of Hypothesis 3; each pair of models tests the effect on the number of days or years spent in power by a leader, respectively. Models 3 and 4 find that the
Table 6. Results for Hypothesis 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>(10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Days in Office</td>
<td>Number of Years in Office</td>
<td>Number of Days in Office</td>
<td>Number of Years in Office</td>
<td>Number of Days in Office</td>
<td>Number of Years in Office</td>
<td>Number of Days in Office</td>
<td>Number of Years in Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Armed Conflict Events Involving PGMs</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>-2.412*</td>
<td>-1.829</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterbalancing Indicator</td>
<td>(0.847)</td>
<td>(0.758)</td>
<td>-0.206</td>
<td>-0.204</td>
<td>-0.452**</td>
<td>-0.439***</td>
<td>(0.179)</td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Armed Conflict Events Involving State Repression</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>0.602</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>0.602</td>
<td>(0.542)</td>
<td>(0.484)</td>
<td>(0.648)</td>
<td>(0.563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Variable (PGM Conflict, Counterbalancing, State Repression)</td>
<td>5.449**</td>
<td>4.633***</td>
<td>(2.163)</td>
<td>(1.725)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (ln)</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>-0.0844</td>
<td>-0.0838</td>
<td>-0.0952</td>
<td>-0.0935</td>
<td>-0.114</td>
<td>-0.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War (dummy)</td>
<td>0.473*</td>
<td>0.469**</td>
<td>0.472*</td>
<td>0.473**</td>
<td>0.400</td>
<td>0.401*</td>
<td>0.592**</td>
<td>0.577**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Effectiveness Indicator</td>
<td>(0.263)</td>
<td>(0.236)</td>
<td>(0.250)</td>
<td>(0.224)</td>
<td>(0.255)</td>
<td>(0.228)</td>
<td>(0.256)</td>
<td>(0.227)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
proportion of armed conflict events involving PGMs has no direct effect on the survival of a leader, and neither do counterbalancing (Models 5 and 6). Similarly, Models 7 and 8 find that state repression (i.e. the proportion of armed conflict events consisting of state repression strategies, including state battles against armed opposition and targeting of civilians) has no direct effect on the survival of a leader. Models 9 and 10, however, find that the interaction of these variables – i.e. when all of these strategies are used simultaneously – to have a statistically significant and positive effect on the survival of a leader, in support of Hypothesis 3.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Militias are violent organizations designed to perpetuate conflict to influence the distribution of power and pursue the agendas of political elites. PGMs are a subsection of this larger community of violent agents who engage in conflict, often against civilians, to protect or strengthen the power of the regime in developing states. PGMs represent informal conflicts that mirror the formal security structure and problems in states. PGM presence is based on the threat type and level that governments experience from domestic competition, including that internal to the government.

Militias generally, and PGMs specifically, have increased in number and action in recent years across developing states. Many African and developing states have political environments that can be aptly characterized as ‘oligopolies’ of violence, instead of monopolies. They have become the primary agents of political violence for several reasons: they are a flexible, ‘cheap’ forces that allow political elites and regimes to distance themselves from the violence they perpetuate both in and outside of ‘formal’ conflict periods; they have arisen in conjunction with the rise of ‘inclusive’ political elite competition; and they allow governments to perpetuate intense and fatal violence without direct attribution or sanction but in keeping with networks of alliance and power. PGM violence as an extension of competition internal to governance processes in patronage states is in line with Mazzei (2009) on Latin America, Ahram (2011a, 2011b, 2014) on the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and Raleigh (2016) on Africa.

In addition to the domestic threats that regimes face as a result of political elites and inclusive politics, African leaders still face a high internal risk of coups, purges, putsches, and mutinies (Roessler, 2011) and increasingly a vocal public who engage in public protest. In response to these myriad threats, and to assure the continuation of the regime despite instability from several areas and
scales, developing states engage in ‘violence management’ both in overtly conflictual and non-conflict periods. Violence management involves three strategies: (1) repression by state forces of public protests and civilians; (2) counterbalancing strategies through the fragmentation of military and police organizations and the establishment of specialized paramilitary forces. These auxiliary state forces operate as supplements to particular branches and elites in governments, as the internal fractures within developing countries’ institutional structures is often significant and exerts a far greater threat to the stability of the state than external threats; and (3) the creation, use, and support for multiple PGMs across the state. Multiple PGMs are often found within states corresponding to the threat they are designed to contain. Regime parties, local ethno-regional affiliates, and allied political authorities can each establish PGMs across the state to address and mitigate threats. These combined strategies work to ‘manage’ violence and, in combination, are associated with violence ‘benefitting’ the state and prolong office tenure. In contrast to explanations of political violence that suggest conflict emerges from crisis, and the presence of conflict is indicative of state weakness, the violence management framework and the use of PGMs illustrate how strong states experience a myriad of threats, but are able employ violence within their territory to effectively mitigate instability. PGMs are therefore a critical component of strong state power, as they indicate how threats to regimes emerge from local competition, party competition, and national political agendas.
References


