ABSTRACT

How does repression influence overt, collective challenges directed against political authority? To date, answers to this question have been inconclusive. This article argues that recent works inadequately address the topic because the focus has been on repression's impact on local civilians, with less consideration of dissident organizations. The author develops an organizational theory of challenger development and specifies predictions for how repression's effects on dissent are contingent upon the types of organizational behaviors targeted for coercion. The analysis employs original, microlevel data collected from previously confidential Guatemalan National Police records to assess the effects of repression during the years 1975 to 1985. Results show that the effects of repression are more complex than previously imagined. When repression targets the clandestine activities necessary to develop and sustain dissident organizations, such as holding meetings, training participants, and campaigning for funds, dissent declines significantly. But when repression is directed at ongoing, overt, collective challenges, it motivates a backlash that escalates dissent. Implications are drawn for how political order and conflict are understood and studied.



# POLITICAL REPRESSION AND THE DESTRUCTION OF DISSIDENT ORGANIZATIONS

## Evidence from the Archives of the Guatemalan National Police

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HOW does political repression affect overt, collective challenges to political authority, such as protests, acts of terror, or targeted attacks? Understanding the effects of repression is crucial to establishing the underlying foundations of order and conflict. When repression succeeds in limiting dissent, the government strengthens its monopoly over the use of force and impedes the development of future challenges. When repression fails, it can lead to an escalation of challenger activity and the deterioration of order into civil war or revolution.[1] But while decades of scholarship have been devoted to investigating the effects of repression, the literature has produced broadly inconclusive results.[2]

To reconcile these competing findings, a series of recent arguments propose a population-centric theory of conflict.[3] From this perspective, challenges to the government depend upon the inflow of support from

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[1] Repression refers to "coercive actions political authorities take to inhibit the will or capacity of people within their jurisdiction to influence political outcomes" (Ritter 2014, 145). Dissent refers to "a sustained, organized . . . effort making collective claims of target authorities" (Tilly 2004, 53).

[2] Lichbach 1987; Gupta, Singh, and Sprague 1993; Gurr and Moore 1997; Moore 1998; Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller 2005; Lyall 2006; Lyall 2009; Lyall 2010; Cunningham and Noakes 2008; LaFree, Dugan, and Korte 2009; Walsh and Piazza 2010; Dugan and Chenoweth 2012; Daxecker and Hess 2013.

[3] The term "population-centric" originated within policy debates surrounding counterinsurgency strategy, e.g., Kilkullen 2009; Kilkullen 2010.

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local civilians. Consequently, repression's effects are contingent upon the manner in which it affects the local population. For example, several investigations within the protest-wave literature suggest that repression can generate opposing effects depending on the momentum of a movement's popularity. Where support for a movement is increasing, repression may lead to an escalation of challenger activity, but where support is waning, repression may hasten its decline.[4] Another related theory contends that repression that indiscriminately targets the general population can increase support for the movement and escalate conflict, whereas coercion that selectively targets only movement participants and their backers effectively deters support and leads to de-escalation.[5] In addition, pioneering research aims to endogenize the repression-dissent relationship and to predict conflict outcomes as a function of the government's popular support and the leader's perceived security in office.[6] Where repression negatively impacts popular support, it can decrease the leader's time horizon and lead to rapid escalations in political conflict.

Yet the puzzle of the conflict-repression nexus persists at least in part because of important limitations associated with population-centric modeling.[7] For example, while the above arguments improve our understanding of how repression affects popular sentiment, each theory relies on the often implicit assumption that functional challenger organizations exist to translate sentiment into action. But spontaneous cooperation is extraordinarily difficult during routine politics, and can be nearly impossible during times of heavy repression.[8] Consequently, I argue that what matters most for understanding repression's effects is not the amount of antigovernment sentiment, but its degree of organization. Without functional challenger organizations, backlash of any kind becomes extraordinarily unlikely as the movement cannot provide selective incentives or channel retaliation. Correspondingly, even selectively targeted repression and/or repression directed at the height of a movement's popularity can have multidirectional effects on future challenges depending on how it influences the capacity and strategy of

[4] Tarrow 1998; Beissinger 2002; Brocket 2005.

[5] Mason and Krane 1989; Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Wood 2010; Condra and Shapiro 2012; Kocher, Pepinski, and Kalyvas 2011.

[6] Conrad and Ritter 2013; Young 2013; Ritter 2014; Ritter and Conrad 2016.

[7] There is disagreement over the robustness of some of the population-centric results. Some research has found, for example, that indiscriminate repression is not always ineffective (Lyall 2009; Zhukov 2015) and that popular grievances do not always translate into challenges (Aspinall 2007).

[8] In the absence of an organized alternative to the government, resistance can operate in the form of scattered attacks, such as foot-dragging, sabotage, and other "weapons of the weak," but individuals are often unwilling or unable to speak collectively against the status quo. Gaventa 1982; Scott 1985.

challenger organizations. In addition, renewed focus on the organization of dissent can help to specify the sequence of strategic interactions that leads from successful preemptive repression and contained dissent to escalations in the use of force by both sides.

Building on a burgeoning body of research that examines the organizational underpinnings of rebellion,[9] this article proposes an organizational-targeting model to explain the impact of repression on dissent. The argument identifies distinct processes in the organization of dissent and asserts that repression of organizations, not merely individuals, limits backlash. Governments are able to suppress dissent when they direct repression at the generally clandestine mobilization activities necessary to inspire and sustain dissident organizations, such as holding meetings, training participants, and campaigning for funds. When government forces target these forms of mobilization behavior, coercion undermines the capacity of the organization to coordinate collective action and incentivize participation, and thereby diminishes subsequent challenges. Alternatively, when repression is directed at overt, collective challenges, such as when police respond to an ongoing demonstration, attack, or riot, it leaves challenger organizations intact to publicize abuse and to deliver the selective incentives necessary to promote further challenges.

I test these arguments using original data collected from an archive of previously confidential documents produced by the Guatemalan National Police between 1975 and 1985. Over this period, the government of Guatemala employed a wide variety of repressive tactics, ranging from political arrests to targeted assassinations, against a broad set of challengers and would-be challengers that included unions, peasant cooperatives, land-rights groups, Catholic activists, students, urban revolutionaries, and Marxist insurgents.[10] Guatemala's history of appalling violence makes the country a relatively fruitful setting in which to test the expectations of the argument. Because of the wide variation in repression and dissent that occurred, studying the Guatemalan case can provide lessons for an encompassing variety of states, ranging from those engaged in low-level abuses to those committing more egregious human rights violations. A within-country analysis holds important structural constraints constant while observing subnational variation in both the independent and dependent variables. The precise nature of

[9] Weinstein 2007; Staniland 2012; Staniland 2014; Lewis 2012; Shapiro and Siegel 2012; Shapiro 2013; Parkinson 2013.

[10] Carmack 1992; Stoll 1993; Schirmer 1998; Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999; Ball, Kobrak, and Spirer 1999; Manz 2004; Brocket 2005; Garrard-Burnett 2011.

the data identifies the targets of each repressive action, where and when the repression occurred, and the type of activity it targeted (that is, mobilization activities or overt, collective challenges). Statistical analyses reveal that repression directed at mobilization activities strongly correlates with decreased challenges against the government. Repression directed at overt, collective challenges correlates with significantly increased dissent.

In addition to providing new insight into the puzzle of repression and dissent, the results from this organizational model reveal a number of important selection mechanisms operating within the broader study of order and conflict. When governments disrupt the mobilization process, the targets' capacity to express political ideas can be systematically censored from the public sphere. Alternatively, when dissidents outpace the government and mobilize surreptitiously, they are able to recruit and inspire participation in political challenges even as governments attempt to repress those activities. Consequently, the success or failure of mobilizers' efforts to evade repression shapes the types of movements that emerge to challenge governments, as well as the issues over which conflicts occur.

The article proceeds as follows: First, I discuss case material from Guatemala illustrating how the repression of mobilization activities differs in practice from repression targeting overt, collective challenges. I then develop a model of dissident organization specifying how repression affects distinct organizational behaviors. Subsequently, I provide historical context detailing patterns of repression and dissent in Guatemala from 1975 to 1985. I next present and then analyze the data. In the penultimate section, I discuss the results and consider substantive effects, comparisons to population-centric models, endogeneity, and generalizability. In the conclusion, I discuss implications for future research.

## Mobilization, Repression, and Overt, Collective Challenges

On the morning of January 31, 1980, a group of armed indigenous peasants and student activists occupied the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala City to protest human rights violations taking place in Northern Guatemala. Police forces surrounded the building and fired phosphorous gas into the embassy to disperse the protesters. The gas ignited and the resulting fire killed thirty-six people.[11]

On that same day in the municipality of Chimaltenago, another unit

[11] AHPN 2010a.

of the Guatemalan police conducted surveillance on a group of organizers and community leaders whom police suspected of publishing pamphlets to incite the local population.[12] Over the next two months, the organizers in Chimaltenango were steadily kidnapped or were disappeared by agents of the Guatemalan government.[13]

These two repressive events epitomize two distinct methods of government coercion. In the first, state agents respond to an overt, collective challenge, attempting to impose costs on challengers. In the second, repression is directed at organizers in an effort to limit their capacity for coordinating collective action. The effects of these events were also broadly divergent. In the months following the embassy fire, Guatemala City witnessed an increase in insurgent bombings and attacks on the police.[14] In Chimaltenango, overt, collective challenges did not recur until nearly a year later.[15]

Historically, when looking at the repression of dissent, scholars have been principally concerned with events such as those at the Spanish Embassy, in which state forces respond to ongoing challenges. In one of the literature's most robust findings, states are shown recurrently to increase their use of repression in response to observed increases in overt challenges.[16] In addition, subspecializations of literature address repressive responses to specific kinds of challenges, including studies on protest policing, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency.

Yet although governments often argue that the use of coercion is a measured response to "civil unrest," prior work demonstrates that government forces also attempt to anticipate and suppress the emergence of overt, collective challenges.[17] Sophisticated surveillance apparatuses are established to monitor social behavior, while armed security forces are trained to direct coercion at developing threats.[18]

Efforts to form or maintain challenger organizations provide governments with an indicator of threat development. Although mass participation in the end stages of a revolution can appear spontaneous, such collective action is reliant on a small group of organizers who sustain the movement during times of quiescence and support participation once a protest wave has begun.[19] Consistent with this contention, past

[12] AHPN 2010b.
[13] AHPN 2010c.
[14] AHPN 2010d; AHPN 2010e; AHPN 2010f.
[15] AHPN 2010g.
[16] Davenport 2007a; Hill and Jones 2014; see also Ritter and Conrad 2016.
[17] Walter 2006; Herreros and Criado 2009; Nordas and Davenport 2013; Danneman and Ritter 2014; Ritter and Conrad 2016.
[18] Lewis 2012; Sullivan 2015.
[19] Oliver 1984; Taylor 1989; Chong 1991.

research on resource mobilization suggests that overt, collective challenges, such as protests, strikes, acts of terror, or insurgent attacks, can only emerge from a preexisting organizational platform that serves to coordinate participants, to direct strategy, and to deliver selective incentives.[20]

Organizational formation, development, and maintenance occur through a series of behaviors that can be referred to collectively as mobilization activities. Mobilization activities, which include actions such as holding meetings, creating new institutions and roles, campaigning for funds or equipment, generating shared symbols and identities, disseminating information, recruiting new members, and training participants, are generally clandestine, collective behaviors necessary to form an organized alternative to the regime.

Mobilization activities are difficult to undertake and require extensive contributions from a relatively small set of individuals.[21] Yet they fulfill a number of functions necessary for supporting and sustaining participation in overt, collective challenges. Three functions are particularly significant. First, mobilization activities help to restructure social affiliations.[22] By shaping social ties, influencing communication, and formulating collective values, such as common symbols, focal points, and identities, these activities transition the alignment of preexisting social networks away from the state and toward the opposition.[23] The effect increases shared expectations for participation in overt, collective challenges. Second, mobilization activities generate resources that can be redistributed as selective incentives.[24] They establish supply networks to funnel resources, such as food, funding, or weapons, into an organizational infrastructure that can reallocate the resource flows to individuals on the periphery of the movement.[25] The effect provides the structural foundation for growth by increasing individual incentives for participation. Third, mobilization activities help to institutionalize tit-for-tat reciprocity.[26] They form an organizational base that supports the sustained interactions required for the evolution of collective monitor-

[20] McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978; Morris 1984; Oliver 1984; McAdam 1982; Marwell and Oliver 1993; Tarrow 1998; Staniland 2012; Parkinson 2013.

[21] Oliver 1984.

[22] Lichbach 1995, 149–56.

[23] Morris 1984, chap. 3; Chong 1991, chap. 6; Gould 1995; Wood 2003, chap. 3–4; Parkinson 2013; Staniland 2014.

[24] Lichbach, 1995, 36–38.

[25] McCarthy and Zald 1977; McAdam 1982; Morris 1984, chap. 8; Oliver 1984; Chong 1991, 126–41; Staniland 2012; Parkinson 2013.

[26] Lichbach 1995, 129–46.

ing and enforcement.[27] The effect facilitates the long-term trust necessary to produce cooperation even when any one individual's participation is contingent on the participation of others.

In the presence of sustained mobilization, the possibilities for mass participation shift dramatically. Individuals who had previously acquiesced to political authority find themselves forced to choose between the demands of the existing government and an organized challenger promising a variety of selective and collective goods in exchange for individual participation.[28] In this way, mobilization activities must begin before overt, collective challenges can take place, but also must persist to sustain challenges over time.

## The Multidirectional Impacts of Political Repression

For governments seeking to maximize the security of their office, employing repression against mobilization activities, even when dissidents are not actively challenging the government, can prevent the occurrence of overt, collective challenges by depleting the organizational resources necessary to inspire and sustain such activities.[29] When governments are able to identify mobilization activities and direct repression at those efforts, they aim to repress the behind-the-scenes individuals at the core of challenger organizations. These organizers are responsible for investing disproportionately in developing behavioral challenges. Without confronting the rank and file, security forces can focus coercion on removing these individuals or on disrupting their behavior.

Because mobilization activities typically take place clandestinely, repressing them can be difficult. Challenger organizations attempt to shield their behavior from the government, for example, by developing underground safe houses and supply networks. The obstacles associated with identifying mobilization activities and directing repression at such behavior mean that even while governments may prefer to repress mobilization prior to the onset of overt, collective challenges, they often have trouble identifying the initial instances of mobilization.[30] But as governments begin to suspect increased mobilization activity,

[27] Hardin 1982, 165–87; Axelrod 1984, 124–42; Ostrom 1990, 94–100; Chong 1991, chap. 3.

[28] Tilly 1978, 192.

[29] These predicted effects are expected to hold on average, ceteris paribus. Below, the study addresses some structural factors that might mediate the relationship between repression, mobilizing activities, and overt, collective challenges.

[30] It suffices to say that there is a minimum amount of state capacity necessary to identify and repress mobilization activities. State capacity is addressed in greater detail below and in the supplementary material. Sullivan 2016.

for example, when movements reveal their capacity for overt, collective challenges or when government surveillance yields actionable intelligence, forces are redistributed to direct surveillance and repression to suspected mobilization sites.

Targeting mobilization with repression has important implications for the production of overt, collective challenges. First, it can lead group members to reevaluate decisions to align themselves in opposition to the state. Such repression affects the core organizations responsible for sustaining common expectations for cooperative behavior, and can disrupt delicate assurances for cooperation. Second, repressing mobilization activities depletes the resources available for organizations to fund their activities and incentivize participation. Third, it can destabilize long-term trust between individuals. Repressing mobilization activities limits the capacity for challenger organizations to fulfill their commitments to members, which can push tit-for-tat strategies away from an all-cooperate equilibrium to an all-defect equilibrium. These observations lead to the study's first hypothesis:

> —H1. When mobilization activities are repressed, overt, collective challenges will decrease.

Within this consideration, the persistence of challengers depends on the strategic interaction of government forces and dissident organizations.[31] Dissidents enter into challenges expecting repression but possess imperfect information about precisely how the state will deploy coercion. Similarly, governments repress in anticipation of a challenger response while trying to outwit or overwhelm their adversaries.[32]

As noted above, there is strong evidence that increases in overt, collective challenges correlate with increased repression.[33] Governments repress overt, collective challenges for several reasons. Most notably, overt, collective challenges threaten government control over public policy and public space.[34] When governments repress ongoing challenges, such as when coercion is deployed against a demonstration or to push back an advancing armed group, their strategy is designed to reestablish control, remove challengers, and present the appearance of a stable political order. When governments choose to ignore overt, collective challenges, it signals that they are unable or unwilling to control the population and may not deliver on their policy proposals. Percep-

[31] Francisco 1995; Moore 1995; Pierskalla 2010; Young 2013; Ritter 2014; Ritter and Conrad 2016.

[32] Davenport 2014.

[33] Davenport 2007a; Carey 2010. See also Ritter and Conrad 2016.

[34] Davenport 1995; Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong 2011.

tions of instability could motivate a government's coalition to consider defecting to challenger organizations or to other rival elite factions.[35] The implication is that overt, collective challenges will motivate increased repression as the regime seeks to reestablish order, impose costs on challengers, and demonstrate resolve.

But when governments target overt, collective challenges with repression, such action does little to diminish organizational capacities for challenging the state. Although governments commonly employ repression against ongoing challenges in an attempt to stabilize political control, repression of this type of behavior is not typically directed toward limiting the organizational leadership, resource stocks, or symbolic values crucial to formulating a coherent retaliation.[36] When governments direct repression at individuals committing attacks or protests, coercion is selectively aimed at dissidents and their backers. However, this form of repression effectively targets individuals on the front lines and not the activists and leaders at the core of the movement behind the scenes.[37]

Even where the government may wish to attack the organizational leadership, the movement's existing infrastructure can effectively shield organizers and their resource endowments from the most severe costs of repression. The movement's ability to wage overt, collective challenges demonstrates a sophisticated level of organizational development. Anticipating repression allows organizations to take proactive steps, such as shielding them behind the scenes, having lower-level activists direct violent challenges, and devising escape plans to transport leaders away, to protect mobilizers from coercion.

To the extent that organizational leaders remain active and retain access to mobilized resources, they retain the capability to encourage participation and direct challenges. In response to the repression of overt, collective challenges, the movement's organizational base can facilitate a number of related counterstrategies that contribute to the growth of backlash challenges.[38] Two are particularly noteworthy. First, in the

[35] Ritter 2014.

[36] Expectations of backlash mobilization are consistent with research examining repression and dissent as mutually determined outcomes, e.g., Pierskalla 2010; Young 2013; Ritter 2014. For instance, Young 2013, 519, argues that when the government believes that survival is at stake, leaders "pursue strategies that maintain the leader's present position, but are potentially more costly for the leader in the future." In some cases, leaders may even wish to instigate conflict as a means of demonstrating their resolve and capabilities for repression.

[37] In many cases, the government does not know the identities or appearance of the organizational leadership.

[38] In addition to increasing the number of challenges, repression targeting overt, collective challenges may influence the form such challenges take (for example, by pushing movements underground and away from mass politics). Future work will be necessary to investigate the relationship between

aftermath of repression targeting overt, collective challenges, movement organizations are able to vouch for existing assurances of cooperation by doling out the requisite selective incentives necessary to balance out some of the costs of repression imposed upon frontline members. In many cases, this may take the form of protection from ensuing targeting by the state, for example, through the identification of safe houses and other forms of shelter.[39] In other cases, it can mean direct payments, such as salaries, legal fees, or martyrs' tributes to the families of abused individuals.[40] Second, in the aftermath of repression, the organizations can publicize abuses committed by government forces and use them as a focal point or rallying cry to direct new collective action. By framing repression in terms of attacks on shared values and symbols, mobilizers can expose the abuses committed and identify state coercion as a threat to collective interests.[41] The effect further demarcates social boundaries and politicizes social identification, increasing collective expectations for participation and drawing new members into the movement.[42]

As a result, in the wake of repression targeting overt, challenges, backlash waves can emerge that increase such challenges. This discussion yields the second testable hypothesis:

> —H2. When overt, collective challenges are repressed, overt, collective challenges will increase.

When considering the evolution of these expectations, the sequence of government-dissident interactions is important. Where governments accumulate sufficient information on organizers to repeatedly repress mobilization, it can destroy challenger organizations. Because both mobilization and the repression of mobilization typically take place underground, the implication is that where governments can repeatedly surveil and repress mobilization, there exists a set of potential claims-making efforts that never make it to the public sphere. In this case, the repression of mobilization prevents the emergence of overt, collective challenges that are, as a result, censored from public politics. Alternatively, when mobilizers are able to outpace government repression and bring their demands to the public, such action can lead to conflict spirals. In this case, initial outbursts of overt, collective challenges motivate repression, which motivates more conflict.

tactical selection and the number of challenges directed at the government in the wake of political repression.

[39] Kalyvas and Kocher 2007.

[40] Parkinson 2013.

[41] Goldstone and Tilly 2001.

[42] Wood 2003; Francisco 2004.

Governments attuned to these dynamics may attempt to extract information from the repression of overt, collective challenges—information that would assist in the repression of subsequent mobilization and thus deescalate the conflict spiral.[43] Arrests made during the repression of overt, collective challenges potentially result in interrogation, torture, and attempts to coerce captured dissidents into defecting.[44] In this manner, defeating dissidents requires positive feedback between government efforts to collect intelligence on dissident mobilization and targeted coercive action taken to contain or eliminate these organizational activities.

Crucially, repression also reveals information to organizers about how much the government knows about their (potential) activities. And dissidents are often adaptive to these dynamics. In response to repression directed against overt, collective challenges, movements can be expected to change their organizational structure and shift their tactical repertoire to prevent or counteract government information accumulation. Among other strategies, they may change the location of their meetings, alter their leadership, restructure organizational networks, or engage in acts of dissent that are less easily monitored by the state.[45]

Over time, dissidents attuned to these dynamics may develop mobilization plans that emulate the strategies of successful groups, and wise governments will emulate successful tactics for repressing mobilization. This evolution should motivate dissidents to develop tactics that make mobilization less observable, and push governments to develop new technologies for surveillance.[46]

These ideas extend the arguments discussed above and consider repression and dissent as part of larger patterns of closely related phenom-

[43] Because mobilization and overt, collective challenges are conceptually distinct ideal types, within this simplified theoretical argument they are considered to exist in distinct points in space and time. As a result, repression targeting mobilization and repression targeting overt, collective challenges also exist theoretically as distinct events in different locations and times (even if the events are closely related temporally or spatially). In this manner, it makes more sense to think of a sequence of related actions, rather than both types of repression occurring simultaneously.

[44] Whether the repression of overt, collective challenges increases or decreases future repression directed against mobilization depends upon the balance between (a) how much information is delivered to governments about anticipated dissident mobilization and (b) how much information is delivered to dissidents about anticipated government repression.

[45] It is possible that such adaptation draws resources from the organization and slows the capacity of the challengers to organize attacks (Wood 2007). Empirically, as identified in the analysis below, repression of overt, collective challenges produced a short-term increase in challenger actions. But I leave future work to identify how the transition toward clandestine organizational forms and tactics shapes the form or content of subsequent challenges. See also Davenport 2014.

[46] Movements may also learn to mobilize around issues the government chose not to repress, leading to moderation; governments may likewise develop tactics for co-opting or managing the demands of successful movements.

ena rather than as isolated events.[47] This logic generates predictions for where and when we should observe both escalatory and de-escalatory cycles of conflict. The emergence of overt, collective challenges suggests either that the government was unconcerned with the demands of the dissidents or that it was unable to suppress the movement at the mobilization stage.[48] Successful repression will be observed where organizers hold some initial possibility for coordinating overt, collective challenges but the government is able to accumulate coercive capacity and impose increasingly severe costs on those organizers.[49] Escalation of conflict behavior will occur when the initial costs of organizing dissent are low and the punishment associated with repression remains restricted to individuals unaffiliated with the movement's organizational base.

## Studying Repression and Dissent in Guatemala

The arguments above are evaluated using data on government and dissident behavior that occurred in Guatemala between 1975 and 1985. The form and severity of contentious politics varied widely across both time and space during this period. Early on, the conflict was largely isolated to more urban municipalities, such as Guatemala City or Escuintla. But as repression escalated, conflict spread to the rural highlands and to smaller municipalities such as Solola and Zacapa. By all accounts, the country was in the throes of civil war from, at minimum, 1977 to 1983.[50] Repression hit its peak between 1981 and 1983. Human rights organizations identify the rampant abuse that occurred during this period; tens of thousands were killed and many more displaced from their homes.[51] Political conflict continued to wax and wane in both territorial scope and intensity during the period in review. Eventually, conflict between the state and the organized opposition settled into a low-level stalemate that persisted for more than a decade before the 1996 peace negotiations.

While many observers see the government's pacification of the coun-

[47] Francisco 1995; Beissinger 2007; Wood 2007; della Porta and Tarrow 2012.

[48] Consistent with work examining the endogeniety of repression and dissent, it is assumed that governments with the greatest capacity for repressing challengers will also be those most likely to deter dissidents or to contain dissent at the mobilization stage (Pierskalla 2010; Conrad and Ritter 2013; Ritter 2014; Ritter and Conrad 2016).

[49] Ritter 2014, 119–27.

[50] Many historians date the civil war as persisting from an earlier conflict beginning in 1960 (Garrard-Burnett 2011). Others see the conflicts as distinct and date the civil war onset in 1977 (Brocket 2005).

[51] Commission for Historical Clarification 1999; Ball, Kobrak, and Sprier 1999; Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999; Sanford 2004.

try as a victory of indiscriminate violence, particularly the massacres committed by elite units of the military,[52] it is important to note that while massacres are perhaps the most appalling form of government violence, repression in Guatemala encompassed an extremely broad variety of tactics deployed by several different units within the security apparatus. In the highlands, massacres by the military were commonly combined with two efforts to eradicate the base from which rural insurgents were mobilizing—forced displacement of indigenous peasants into "model villages" and the organization of remaining communities into paramilitary units directly overseen by the government. Alongside this military effort, the National Police engaged in a broad, repressive campaign designed to root out individuals believed to be "subversives." Although the application of repression by the National Police has received less attention, they were ferocious in their efforts to counter what the government perceived to be a growing communist threat perpetrated by a unified front of unions, students, indigenous activists, and insurgents.[53] To track the activities of these groups and target coercive behavior, the state developed a sophisticated system of surveillance, double agents, and civilian informants, in which the National Police played a large role.[54] Guatemala received aid and training in intelligence collection from the CIA and the US Army, as well as Argentine, Chilean, Colombian, Israeli, and Taiwanese intelligence forces.[55] Money and attention were devoted to developing a police force with national jurisdiction that was highly skilled at investigation, intimidation, and abuse.[56] The National Police were responsible for arresting, torturing, and killing individuals identified as threats to the state.[57] They also carried out more typical police operations, such as clearing streets, corralling demonstrations, and monitoring highway traffic. Throughout the period, the police and the military remained in close collaboration; this coordination is captured in the police files discussed in detail below.

The Guatemalan civil war was one of the deadliest conflicts to occur in the Americas. In this way, Guatemala functions as a unique laboratory for examining repressive action. It is certainly an outlier in terms

[52] Stoll 1993; Commission for Historical Clarification 1999.

[53] In actuality, these groups were fractured and pursued what were often mutually exclusive goals. In future analyses, it will be important to disaggregate interactions between government forces and specific social movements.

[54] Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999; Commission for Historical Clarification 1999; Guberek 2012; Weld 2014; Schirmer 1998.

[55] McClintock 1985; Jonas 1996; Schirmer 1998.

[56] Commission for Historical Clarification 1999; Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999.

[57] Guberek 2012; AHPN 2011.

of the amount of repression employed, which to some may indicate that the case can only be generalized to other civil war settings. But that sidesteps the question of how civil wars emerge, and effectively ignores the fact that civil war is the result of strategic decisions made by governments and challengers. Periods of heightened violence ebbed and flowed over different areas of Guatemala during the decade in review.

In discussing the case and considering its generalizability, it is important to be explicit about the scope conditions of my argument. As the theoretical dynamics consider interactions between a government and a challenger, a primary concern must be that the government is facing some (minimally) organized opposition.[58] This excludes situations in which the government does not need to repress because coercion operates effectively as a deterrent, as in some highly authoritarian settings in which would-be dissidents do not consider organizing to challenge the regime out of fear. It also excludes situations where the government refrains from engaging in repression due to constraints placed upon it by domestic institutions or by its underlying capacity for coercion.[59] There must exist some minimum amount of surveillance capacity to identify at least some acts of mobilization. Territorially divided sovereignty is not necessary.[60] But the government must be deploying repression to enforce compliance with its authority, rather than removing or destroying the local population.[61] Concerning the form and severity of repression, coercion must clearly surpass some threshold to affect challengers, but my research does not attempt to identify where that threshold is or how variation across repressive intensity affects dissent. Instead, the focus here is on organizational targeting. Another important distinction is this study's concern with de facto rather than de jure forms of repression. While legalized restrictions, such as general curfews and prohibitions on assembly, are designed to influence challenger formation and strategy, this work is interested exclusively in discreet, observable acts of repression, which may or may not be legally sanctioned.[62]

Within these constraints, the expectations of the argument are predicted to hold in situations outside Guatemala. However, as the external

[58] These dissidents must have some disagreement with the government that leads them to seek redress outside the institutional channels of the regime.

[59] Concerns over constraints may be less important in the presence of dissent, as challenges to the state have been shown to mitigate institutional constraints on repression. Davenport 2007b; Conrad and Moore 2010.

[60] Territorially divided sovereignty can be defined as situations in which dissidents have demarcated territory within which they attempt to monopolize legitimate means of coercion (Kalyvas 2006, 22–23). While the expectations of the argument are thought to apply both in situations where sovereignty is territorially divided as well as where it is not, targeting mobilization may be made more difficult in settings where dissidents can control territory and restrict flows of information to the state.

[61] Walter 1969; Sullivan 2012.

[62] Cf. Koopmans 1997.

validity of any single country study cannot be easily generalized, it will be important for future work to examine the operation of this study's findings within other cases. In particular, there is a need to replicate the analyses in cases where there was less violence and more democracy, or different levels of state capacity. I return to issues of replication and generalizability in the discussion section below. But it is crucial to note that this case allows examination of variation across the full spectrum of repressive practices while holding relevant external factors constant. Examining variation within this single country can also address the microdynamics of challenger organization and government targeting that cannot be identified using broad cross-national data sets.

## Data

Data for this study are taken from the Guatemalan National Police Historical Archive (AHPN), a collection of previously confidential police records found in Guatemala City. The AHPN data track the diverse public and private behaviors of social movements, specify the organizational behaviors targeted by the government, and enable the identification of repression's effects on subsequent overt, collective challenges. For nearly a hundred years, the Guatemalan National Police stored their records in a large warehouse located within a police compound on the outskirts of the capital. In 1996, the National Police were disbanded and reformed into the new National Civilian Police, which included members of the demobilized insurgent organizations. Documents lingered in the warehouse for nearly ten years until they were discovered by the country's Human Rights Ombudsman's office in 2006.

What the ombudsman uncovered was a trove of more than eighty million records containing information produced during the routine bureaucratic processes that accompanied police surveillance, arrests, torture, and other repressive acts, including memos passed up and down the chain of command, arrest records, log files summarizing daily activity, and investigative reports produced by local divisions, the central command, or other specialized units. With aid from several European governments, the AHPN indexed, digitized, and archived its collection of approximately ten million documents dating from 1975–85.[63] Those documents were released to the public in early 2009; my project is one of the first to access the full digital collection.[64]

To create an events database of political activity from the AHPN's

[63] Weld 2014.

[64] The AHPN is available online at https://ahpn.lib.utexas.edu.

1975–85 digital collection, I used a multistage sampling procedure.[65] In total, more than 300,000 files were read, including every file sent to the Director General's Office and the Office for Coordinating Military and Police Activity. Coders read each file and coded all politically relevant events into the database using a coding rubric that included nearly one hundred event types.[66] Records from the AHPN contain information on more than 3,400 events in which members of civil society or social movements participated, including more than 1,500 mobilization activities. A comparable sample collected from the major international and domestic press identifies less than half of those events and fewer than two hundred mobilization activities.[67]

It is important to be aware of the potential biases in all data sources. For example, with reference to the reporting of repression in this period, given the Jimmy Carter administration's emphasis on human rights, it is clear that the regime was consciously trying to improve its international human rights reputation by concealing evidence of massacres.[68] The supplemental material to this article contains a discussion that details case-specific information on underreporting as it pertains to the AHPN data.[69] What makes the AHPN data unique is that they were produced by a bureaucracy that believed its records would never be made public, and they were released without the oversight of the regime responsible for the repression.[70] As a consequence of the relatively open access to the documents, the collection represents one of the most transparent sources of data on repressive behavior identified to date.[71]

Most important, the AHPN data allow for direct observation of the targets of political repression. Whereas other data sets have been forced to draw inferences about targeting based on the form of repression applied, the weapon utilized, or scope of victimization, the AHPN files identify both the types of activity engaged in by state forces and the targets that each activity was directed against.

[65] The files were read by me and two other coders, and I adjudicated any coding disputes. Intercoder reliability checks consistently demonstrated reliability rates well above 85 percent. The coding rubric, along with additional details on the sampling procedure and data collection process, can be found in the supplemental material. Sullivan 2016.

[66] The database thus captures all political activity identified by the National Police and the Military Coordination office. This corpus can be used as a proxy for the set of political activity the government was aware of, but should not be thought of as a complete universe of political actions.

[67] Sullivan 2015.

[68] Doyle 1999; Guberek 2012.

[69] Sullivan 2016.

[70] Doyle 2007; Weld 2014; Sullivan 2015.

[71] US readers might want to imagine a successful Freedom of Information Act request for which the FBI was required to turn over all its documents, unredacted, for a ten-year period.

## Analysis

This analysis investigates how repression that targets overt, collective challenges or mobilization affects subsequent patterns of dissent. I begin by employing the most common methodology for estimating repression's effects and use a cross-sectional time-series design to identify correlations between lagged values of repression (measured at time $t$-1) and overt, collective challenges occurring during the subsequent time period (time $t$). The units of analysis are monthly measures for repression and dissent in each of Guatemala's 326 municipalities.[72]

*Overt, collective challenges* are operationalized as public efforts by organized challengers to press claims against political authority. Examples include strikes, demonstrations, marches, roadblocks, targeted killings, arson, kidnapping, and the taking of hostages.[73] *Mobilization activities* are operationalized as dissident behavior designed to increase the level of formal organization of a dissident group or to raise the resource endowment of existing challenger organizations. Examples of mobilization activities include the distribution of information, organizational meetings, training sessions, and recruitment efforts. *Overt, collective challenges* and *mobilization activities* are each measured as a count of the number of events in each category occurring inside a municipality-month.

*Political repression* is operationalized as politically motivated violence committed by representatives of the state against individuals under their political jurisdiction. Examples of repression captured in the data include death threats, torture, disappearances, shootings, raids, protest policing, and politically motivated arrests. Police forces were exclusively responsible for 52 percent of the repressive activity identified in the sample, while the remaining repression was either exclusively carried out by the military or involved coordinated military-police operations. Each instance of political repression is further coded as to the type of dissident action it targeted. This process makes it possible to identify for each repressive act whether coercion was directed at mobilization activities; overt, collective challenges; or no apparent act of dissident behavior.[74] *Repression of mobilization* and *repression of overt, collective*

[72] Municipalities are the second smallest administrative unit in Guatemala. In 1973, the least populous was San Jose Chacaya, with 567 inhabitants, and the largest was Guatemala City, with 700,460 inhabitants.

[73] This is admittedly a broad categorization. Future analyses might further divide overt, collective challenges based on the various tactics employed by challengers.

[74] There were very few incidents of repression (fewer than fifty) for which there were no connected or related acts of non-state behavior. This fact provides some interesting insight into when, how, and

*challenges* are similarly measured as counts of events (for each type of targeted repression) in each municipality-month.

To account for unobserved confounders influencing repression and challenger behavior, all statistical models control for lagged trends in the dependent variable (*overt, collective challenges*) and incorporate municipal-level random effects.[75] All models also control for a lag of *mobilization activities* to account for the study's theoretical concern with the connection between mobilization and overt, collective challenges. Additional controls are included as robustness checks within several model specifications. For example, the country's annual *democracy* score (measured using the Michael Coppedge, Angel Alvarez, and Claudia Maldonado standardized inclusion metric) is included because prior work demonstrates that national democratic institutions robustly affect both repression and dissent.[76] It is also possible that conflict behavior is being driven by structural conditions operating at the local level. Three time-invariant measures are included to identify the strategic context of each municipality: logged municipal *population*, percentage of the municipality that was *indigenous*, and percentage of the municipality that was *literate*. These values are taken from a census conducted in 1973. Population is included to account for the impact this variable has on the scale of dissident and government activities.[77] Indigenous population rates are included because previous research draws strong connections between Guatemala's ethnic divisions and the dynamics of the conflict.[78] Literacy rates are include as an indicator of local state capacity, which can affect decisions to organize against the government and the government's capacity for monitoring such behavior.[79] Alongside the structural variables, two measures of challenger behavior in neighboring territories are included as controls—a *spatial-temporal lag of mobilization activities* and a *spatial-temporal lag of overt, collective challenges*. The spatial-temporal lags measure counts of different forms of challenger behavior inversely weighted by how far from a given municipality they occurred.[80] The lags are included to account for the influence of

why repression is applied. On the other side, there were a large number (more than 800) of mobilization activities and overt, collective challenges for which the state's only identifiable action was the filing of a report.

[75] Angrist and Pischke 2009, 245–46.

[76] When compared to many alternative democracy metrics, the Coppedge, Alvarez, and Maldonado 2008 inclusion measure is both (1) less likely to capture civil liberties restrictions and (2) less sensitive to biases resulting from conflict and missing data.

[77] Raleigh and Hegre 2009.

[78] Ball, Kobrak, and Spirer 1999; Commission for Historical Clarification 1999.

[79] Fearon and Laitin 2003.

[80] Ward and Gleditsch 2008.

regional patterns of dissent and repression on local conflict dynamics.[81] Subsequent tests incorporate annual and department-level fixed effects to guard against potential confounding factors occurring at more aggregate temporal or geographic units.[82]

Results are presented in Table 1. Models 1–3 estimate the effects of repression on overt, collective challenges occurring the following month, and models 4–6 estimate these same relationships while differencing the time-variant independent and dependent variables (for example, $\Delta X_{i,t} = X_{i,t} - X_{i,t-1}$). Thus instead of estimating how many overt, collective challenges occurred in a municipality-month as a function of how many repressive events occurred during the previous month, they estimate how changes in rates of overt, collective challenges correspond to changes in rates of repression. This strategy follows Eli Berman and colleagues, who argue that first-difference equations augmented with controls for preexisting trends in the dependent variable can help account for the selection of repression into areas with higher levels of dissent.[83] To facilitate comparison with the first-difference equations as well as the analyses presented in the supplementary material, all models in Table 1 are estimated using ordinary least squares.[84] Replications using negative binomial and zero-inflated negative binomial specifications produced similar results.

The results broadly support the study's two hypotheses. Coefficients and standard errors for *repression of mobilization* and *repression of overt, collective challenges* can be found in the top rows of Table 1. *Repression of mobilization* is negatively and significantly correlated with subsequent overt, collective challenges in model 1, which includes only the core covariates and basic controls. The significant, negative relationship between *repression of mobilization* and subsequent challenges proves robust to the inclusion of the additional controls (model 2), as well as to the incorporation of annual and department-level fixed effects (model 3). All results suggest that when repression targets the clandestine mobilization activities of dissident organizers, it limits their capacity for coordinating subsequent challenges against the government.

Turning to *repression of overt, collective challenges,* there is strong support for the contention that this form of repression increases subsequent challenges. Across models 1–3, repressing overt, collective challenges is associated with significant increases in challenges the following month

[81] Danneman and Ritter 2014.

[82] Guatemala's municipalities are grouped into twenty-two departments.

[83] Berman, Shapiro, and Felter 2011, 799. Further attention is given to selection and endogeneity in the discussion section below, and in Sullivan 2016.

[84] Sullivan 2016.

TABLE 1
CROSS-SECTIONAL TIME-SERIES ESTIMATION OF OVERT, COLLECTIVE CHALLENGES[a]

| | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Repression of mobilization | –0.115*** | –0.116*** | –0.112*** | –0.108*** | –0.108*** | –0.107*** |
| | (0.012) | (0.011) | (0.012) | (0.009) | (0.008) | (0.008) |
| Repression of overt, collective challenges | 0.481*** | 0.426*** | 0.414*** | 1.218*** | 1.219*** | 1.217*** |
| | (0.036) | (0.035) | (0.036) | (0.022) | (0.023) | (0.023) |
| Additional controls | | y | y | | y | y |
| Annual fixed effects | | | y | | | y |
| Department-level fixed effects | | | y | | | y |
| Differencing the variables | | | | y | y | y |
| N | 35,750 | 35,750 | 35,750 | 35,750 | 35,750 | 35,750 |

Coefficients and standards errors in parentheses; * p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001 (two-tailed test)

[a] All models include controls for lagged measures of *overt, collective challenges* and *mobilization,* and incorporate municipal-level random effects. Models 2, 3, 5, and 6 include the following additional controls: *spatial-temporal lag of overt, collective challenges, spatial-temporal lag of mobilization*, *indigenous*, *literate*, *population*, *democracy.*

when compared to what would be predicted had repression not taken place. This evidence corresponds to the argument that repression directed against public challenges can actually improve opportunities for coordinating challenges against the government.

Within the analyses, the control variables perform largely as expected and reveal some additional information about the dynamics of overt, collective challenges in the country. Both spatial-temporal lags of dissident behavior show significant correlations with municipal levels of overt, collective challenges. Municipal *indigenous* population rates do not prove to be robustly correlated with dissent, even as this variable has been shown repeatedly to correlate with repression.[85] Interestingly, levels of *democracy* are negatively correlated with overt, collective challenges, suggesting that fewer acts of dissent occurred as democracy improved. And *population* is positively and robustly correlated with overt, collective challenges while municipal *literate* population rates have a negative sign, but the variable is significant only in model 2.

Models 4–6 take further advantage of the time-series dynamics operating in the data by first-differencing the time-variant independent and dependent variables. The results for both *repression of mobilization*

[85] Gulden 2002; Sullivan 2012; Sullivan 2014; Sullivan 2015.

and *repression of overt, collective challenges* prove robust to this specification. Municipal-specific trends in prior *mobilization* and *overt, collective challenges* do have significant correlations with contemporaneous rates of change in the dependent variable. However, the inclusion of these trends does not strongly affect the core results. Across model specifications, rates of overt, collective challenges decreased systematically following repression targeting mobilization, while such rates increased systematically following repression targeting overt, collective challenges. Taken together, these results support both hypotheses and suggest that political repression can have divergent effects depending on the types of organizational behavior it targets.

The predicted effects are substantively important. When dissidents mobilized without being targeted with repression, they were able to engage in overt, collective challenges in more than 50 percent of subsequent municipality-months. When mobilization was repressed, the number drops to less than 10 percent.[86] Comparatively, when there was ongoing dissent but no overt, collective challenges were repressed, dissidents engaged in overt, collective challenges in approximately one-third of the subsequent municipality-months. And when overt, collective challenges were repressed, the rate more than doubles.

There are lasting effects as well. Because of the positive relationship between past and present dissident behavior, repression can set in motion enduring escalatory or de-escalatory dynamics. Figure 1 presents dynamic forecasts (with 95 percent confidence intervals) for the predicted rates of change in *overt, collective challenges* based on the specifications in model 6.[87] The forecasts estimate the effects of a single act of repression observed at time $t_0$. For the six months following an act of repression, rates of *overt, collective challenges* decrease if repression targeted mobilization and increase if repression targeted overt, collective challenges.

## Discussion

Returning to the core questions motivating this study, the analysis demonstrates connections between the organizational underpinnings of dissent and the effects of repression on future conflict. Where the

[86] In municipality-months where mobilization was repressed, the government repressed two mobilization events on average. When overt, collective challenges were repressed, the government repressed an average of just over one event in that municipality-month.

[87] Forecasts were generated using the commands and methods created by Williams and Whitten 2012.

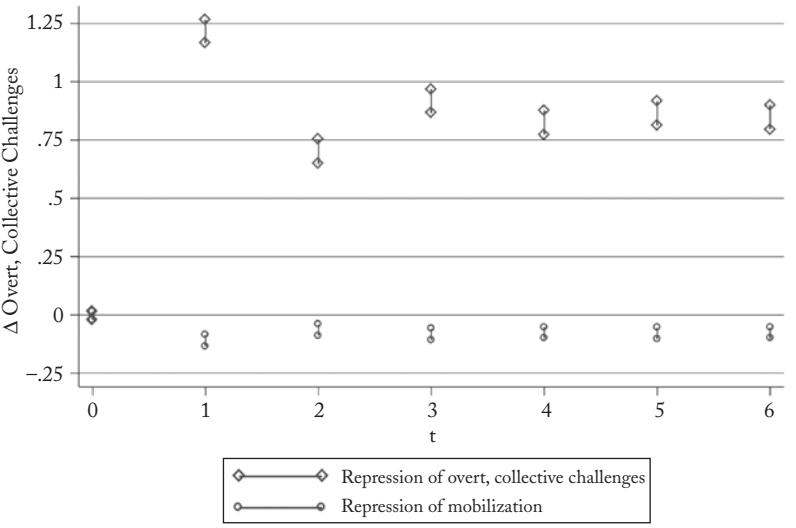


FIGURE 1
DYNAMIC FORECASTS FOR DISSIDENT BEHAVIOR IN THE AFTERMATH OF REPRESSION

government can target mobilization, future challenges decrease. Where the government responds to ongoing challenges with repression, conflict escalates. Such results should give pause to population-centric approaches for resolving the conflict-repression nexus. If the government is able to successfully eliminate the organizations responsible for coordinating overt, collective challenges, then aggrieved populations may have no one to turn to for backlash against the state. In contrast, if mobilization is ongoing, even repression that selectively targets dissidents can lead to conflict escalation. This last proposition is tested in the analysis above, which demonstrates robust, positive correlations between repression selectively targeted at overt, collective challenges and increases in subsequent challenges. The supplementary material contains additional analyses comparing results from the organizational-targeting approach to expectations derived from population-centric arguments.[88] The models incorporate indiscriminate forms of repression, consider issues of territorial control, and weigh the implications of executive job insecurity. Although these analyses are preliminary, the results support the theoretical primacy of the organizational-targeting model. For instance, positive correlations between indiscriminate repression and subsequent overt, collective challenges become substan-

[88] Sullivan 2016.

tially weaker in settings without organized mobilization. In contrast, the organizational-targeting results hold up robustly to the inclusion of population-centric measures.

The supplementary material also presents robustness checks considering potential endogeneity in the repression-dissent relationship.[89] Here, the study supplements the primary analysis with an instrumental variables (IV) design. This effort follows a recent trend of researchers seeking to identify plausibly exogenous effects in the repression-dissent relationship.[90] The percentage of repressive events documented by local and international NGOs (in each municipality-month) is used to instrument for political repression. The logic is that the publication of NGO reports likely informs governments about efforts to monitor their human rights practices, which may inspire changes in the location, severity, or form of subsequent repression (without providing any new information to local dissident organizers). The supplementary material considers issues of relevance, exogeneity, and exclusion in greater detail, but one important issue that warrants noting is that NGO reporting may be limited in areas with heavy repression. The analyses attempt to address this concern by demonstrating that reporting does not correlate with preassignment levels of repression, and by controlling for measures of democracy.[91] Across model specifications, the IV results confirm the expectations of the argument.

Extending the implications of the findings outside of Guatemala requires considering important structural variables that may impact the government's capacity to identify and repress mobilization, and should thus be significant predictors of the likelihood of a state descending into conflict. A study such as this one, which investigates microdynamic variation within a single case, has the ability to narrow in on and identify challenger responses to individual acts of repression. But it also has limited capacity to examine the impact of macrolevel variables that could condition those responses. Although it is important to recognize that many relevant structural factors, such as democracy, state capacity, and civil war, are likely outcomes of government-challenger struggles,

[89] As noted above, repression commonly occurs in response to increased challenges, which suggests important selection mechanisms whereby repression is occurring in areas that already have significantly different latent propensities for experiencing dissent. To the extent that there is a positive relationship between past and present dissident behavior that persists despite controls for lagged dissent, the remaining bias would influence the estimates of repression's effects in a positive direction. The effect would create a particularly hard test for Hypothesis 1 (regarding the repression of mobilization), while decreasing the probability of rejecting Hypothesis 2 (regarding the repression of overt, collective challenges).

[90] Carey 2006; Young 2013; Ritter and Conrad 2016.

[91] Sullivan 2016.

examining how these factors condition subsequent strategic choices could provide clues to the broader generalizability of the findings.

In regard to democracy, the domestic democratic–peace literature suggests that democratic governments commit fewer repressive acts than their authoritarian or semidemocratic counterparts.[92] But there exists debate over how democracy affects the repression of mobilization. Some recent work holds democracy as an indication that preemptive repression will not occur, while other work suggests that democracies may be more inclined to engage in this form of repression because it is difficult for a democratic public to observe.[93] In regard to capacity, some governments simply do not have the ability to monitor mobilization and thus are unable to repress it.[94] Such states should be particularly prone to conflict escalation. The results of auxiliary analyses (presented the supplementary material) are consistent with this argument.[95]

State capacity in Guatemala is extremely unevenly distributed, and in some areas, such as the indigenous highlands, the Guatemalan state only truly emerged during the decade under study. Replicating the analyses in high capacity and low capacity regions reveals that repression directed at mobilization is most consistently associated with decline in overt, collective challenges in sites with strong state capacity. Where capacity was the weakest, repressing mobilization did not appear to significantly decrease challenger behavior. And when overt, collective challenges were repressed in low capacity areas, the most dramatic increases in subsequent challenges occurred.

These results suggest that future research should further investigate how governments make particular decisions about applying repressive force under different structural conditions and in response to different forms of organizational behavior, as well as examine how structural outcomes, such as democracy or state capacity, emerge from conflict.

[92] Davenport 2007a; Davenport 2007b.

[93] Cunningham 2004; Davenport 2014; Ritter and Conrad 2016.

[94] The data show that repression that targets mobilization activities is positively correlated with state capacity (as measured by municipal population and literacy rates), which suggests that such behavior is more likely to be observed in high capacity regions. Analyses using zero-inflated negative-binomial models provide further nuance to this point by first estimating whether or not it is possible for the government to repress mobilzation activities in a given municipality-month and then predicting how many acts of repression are likely, conditional on that possibility. Results indicate that low levels of state capacity do not completely inhibit the government from repressing mobilization, but they might decrease the number of mobilization activities that are repressed.

[95] Sullivan 2016.

## Conclusion

Governments routinely turn to repression as a means for protecting their rule from overt, collective challenges, such as strikes, protests, and targeted attacks. At times, their efforts appear to succeed, diminishing challenges and helping to preserve the existing political order. But government coercion appears equally likely to fail, leading to an escalation of conflict and, potentially, to civil war or revolution. This study argues that the impacts of political repression are conditional on the development of challenger organizations. When governments are able to direct repression at clandestine mobilization activities, repression depletes the capacity for dissident organizations to coordinate overt, collective challenges. In contrast, when governments direct repression against ongoing overt, collective challenges, it leaves challenger organizations in place to escalate levels of dissent. This article examines these arguments with statistical analysis of political repression in Guatemalan municipalities from 1975 to 1985. Unique data gathered from previously confidential police records are employed to examine the impact of repression targeting different forms of organizational behavior. The results confirm the expectations of the argument.

The findings speak to limitations of prior efforts to resolve the relationship between repression and dissent, and in particular to population-centric theories of conflict. Arguments specifying repression's impact on popular support need to acknowledge theoretically prior considerations of how repression interacts with dissident organizations. In the presence of sustained mobilization, even selectively targeted repression can have divergent effects, depending on the types of organizational activities it targets. And in the absence of challenger mobilization, the backlash predicted by many population-centric models becomes unlikely. The findings also present insights into problems posed by recent work on the endogeneity of repression and dissent. Such research urges scholars to consider the strategic interactions that move a society away from an equilibrium characterized by preemptive repression (and a lack of apparent dissent) and toward an equilibrium in which states and challengers respond to one another with increased violence.[96] This sentiment is strongly echoed in this article. Where existing research has remained largely agnostic about the form or content of preemptive repression and the types of organizations that are likely to emerge in the context of such repression, this study specifies the microdynamics underlying sequences of escalation and de-escalation.

[96] Pierskalla 2010; Ritter 2014; Ritter and Conrad 2016.

When a government succeeds in repressing mobilization activities, it depletes capacities for public claims-making. To the extent that this form of repression is responsible for stabilizing order, it is important to recognize that within apparently peaceful states, there are selection effects operating to limit the public articulation of particular ideologies or grievances. Subsequent research might consider the duration of these effects and the long-term implications of organizational destruction. At the same time, where and when dissidents can conceal their mobilization activities and outpace government efforts to repress mobilization, their capacity to affect change and potentially overthrow the government is improved. In the future, it will be important to study the variables determining the types of movements that are more or less able to avoid repression of their mobilization. Understanding which types of movements succeed and which fail can help to explain the onset and escalation of political conflict.

## Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article can be found at http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0043 887116000125.

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