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Beyond the fallacy of coup-ism: conceptualizing civilian control of the military in emerging democracies

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It is consensus in the democratization literature that civilian control of the military is a necessary ingredient for democracy and democratic consolidation. However, there is considerable disagreement on what civilian control of the military exactly entails and there is a lack of solid theoretical arguments for how weak or absent civilian control affects democratic governance. Furthermore, a considerable portion of the research literature is captured by the fallacy of coup-ism, ignoring the many other forms in which military officers can constrain the authority of democratically elected political leaders to make political decisions and get them implemented. This article addresses these lacunae by providing a new conceptual framework for the analysis of civil–military relations in emerging democracies. From democracy theory it derives a definition of civilian control as a certain distribution of decision-making power between civilian leaders and military officers. Based on this definition, the authors develop a five-dimensional concept of civilian control, discuss the effects of weakly institutionalized civilian control on the quality of democracy and address the chances for democratic consolidation.

Keywords: armed forces; democracy; democratization; democratic consolidation; democracy theory; civilian control; civil–military relations; military; new democracies

1. Introduction

The theme of this article is the position that civilian control of the military is a necessary condition for democratic rule. Only if democratically elected political leaders and their appointed officials control the armed forces can democratic rules and processes persist.[1] At the same time, in many countries which have made the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in the last three decades, civilian control remains contested. Arguably, this has led to stagnation and regress in democratic consolidation and sometimes even resulted in outright democratic breakdown. Certainly, civilian control of the military is possible without

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democracy and frictions in civil–military relations are not the only challenge to democratic consolidation in many newly democratized nations.[2] Nor is the implementation of civilian control the only problem of reforming the security sector in third wave democracies.[3] However, it is a fundamental premise of democratization theory that democracy is not possible without civilian control over the military.

Notwithstanding the agreement on the relevance of the topic, there is considerable disagreement on a precise model of civilian control. Furthermore, there is a lack of solid theoretical arguments for why exactly civilian control is so important for democracy, and what effects weak or absent civilian control have for the 'quality' of democracy.[4] Instead, most democratization studies seem to implicitly equate civilian control with the absence of military coups. From this perspective, further theoretical reflection on the relationship between civilian control and democracy is unnecessary as the fatal influence of a military takeover on democratic quality is evident. However, this lack of conceptual reflection has hampered the accumulation of knowledge as the relationship between civilians and the military in new democracies is much more complex than the 'fallacy of coup-ism' implies.[5]

This article addresses this shortcoming by providing a new conceptual framework for the analysis of civil–military relations in new democracies. In this, we define civil–military relations as the interaction between the leaders of the armed forces and political elites occupying the key national government positions in the state.[6] This definition is significantly narrower than the new paradigm of 'security sector governance' since the latter, policy-oriented framework is too diffuse to be of analytical use.

The remainder of the article is guided by three questions: (1) What is the relevance of civilian control for democratic consolidation? (2) How can civilian control be defined, conceptualized and operationalized without falling prey to the 'fallacy of coup-ism'? And, (3) what are the implications of weak civilian control for democratic consolidation? In addressing these questions, we proceed in five steps. First, we discuss the relationship between democratic rule and civilian control. Secondly, we offer a definition of civilian control. Thirdly, we elaborate on this definition, proposing a multidimensional conceptualization of civilian control which differentiates five analytically distinct areas of civil–military relations. Fourthly, we discuss the implications of weak or absent civilian control for liberal democracy. Finally, we conclude by briefly summarizing our argumentation and discussing the value of our new approach for the accumulation of knowledge in civil–military relations research.

2. Democracy and civilian control of the military

Democracy is a form of government in which political power exclusively derives from the 'freely expressed will of the people whereby all individuals are to be treated as equals'.[7] This definition highlights three democratic values which are at the core of most modern understandings of democratic rule: peoples' sovereignty,

equality, and liberty.[8] The different understandings of how to realize these principles has led to multiple interpretations of democracy.[9] These alternatives range from minimalist-procedural 'electoral' versions, which equate democracy with the existence of a functional system of elections and representative government,[10] to 'thick' conceptions such as 'participatory', 'deliberative', or 'strong' democracies.[11]

Most of the recent contemporary empirical research on the transition to and consolidation of democracy, however, is grounded in an institutionalist understanding of 'liberal democracy' which takes a middle ground between the minimalist 'electoral' type and the substantively demanding notions of 'participatory democracy'.[12] 'Liberal democracy' adds to the electoral minimum the existence of a regime of fundamental civil rights, the rule of law, the institutionalization of horizontal accountability as well as civilian control over the military.

In an attempt to translate the theoretical notion of 'liberal democracy' into a conceptual framework, Wolfgang Merkel et al. developed the multidimensional concept of 'embedded democracy'.[13] At the core lies the assumption that in order to fulfil all three democratic principles in a given political system, a set of institutions must be established which can analytically be disaggregated into five 'partial regimes': (A) the electoral system, (B) a system of political liberties, (C) a system of civil rights, (D) a system of horizontal accountability, (E) and a system of institutions which guarantee the effective power for the democratically elected representatives.

- Partial regime A institutionalizes the democratic principle of peoples' sovereignty and responsive and accountable rule through universal, free, fair and meaningful elections.
- Partial regime B complements the electoral regime by providing for the necessary political rights of participation and articulation which are necessary to make elections meaningful instruments of vertical accountability: the rights of free political association and unhindered information.
- Partial regime C limits the exercise of political power, prevents the abuse of political authority and guarantees individual freedom through a set of civil liberties.
- Partial regime D prevents the abuse of state power and ensures inter-agency supervision through institutional checks-and-balances between the legislative, executive and judicative branches.
- Finally, partial regime E includes those institutions which guarantee that it is the democratically elected politicians alone who exercise decision-making authority in all relevant political issues.[14] They prevent extra-constitutional actors not subject to democratic legitimization and accountability from incising the legitimate political authorities' power to govern.

While analytically discernible, the partial regimes of embedded democracy are considered interdependent, each providing specific functions for the whole

without which democracy will not work. Hence, democracy is only achieved if each partial regime operates according to its internal logic and the partial regimes provide reciprocal functions for each other. Simultaneously, if any of the five partial regimes is undermined, 'liberal democracy' deteriorates into 'defective democracy' or – if the damage to the overall system is sufficiently large – leads to democratic collapse.[15]

In this context, we identify the problem of civilian control of the military in partial regime E.[16] The failure of civilians to effectively control their armed forces has been described as being 'sufficient to account for the existence of non-democratic regimes in many countries'.[17] Yet challenges in civilians' 'effective power to govern' are not limited to the military. In fact, whenever groups which are not democratically legitimized acquire the power to make and implement decisions autonomously from the elected representatives, the functionality of partial regime E diminishes. Thereby, the electoral regime's function as a safeguard for public control of and citizens' participation in politics is undermined.[18] Hence, elected officials' effective power to govern can be circumscribed by various veto actors, for example, militias, monarchs, or religious leaders.[19] As the ability to gain such decision-making autonomy depends on the power resources the respective groups have at their disposal, in most countries it is the military which is particularly well situated to encroach on the democratically elected representatives' effective power to govern. The very features that enable militaries to fulfil their mission, protecting communities by projecting coercive force towards enemies, also grants them the ability to enforce their will upon the societies that created them.[20] Therefore, all societies and political regimes must ensure that the military is subordinate to legitimate political decision-makers.[21]

This problem, however, is particularly relevant for emerging democracies. For one, in most newly democratized countries the armed forces had been an important political player in the authoritarian regime coalition – if they had not themselves been the rulers. This means that in most new democracies the armed forces are politicized and used to be actively engaged in more or less concrete forms and varying degrees of influencing politics. Furthermore, authoritarian rulers usually secure the military's support by granting them wide ranging benefits, ranging from generous revenues up to autonomous decision-making authority in security and defence policy. During democratic transition and consolidation, however, this poses a double challenge on the democratic elites. Not only must they demilitarize the political system by cutting back military prerogatives and extending their own decision-making ability into former military domains; they also must do so against a military leadership which has a tradition of political involvement and which might be willing and able to resist such threats to their corporate interests by open opposition or even by force. At the same time, the ability of the democratizers to push through wide-ranging changes against the will of the military is often contested by the political and social attributes typical of many transition countries. Usually, political institutions are in flux and cannot yet provide robust and unambiguous structures for conflict resolution. At the same time, civil society and

political parties are often weakly developed and the normative support to the new democratic rules and processes is often brittle. Given these circumstances, it is possible that the military steps in to challenge civilian attempts at curtailing their privileges or even to supplant the democratically elected government.[22] It is exactly this challenge which makes the robust institutionalization of civilian control of the military so important for the consolidation of democracy.

3. Defining civilian control

The study of civil–military relations is a long-established and immensely rich research field. It exhibits a bewildering variety of different definitions, concepts and models of civilian control.[23] At the same time, many empirical studies are criticized for lacking theoretically grounded conceptualizations of the contents and boundaries of civilian control.[24] Furthermore, in the past, civil–military relations have often been understood as a dichotomy between civilian control and overt military intervention. As such, civilian control has become implicitly defined as the absence of military takeover and military rule.[25]

Yet the 'fallacy of coup-ism' suffers from theoretical and empirical flaws. Theoretically, simplistic dichotomies reduce the complexity of civil–military relations to only one partial aspect, establishing the most extreme form of military intervention as a benchmark for whether a society possesses civilian control or not.[26] Indeed, as much as elections alone are not sufficient for democracy, the absence of coups is not sufficient for civilian control. Furthermore, defining civilian control as the absence of coups logically implies that as long as there are no coups, all is well in civil–military relations. Consequently, most other forms of military assertions of political influence would be considered compatible with civilian control.[27] This is problematic, however, since the absence of coups might just as well be understood as an indicator for the military enjoying a high degree of political influence vis-à-vis civilians.[28]

Empirically, while coups have not completely vanished, their number has dwindled significantly in recent years.[29] However, the literature on democratic transitions suggests that in many countries the military has yet to completely surrender its political power. In fact, militaries in many former authoritarian regimes seem to have adjusted to the new *zeitgeist* of the post-'third wave' world by formally accepting the new political order. At the same time, however, they demanded exemption from punishment for human rights violations committed during the authoritarian regime and secured for themselves *reserved domains* and *tutelary power* in political arenas such as defence and security policy.[30]

Minimalist conceptions of civilian control are unable to analytically capture these more nuanced patterns of military political influence.[31] The point of reference for a comprehensive understanding of civilian control must therefore not be *whether* the military yields political influence, but *how* and *how much.* In line with the democracy theory discussion above, our approach originates from the theoretical assumption that civil–military relations can be understood as the

distribution of decision-making power between civilians and the military. Civilian control marks one pole of the decision-making power continuum, the situation in which 'civilians make all the rules and can change them at any time'.[32] Accordingly we define civilian control as that *distribution of decision-making power in which civilians alone have the authority to decide on national politics and their implementation. Under civilian control, civilians can freely choose to delegate decision-making power and the implementation of certain policies to the military while the military has no autonomous decision-making power outside those areas specifically defined by civilians. Furthermore, it is civilians alone who determine which particular policies, or policy aspects, the military implements, and civilians also define the boundaries between policy-making and policy-implementation. Moreover, civilian authorities must possess sanctioning power vis-à-vis the military, and they can – in principle – revise their decisions at any time*.[33]

If civilian control marks the 'positive pole'[34] of the civil–military relations continuum, the negative pole can be conceived of as the distribution of decision-making power in which the military dominates all political structures, processes, and policies while civilians lack any autonomous political authority. Naturally, in between these poles lies a 'grey zone' in which political decision-making power is somewhat divided between civilians and the military. To conceptually capture the diversity of such configurations, civil–military distributions of decision-making power must be disaggregated into substantive areas which can then be empirically analysed to evaluate the overall state of civil–military relations in a given country.[35] This will be elaborated upon in the next section.

4. Conceptualizing and operationalizing civilian control

In order to differentiate various states on the decision-making continuum and to systematically assess the degree of civilian control, civil–military relations can be analytically divided into different policy arenas. The first systematic multidimensional conception of civil–military relations was proposed by Timothy Colton in a seminal study on the political role of the Soviet military.[36] Following Colton's work, Muthiah Alagappa and Harold Trinkunas have developed new approaches to capture different patterns of the civil–military power relationship.[37] Building on their work, we analytically distinguish five decision-making areas: elite recruitment, public policy, internal security, national defence, and military organization (Figure 1). By investigating the distribution of decision-making power in each of these five areas and then aggregating the results, the degree to which civilian control has been realized in a given country can be assessed. Fully-fledged civilian control requires that civilian authorities enjoy uncontested decision-making power in all five areas while in the ideal-type military regime the armed forces dominate all political matters.

In order to appreciate the degree of civilian control in each of the five areas, one has to measure the extent to which civilians have the ability to effectively make decisions concerning the respective policy matters and to what degree

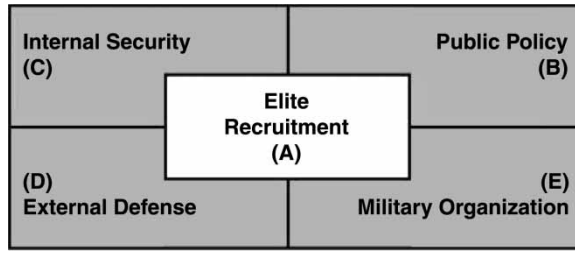

Figure 1. Decision-making areas of civil–military relations.

this ability is circumscribed by the military. Challenges to civilian decision-making power can take two analytically distinct shapes: formally *institutionalized prerogatives* and informal *contestation*.[38] *Institutionalized prerogatives* describe formal rights by which the military is able 'to exercise effective control over its internal governance, to play a role within extra-military areas within the state apparatus, or even to structure relationships between the state and political or social society'.[39] Examples of military prerogatives can be found in Ecuador and Turkey, where a role for the armed forces as 'guardian of the nation' is inscribed in each country's constitution, ensuring them considerable influence in political matters.[40] *Contestation*, by contrast, encompasses informal military interventions or other illegitimate behaviour by which the military challenges civilian decision-making power, for instance by engaging in illegitimate conduct or by challenging formal regulations which are supposed to grant civilians political influence in military and defence affairs. Since both types of military influence circumscribe the decision-making power of civilian elites, civilian control over any area depends on the absence of both formal prerogatives and informal contestation.

Below, we discuss each decision-making area and present indicators by which the extent of civilian control over that area can be measured ordinally (see also the Appendix for a combined table of the areas and their respective indicators). We distinguish between three 'intensities' of civilian control – high, medium and low. The indicator is high if the military does not enjoy formal or informal guarantees of authority. It is at medium where the armed forces enjoy certain formal or de facto privileges but is unable to monopolize them. The indicator is at low if the military dominates decision-making or implementation either thanks to formal regulations or through informal influence.

The exact thresholds between the three intensities cannot be defined a priori in the sense of a quantifiable value. Clear-cut measures of whether a certain interaction between civilians and soldiers indicates a high degree of civilian control or, for example, is indicative of a switch from military dominance to a more mixed pattern of the distribution of decision-making authority, cannot be classified beforehand and without knowledge of the actual cases in which the interaction occurs.

(A) Elite recruitment

This area defines the rules, criteria and processes of recruiting, selecting, and legitimizing political office holders. An actor who controls this area is thus able to define 'who rules and who decides who rules'.[41] Following Robert Dahl, these rules and procedures can be analytically disaggregated into two theoretical dimensions: (1) the rules of competition, that is, the degree of openness of the political processes, and (2) participation, that is the inclusiveness of the political competition.[42] In order to gauge the degree of civilian control over elite recruitment, it must be analysed to what extent the military is able to exercise influence over the realization and concrete form of both dimensions. Civilian control over the *rules of competition* is undermined if relevant public offices are excluded from open competition because positions of power are reserved for representatives of the military (for example, soldiers in the cabinet); and if the military can influence the procedures of political competition by which the holders of political office are chosen (for example, military manipulation of electoral processes). Civilian control over the *dimension of participation* is constrained if active military personnel are eligible for public office; and if the military can exercise power over the forming or dissolving of governments (for example, by informally supporting a particular coalition or open interventions to oust civilian leaders). Examples for such latter defects are widespread as the military tried to influence leadership selection in many new democracies. In the Philippines, for instance, the military staged not less than eight coup attempts after the transition to democracy and the Thai military toppled democratically elected Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in September 2006.[43] Furthermore, in a recent episode, generals did away with Manuel Zelaya, President of Honduras.[44] Even more often, however, military influence on elite recruitment takes the form of reserved representation in political decision-making bodies. In the Southeast Asian third wave democracies, for instance, the military was able to reserve for itself parliamentary seats for years into the democratic era.[45]

(B) Public policy

This area comprises three phases of the policy-making process ('agenda-setting', 'policy-formulation'; 'policy-adoption') as well as policy implementation regarding all national policies except the narrowly understood aspects of security and defence policy. Civilian control over this area means that civilians alone decide on the contents, scope, and duration of policy decisions and possess effective means to control and supervise the administrative implementation of these decisions. To determine civilian control over the first dimension of policy-making, it must be analysed to what extent the armed forces can assert their interests in the processes of agenda setting, policy formulation, and policy adoption in fields like fiscal, monetary and economic policy, foreign policy, public welfare, and symbolic policies. Furthermore, civilian control necessitates that the military does

not play a prominent role in budgetary decision-making and that the military budgeting process must be openly arrived at in competition with other government priorities which precludes that the defence establishment cannot claim a right to be the first in line in public spending. Finally, the military must not exert influence on the administrative agencies charged with implementing political decisions (for example, military control over decision-making in a particular ministry).[46] Examples for defects in this area can be found in many of the emerging democracies of Latin America, where the military successfully hampered civilian governments from prosecuting human rights violations during the military regimes.[47]

(C) Internal security

This area entails all decisions regarding the preservation and restoration of domestic law and order, ranging from counterinsurgency operations, counterterrorism and domestic intelligence-gathering up to daily law enforcement and border control.[48] As it concerns the safety and stability of the state and society, these policy matters are directly related to the *raison d'être* of the body politic. For civilian control over internal security to be present, all internal security activities must be under the command of the legitimate civilian authorities and must be carried out according to their prescriptions. This does not preclude the military to take over some of these responsibilities, for example, in emergency situations. In fact, the military might be the only state agency able to cope with certain internal security challenges, like armed rebellion, widespread insurgency or terrorism.[49] Civilian control, however, presupposes that (1) civilians have the right and actual capacity to decide on the range, duration, and frequency of all such operations, and (2) they must be able to direct their implementation by the military. In order to measure the degree of civilian control over internal security it must be analysed to what extent civilians formulate the goals and decide on the measures meant to uphold internal security, and if the civilian agencies charged with upholding domestic security and law-enforcement are independent from the military. Furthermore, for those instances in which the military is tasked with conducting domestic operations, these missions must be monitored and conducted according to civilian principals' orders and guidelines. Challenges to civilian control in internal security are widespread in many emerging democracies. Particularly in the new democracies of Southeast Asia which are plagued by internal threats to the state and militant insurgencies, militaries control much of the internal security apparatuses without any effective civilian oversight.[50]

(D) National defence

This area includes all measures aimed at securing and defending territorial integrity against external security threats. These measures range from devising the basic defence posture and security doctrines, to the deployment of troops abroad and the preparation and actual conduct of war.[51] The failure to define adequate

defence policies can at best be a waste of scarce state resources, as budgets and manpower may be allocated inefficiently or ineffectively.[52] At worst, it could lead to disastrous consequences, like defeat in armed conflict, the collapse of the state, and the wide-spread destruction of human life and property. Hence, command of a nation's defence policy is an important responsibility of the political leadership. Civilian control of this area means that all policies to defend the state against external threats must be under the command of legitimate civilian authorities and must be implemented according to their prescriptions. This includes effective institutions of defence planning, oversight and control like civilian-led and functional ministries of defence and active parliamentary defence committees. Civilian control over national defence policy does not preclude military influence in defence policy per se. In fact, the soldiers' specialized expertise is an important resource for civilian decision-makers for adequate and effective national defence policies. The distinction, however, is that civilians alone must be able to ultimately decide on defence policies and can monitor their implementation. Hence, the concrete state of civilian control over this area depends on the degree to which (1) civilians have effective and ultimate decision-making authority on all aspects of defence politics; and (2) if they are able to effectively oversee the military's implementation of defence policies.[53] Establishing robust civilian control over national defence is a notorious problem for most new democracies. Effective civilian decision-making and oversight over defence policy have been illusive in many of the transitional states of Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia well into the democratic period.[54]

(E) Military organization

This area comprises decisions regarding all organizational aspects of the military institution, which can be separated into two dimensions. The first refers to the material aspects or 'hardware' of military organization: force size and structure, procurement and production of military equipment, as well as other institutional, financial and technological resources of the military. The second dimension includes subjective elements ('software'), that is, the ideational aspects of military organization, like doctrine and education; and decisions on personnel selection, that is, recruitment, appointment and retirement.[55] The size of the armed forces, their command structures, recruitment patterns, training and doctrine have an influence on the general posture vis-à-vis external threats and limit the range of possible alternatives for defence policy.[56] Thus, it is important for civilian authorities to be able to influence matters of military organization. There is, however, a trade-off between the legitimate interest of civilian principals to influence the inner workings of the military agent and the problem that too frequent and extensive micro-management is problematic.[57] For civilian authorities to define and control all details of military organization is impossible and arguably inefficient. Civilian control is in principle compatible with the military enjoying large degrees of autonomy in its internal affairs, but only if civilians have decided to grant the military these

autonomies and are, at least in principle, able to revoke this decision and redraw the boundaries of professional autonomy at any time.[58] In order to measure the degree of civilian control over the area of military organization, it must therefore be analysed if civilians have the actual authority to decide on the 'hardware' and the 'software' dimensions of military organization and to what extent civilians are capable of establishing the boundaries of military decision-making authority concerning its internal affairs. Even more so than in the cases of national defence policies, militaries have successfully hampered civilian attempts to reorganize and restructure military establishments in many emerging democracies. In Russia, for instance, in spite of a long tradition of military subordination to the Soviet and Russian civilian principals, defence reforms aimed at have been repeatedly stalled due to the opposition of the conservative military leadership.[59]

Based on this five-dimensional concept, civil–military relations in a given state can be systematically evaluated and changes can be traced over time. In addition, it offers a stringent analytical framework for cross-national comparisons of civil–military relations in new democracies. Lastly, it provides the theoretical foundation for a nuanced discussion of the implications of weakly institutionalized or absent civilian control, which we will discuss in the following section. For a concise overview of the five areas and their respective indicators, see Table 1 in the appendix.

5. The implications of weak civilian control on democratic consolidation

While it is widely accepted that civilian control is a *sine qua non* for democratic consolidation, the effects of weakly institutionalized civilian control on the quality and consolidation of democratic rule have thus far not been theorized. Most of the literature focuses on the 'regime-level' relationship between control and democracy, neglecting the question of exactly which partial regimes, norms and procedures of democracy are affected by weak or lacking civilian control. This section addresses this shortcoming by discussing the implications of weak civilian control on the four partial regimes of 'embedded democracy': the electoral regime (A), political rights (B), civil rights (C), and horizontal accountability (D).

(A) Electoral regime

Weakly institutionalized civilian control of the military seriously undermines the functioning of this core element of 'embedded democracy'. As the relevance of elections as instruments of accountability and responsiveness declines with the extent to which the military can influence the channels of political recruitment and competition, the working of the electoral regime is closely connected to the degree of civilian control over the area of *elite recruitment*. This is true for all aspects of the electoral regime summarized above. Democracy is at stake if the military enjoys privileges of reserved representation in decision-making agencies, if significant segments of society are excluded from electoral participation, or if elections are manipulated in order to safeguard its political preponderance.

Reserved representation of active or former military men in political decision-making bodies, for instance in government, parliament or party committees, is in direct contradiction to the fundamental democratic provision that all political representatives are chosen through popular elections. This is particularly the case if the share of such reserved seats allows the military actual veto power over political decision-making (for example by granting them a blocking minority in parliament). In regard of free and fair elections, the right to be a candidate for political office and inclusive suffrage, the problem stems less from active military participation in office but from the control of the electoral processes. Once in control of the channels of political recruitment, the military might exploit them in order to safeguard its elevated position and shield political challengers from getting access to the political centre. There is a wide range of possible forms of such behaviour, ranging from *ad hoc* political pressure to threats or actual application of physical violence (for example, intimidating political rivals, or cowing rivals' supporters into abstaining from electoral participation). The empirical evidence shows that in the decades following World War II, militaries around the world manipulated or supplanted governments, thereby undermining or effectively abolishing fledgling democratic institutions.[60]

(B) Political rights

Weakly institutionalized or absent civilian control might also lead to severe cutbacks in the political rights of association and information. The relevance of these violations will depend on the scope of military dominance over the political system: the more decision-making areas are under control of the military, the higher the likelihood that it will engage in repression of political opponents or media censorship. If the military's autonomy is confined to the realms of military organization and national defence, attempts to manipulate the media and to suppress civil society are likely to occur only when parties or civil society associations openly and directly criticize the military. Furthermore, even if they have incentives to repress civic action, however, they will not be able to subdue public opposition as they do not control the necessary instruments of internal security. The situation is different if military political power extends into other policy areas. Military control over the internal security apparatus in particular will provide the military with the means to harass political adversaries and curtail media freedom on a larger scale. The most extensive violations of political rights are likely to arise when the military's political influence extends to elite recruitment and public policy. As the military is involved in day-to-day politics, opposition politics directly addresses the military which could be interpreted as threats to their corporate and political interests, providing incentives to curtail the liberties of association and information.

(C) Civil rights

Insufficient civilian control of the military also has negative effects on the realization of constitutional rights. This is particularly the case if internal security

decision-making is under control of the military. Being in charge of the internal security apparatus provides institutional and organizational means to repress political adversaries on a large scale. Furthermore, in the absence of civilian security forces autonomous of the military, there are no 'balancing institutions'[61] which could check military internal security conduct. Serious transgressions are particularly probable if the military is faced with large scale public protests and challenges directed against itself or its institutional, political, social and economical interests. In such situations, the armed forces are likely to react to internal security challenges as they would to external threats: with systematic violence and following the logic of warfare. Different to the civilian police whose operational norm is minimal use of force,[62] the military's organizational and operational standards are aimed at physically destroying the potential of threat by means of overwhelming, destructive force.[63] If the military controls internal security, the norm of minimum force is transposed by the logic of warfare which will lead to serious violations of civil rights.[64] This is forcefully underscored by empirical evidence from the military-led regimes of Latin America, Africa, and Asia which have lanced 'internal wars' against their opponents in order to either physically destroy political opposition or to psychologically cow them into political quiescence.[65]

(D) Horizontal accountability

Lastly, weak civilian control will similarly undermine those institutional checks-and-balances which combine into the partial regime of 'horizontal accountability'. Per definition, military dominance over decision-making areas shields those policy matters from civilian oversight. That is, even if there are autonomous civilian agencies these cannot function as institutional counterweights in those areas which are exclusively dominated by the military. Hence, only when civilians wield actual influence in all policy areas can the civilian parts of the executive check the military, while the legislature and judiciary in turn check the civilian and military segments of the executive. Furthermore, the absence of functional checks-and-balances even solidifies existing political prerogatives of the military as there are no effective interagency countermeasures to keep the military's political activities in check. Again, it is reasonable to assume that these defects and their impact on democratic quality will be more grave the larger the political prerogatives of the military: the more decision-making areas controlled by the military, the less non-military state agencies will be able to limit possible misappropriations of military power.

In summary, weak civilian control not only thwarts the elected authorities' effective power to govern (partial regime E), but threatens the functionality of all other partial regimes. The gravity of these implications depends on the extent to which the military has usurped the political decision-making areas. If civilians dominate all five decision-making areas, the military will not be able to confine civil rights, repress political participation, or to evade institutional checks-and-balances – unless the ruling civilians allow the military to do so. If, however,

the military's political power expands and they gain dominance over one or more policy areas the democratic interplay between the partial regimes will be disturbed as the institutions of vertical and horizontal accountability become hollowed out. The further the military's political power expands, the greater will be its means and incentives to curtail democratic freedoms and to safeguard its political privileges, thereby undermining the democratic logic of all partial regimes of embedded democracy.

6. Conclusion

As has been stated by many students of democratic transition and consolidation, civilian control of the military is a *sine qua non* for democratic rule. This agreement notwithstanding, the transition literature thus far lacks a generally accepted definition of civilian control. A wide range of concepts has been proposed to capture the various understandings of the term civilian control. Furthermore, the relationship between democracy and civilian control has for a long time remained undertheorized. This need for a common understanding of the core problems, and the lack of analytical rigor in defining, conceptualizing, operationalizing, and theorizing civilian control and its relation to democracy has, to some degree, hampered the development of a coherent body of theoretical knowledge and thereby forestalled the accumulation of knowledge in the field.[66] In this paper, we aimed to address these shortcomings and proposed a unified conceptual framework for empirically evaluating the degree of civilian control in new democracies. Starting out from the argumentative foundation of democracy theory, the question of civilian control was identified as a problem concerning the distribution of decision-making power between civilian political elites and the military leadership. From this basic understanding, we then defined civilian control as that condition of the civil–military power relationship in which civilians possess decision-making authority over all relevant political issues. Hence, we proposed to differentiate five substantive decision-making areas and suggested a set of indicators for each of the five areas in order to empirically assess the degree of civilian control across the overall political system. Subsequently, we returned to the reciprocal relationship of civilian control and democracy theory and discussed the impact of insufficient civilian control on democratic quality.

We see three main contributions of our framework for the research on civil–military relations in emerging democracies. First, by explicitly framing our discussion in democracy theory, we provide the basis for a stringent argument. Not only did this approach permit us to deduce a clear definition of civilian control from the democratic imperative that elected authorities need to hold effective political power. It also allowed us to systematically discuss the impact of unrestricted military political autonomy on the realization of democracy. Furthermore, as all arguments are deductively derived, every step in our conceptual and theoretical endeavour can be traced back logically to a basic theoretical foundation. This is a significant innovation in the field as most of the existing approaches merely

postulated concepts without embedding them into a larger theoretical frame of reference. Furthermore, our stringent theorizing allows for a rigorous analysis of our theoretical assumptions and conceptual decisions and opens them up for critical evaluation.[67]

Secondly, disaggregating civil–military relations into substantive issue-areas reveals the complexity of civil–military relations and allows for differentiated empirical analysis. While there are other multi-dimensional concepts of civilian control in the literature and our treatment benefits from many of these, the five-dimensional concept of embedded democracy outlined above goes beyond existing proposals as its dimensions are built around a single common question: who holds the effective power to make decisions and oversee their implementation? Furthermore, the concept provides a set of indicators for each of the five areas together with a concise discussion of why each indicator is relevant and how it is to be measured. Our analytical framework offers a powerful heuristic tool for empirically assessing the concrete state of civil–military relations at one point in time, and for longitudinal, cross-sectional, and combined longitudinal/cross-sectional comparisons.[68]

Thirdly, to our knowledge, there has been no systematic theoretical discussion of the implications of weak civilian control on the quality of democracy. While authors agree that insufficient civilian control in some way affects the quality of democratic governance, and that the expansion of military political influence in the past has led to democratic breakdown in many nations, our new approach offers the first comprehensive theoretical argument of how exactly the lack of civilian control is connected to democratic decay. It thus provides a fine-grained 'causal mechanism'[69] for the often stated – and many times empirically corroborated – correlation between weak civilian control and the deterioration of democracy.

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Notes

1. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*.
2. Feaver, 'The Civil–Military Problematique'; Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy.*
3. Hänggi, 'Conceptualising Security Sector Reform and Reconstruction'; Bruneau and Matei, 'Towards a New Conceptualization'.
4. Diamond and Morlino, 'The Quality of Democracy'.
5. A range of authors have highlighted this problem in the existing literature on established and emerging democracies. Cf. Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy*,

16–22; Bacevich, 'Tradition Abandoned. America's Military in a New Era'; Bland, 'A Unified Theory of Civil–Military Relations'; Pion-Berlin, 'Introduction'; Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*, 4–8.

6. Born et al., 'Civil–Military Relations in Europe', 5.
7. Hadenius, *Democracy and Development*, 9.
8. Brettschneider, 'The Value Theory of Democracy'.
9. Held, *Models of Democracy.*
10. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*; Dahl, *Polyarchy.*
11. Barber, *Strong Democracy*; Fishkin, *When the People Speak*.
12. For example, O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*; Huntington, *The Third Wave*; Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*.
13. Merkel et al., *Defekte Demokratie: Theorie*.
14. By stating that civilian control of the military is a *sine qua non* for liberal democracy, we do not imply that democracy is necessary for civilian control. In fact, civilian control is logically possible in autocratic regimes as demonstrated, for instance, historically by the Soviet Union or today's Singapore.
15. Merkel and Croissant, 'Formale und informale Institutionen'.
16. We define the 'military' (or, synonymously, the armed forces) as the permanent state organization authorized by law to apply coercive power in order to provide security for society and state primarily against external threats. 'Civilians' shall be defined as those non-military segments of the state apparatus which have the authority to formulate, implement and oversee political decisions.
17. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, 250.
18. Loveman, 'Protected Democracies'.
19. Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation', 92–6.
20. Feaver, 'The Civil–Military Problematique'; Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy.*
21. The existence and soundness of civilian control does not imply good governance, nor does it necessarily enhance the quality of policy decisions. Neither does it guarantee the respect of human rights by the ruling elites nor the stability of the political regime. As our discussion will show, civilian control means nothing other than the fact that civilians alone are responsible for political decision-making.
22. Diamond and Plattner, 'Introduction'; Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.
23. Cf. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military*, 3–5; Feaver, 'Civil–Military Relations'.
24. For criticisms of the concepts used in civil–military research see Forster, 'New Civil–Military Relations and its Research Agendas', 76–81; Nelson, 'Definition, Diagnosis, Therapy', 157–8.
25. Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society*, 93.
26. The term 'fallacy of coup-ism' is adapted from Terry L. Karl's well known criticism of early concepts of democracy which similarly suffered from too narrow understandings of the defining elements of democracy ('fallacy of electoralism'). Karl, 'Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America'.
27. One example is the 'parasitic military' which abuses political power to draw more resources from the parent society than it needs for providing its core functions. Edmonds, *Armed Services and Society*, 29–30.
28. Feaver, 'Civil–Military Relations', 218.
29. Clark, 'The Decline of the African Military Coup'; Croissant and Kuehn, 'Patterns of Civilian Control'.
30. Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation', 62–3.
31. Other authors agree on measuring military influence on politics as the most adequate way to gauge the state and development of civil–military relations in new

democracies. Cf. Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy*; Alagappa, 'Investigating and Explaining Change'; Barany, 'Democratic Consolidation and the Military: The East European Experience'; Cottey, Edmunds, and Forster, *Democratic Control of the Military in Postcommunist Europe*; Pion-Berlin, 'Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America'; Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*; Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*.

32. Kohn, 'How Democracies Control the Military', 142.
33. This definition is broader than the notion of 'democratic civilian control' Cf. Hänggi, 'Conceptualising Security Sector Reform and Reconstruction'; Lambert, *Democratic Civilian Control*. While we are interested in the struggle over civilian control in emerging democracies, our definition of civilian control applies to democratic as well as non-democratic regimes.
34. Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*.
35. Other authors have addressed the 'grey zone' from different analytical and theoretical angles. See Bland, 'A Unified Theory of Civil–Military Relations'; Cottey, Edmunds, and Forster, 'The Second Generation Problematic'; Schiff, 'Civil–Military Relations Reconsidered'.
36. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority.*
37. Alagappa, 'Investigating and Explaining Change', 31–41; Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*, 4–24.
38. Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*; Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation'.
39. Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics*, 93.
40. Danopoulos and Zirker, *The Military and Society in the Former Eastern Bloc*, 4–5.
41. Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army*, 7.
42. Dahl, *Polyarchy*, 4–6.
43. Beeson, 'Civil–Military Relations in Indonesia and the Philippines'.
44. Malkin, 'Honduran President Is Ousted in Coup'.
45. Croissant and Kuehn, 'Patterns of Civilian Control'.
46. Kohn, 'How Democracies Control the Military'.
47. Hunter, 'Civil–Military Relations in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile: Present Trends, Future Prospects'.
48. Collier, 'Armed Forces and Internal Security'.
49. Goldsworthy, 'Civilian Control of the Military in Black Africa'; Rasmussen, 'The Military Role'.
50. Croissant and Kuehn, 'Patterns of Civilian Control', 203–5.
51. Alagappa, 'Investigating and Explaining Change', 36–7; Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control*, 7.
52. Cf. Bruneau and Matei, 'Towards a New Conceptualization'.
53. Bruneau and Goetze, 'Ministries of Defense and Democratic Control'; Giraldo, 'Legislatures and National Defense'; Pion-Berlin, *Through Corridors of Power: Institutions and Civil–Military Relations in Argentina*.
54. Agüero, 'Democratic Consolidation and the Military'; Croissant and Kuehn, 'Patterns of Civilian Control'; Edmunds, *Security Sector Reform*.
55. Bland, 'Patterns in Liberal Democratic Civil–Military Relations'; Cottey, Edmunds, and Forster, 'The Second Generation Problematic'; Lambert, *Democratic Civilian Control*, 270–96.
56. For example, Rosen, 'Military Effectiveness'.
57. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil–Military Relations*.
58. Kemp and Hudlin, 'Civil Supremacy over the Military'.
59. Barany, 'Civil–Military Relations and Institutional Decay'.

60. For example, Finer, *The Man on Horseback*; Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*; Loveman, 'Protected Democracy'; Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America*.
61. Frazer, 'Conceptualizing Civil-Military Relations during Democratic Transition'.
62. Reiss, 'Police Organization in the Twentieth Century'.
63. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 11–14; van Doorn, *The Soldier and Social Change*, 159.
64. This argument of course is a simplification and does neither imply that all military internal security missions need to be overly violent nor that civilian police deployments, especially by paramilitaries like counterinsurgency troops and anti-terrorist commandos, will not lead to gross human rights violations and brutality. However, given that the standard military logic of operation is not minimum-force law enforcement but rather the destruction of the enemy, it is plausible to assume that – in tendency – military internal security operations will be more violent than those of the civilian police. Cf. Barber and Ronning, *Internal Security and Military Power*; Rasmussen, 'The Military Role'.
65. Finer, *The Man on Horseback*; Jackman, 'Politicians in Uniform'; Heinz and Frühling, *Determinants*.
66. Pion-Berlin, 'Introduction'.
67. Cf. King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 19–23.
68. Obviously, the concept lends itself naturally to qualitative inquiry, particularly for comparative case study research designs. This affinity to qualitative analysis is not in principle, however. In fact, it is more a problem of available comparable data than methodological limitations inherent in the concept, as the various techniques under the *Qualitative Comparative Analysis* label become more refined and well-established. See Ragin, *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy Sets and Beyond*. Recent innovations in regression analysis also promise to make this methodology more amenable for handling smaller populations and ordinal-scaled variables. Cf. Braumoeller and Kirpichevsky, 'When More Is Less'. However, as long as we do not have a large number of comparable scores based on our concept for a large enough number of different cases, qualitative inquiry will still be the approach of choice.
69. Hedström, 'Studying Mechanisms to Strengthen Causal Inferences in Quantitative Research'.

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Appendix

Table 1. Arenas, dimensions and indicators of civilian control.

Arena	Dimension	Indicator	Degree of civilian control		
			High	Medium	Low
Elite recruitment	*Competition for public office*	Reserved representation for military personnel	No formal or informal guarantees for military representation in political bodies	Some privileged access to political office	Majority of decisive political positions are reserved for the military
		Military influence on the rules of political competition	Military has no influence in nominating candidates for and no influence on the selection of political decision-makers	Military has some authority over the process of selecting political decision-makers but does not dominate procedures or outcomes of the process	Military dominates rule-setting, process and outcomes of elite selection
	Political participation	Eligibility of active duty military officer	Non-eligibility of active duty military officers (legally and de facto)	Selective circumvention or break of legal rules	Eligibility of military officers or rules of non-eligibility are regularly ignored
		Military veto power over formation/dissolution of governments	No military influence on the making and breaking of governments	Occasional *de facto* influence	Formal regulations establish military as veto actor or military systematically demands a tutelary role

Public policy	*Policy-making*	Military influence on state budget	Neither institutionalized nor contestational participation in the allocation of state expenditure (including defence/military)	Institutionalized prerogatives of the military over certain portions of the budget, or military de facto capture of budgetary process	Military dominance over budgetary process
		Military influence on public policy-making (except defence and security policy)	No institutionalized prerogatives or informal intervention	Some institutionalized or informal military participation	Systematic exclusion of civilians from at least one policy field
	Policy-implementation	Military authority over public administration	No military dominated state-in-state structures and no military oversight of civilian administrative authorities	Military substitutes civilian administration in certain (functional or geographical) areas	Civilian administrative authorities are under military oversight (legally, or de facto), or significant militarized parallel structures
Internal security	*Policy-making*	Military influence in internal security policy-making	No institutionalized prerogatives or informal intervention	Some institutionalized or informal military participation	Systematic exclusion of civilians from at least one policy field

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued.

Arena	Dimension	Indicator	Degree of civilian control		
			High	Medium	Low
	Control over security agents	Separation of police/other security agents and military	Strict separation; no military command over internal security agents except clearly defined (by civilians) emergencies	Subordination of police or other agencies in limited specified geographic areas, missions or in infrastructural aspects	Police or other security agents subordinate to military command or no separate police
		Civilian oversight of military internal security operations	Institutional framework in place for comprehensive monitor and punish military operations; military accepts civilian oversight	Civilian capability to monitor is limited	No civilian effective oversight or sanctioning; military *de facto* autonomous in the conduct of operations
National defence	*Policy-making*	Civilian influence on defence policing	Institutionalized civilian dominance over defence policy and active day-to-day participation of civilians in defence policy-making; military accepts civilian's policy prerogative	Lack or ambiguity of legal regulations; dominance of military personnel in defence bureaucracy; *ad hoc* military contestation against civilian authority	Civilians are systematically excluded from decision-making
	Policy implementation	Civilian oversight of military defence activities	Civilians of all branches of government are able to monitor military activities	Military has the ability to selectively withdraw itself from effective oversight	Military is not subject to civilian monitoring and sanctioning

Military organization	*'Hardware' of military organization*	Civilian influence in decisions on military 'hardware'	Civilians have full authority about decisions of military organization; the military implements civilian decisions	Civilian influence is limited but military cannot exclude civilians from organizational issues	Military hardware is under military control; military draws the line between civilian and military decision-making authority
	'Software' of military organization	Civilian influence on military 'software'	Civilians set the rules of conduct, the limits of military autonomy and provide the guidelines for 'corporate identity' of the armed forces	Military partly ignores civilian guidelines and develops a 'state in the state' identity	Military defines the limits of military autonomy and ignores civilian guidelines; the corporate culture is distinct from the civilian society and the military aims to preserve its distinctiveness

Note. For explanation of the table and references to the relevant literature see section 4 in this article.