

Final Examination

The Causes and Consequences of Political Violence

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1 Introduction

Within the intricate landscape of state repression, the mechanisms driving governments to make concessions or resort to violence in the face of protests remain a subject of intense scholarly inquiry. Greitens (2016) introduced a comprehensive framework rooted in the design and structure of state security apparatus, also known as coercive institutions, specifically exploring the interplay of two primary mechanisms: Intelligence gathering capacity and the Incentive to escalate or dampen violence. This framework categorized coercive institutions into two distinct types based on the dimensions of Fragmentation and Social Inclusivity.

Greitens' theory proposes that Fragmented and Socially Exclusive coercive institutions, by design, exhibit limited intelligence-gathering capacity, leading to less selective repression. Furthermore, these institutions are incentivized to escalate violence, resulting in discrimination and pre-emptive repression. In contrast, Unitary and Socially Inclusive coercive institutions, characterized by better intelligence capacity - such as a State's Secret Police force, tend to engage in targeted repression and display a reduced inclination toward violent repression. As a security apparatus, the Secret Police is commonly associated as tool that prevents popular unrest due to its high intelligence gathering nature and one that employs selective repression on its population, a notion extensively reflected in the literature on state repression (Greitens, 2016; Berman and Waller, 2006).

While Greitens' theory has found empirical support in various studies (Makara, 2016; Dworschak, 2020; Winward, 2021; Carey and González, 2021; Cebul and Grewal, 2022; Steinert, 2023), a nuanced examination of the Fragmentation and the Inclusivity aspect alone has uncovered subtle and contradictory causal effects (Lee, 2009; Pion-Berlin et al., 2014; Lutscher, 2016; Hendrix and Salehyan, 2017; Rød and Weidmann, 2023; Mehrl and Choulis, 2023). In light of conflicting findings in the broader literature regarding factionalism intelligence capacity, and their impact on repression, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse by isolating and exploring the Fragmentation dimension within the context of the State's Secret Police. The central focus is to unravel **how the degree of fragmentation moderates the influence of State Secret Police on the propensity towards different forms of state repression**, specifically selective or indiscriminate repression.

To examine these competing expectations, I am reproducing and enhancing the research conducted by Mehrl and Choulis (2023), by incorporating two separate dependent variables from Bagozzi et al. (2021) ICEWS-derived political event data, which delineates states' repressive repertoires. This approach aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities associated with both selective and indiscriminate repression, departing from the use of human rights as the sole metric for assessing state repressive repertoires.

The findings affirm Mehrl and Chouli's proposition that the existence of secret police organizations correlates with an escalation in selective repression, but yielded statistically insignificant results for effects on indiscriminate repression. In simpler terms, while secret police may dissuade potential adversaries by taking active measures or furnish information for selective targeting, my analysis does not reveal any indication that their mere existence leads to an overall reduction in indiscriminate repressive events. Nonetheless, supplementary results align with the principles of deterrence and institutional self-preservation, in other words, the impact of secret police on physical repression is contingent on the

number of other security organizations with similar responsibilities present. These findings may offer a more granular understanding of how a state intelligence mechanism, vis-à-vis its Secret Police force, operates within varying degrees of fragmentation and contributes to the distinct patterns of selective and indiscriminate repression observed across different political contexts.

2 Theoretical Arguments and Hypotheses

2.1 Previous Research on State Security Apparatus and Repression

Prior studies exploring the relationship between state security apparatus and repression have offered valuable insights into the complex dynamics that govern the responses of governments to protests and dissent, namely the social and ethnic cleavage-based explanation by [Buhaug et al. \(2008\)](#), the Regime-based Explanation by [Jones and Lupu \(2018\)](#), and the Threat-based explanation - threat of Mass revolt and Elite coup - by [Bueno de Mesquita et al. \(2003\)](#) and [Svolik \(2009\)](#). Some of these work focuses on the task of elite management, examining how autocrats create and sustain the coalitions necessary to stay in power, while other theories look at how states' assessments of internal versus external threats inform internal security. None of these works, however, address the consequences of threat balancing on the patterns of state violence and repression.

[Greitens \(2016\)](#) significantly contributed to this discourse by advancing the Threat-based explanation, elucidating how the design and structure of the Coercive Institution's state security apparatus, also known as coercive institutions, influence the levels of state violence. Two primary mechanisms underpin Greitens' theory: Intelligence-gathering capacity and the Incentive to escalate or dampen violence. This conceptualization results in two distinct types of coercive institutions, "Fragmented & Socially-Exclusive organizations" and "Unitary & Socially-Inclusive organizations".

Fragmented & Socially Exclusive organizations, designed to prevent elite-oriented coups, exhibit a weaker capacity to collect intelligence, leading to less selective repression. Incentives within such organizations may drive the escalation of violence, resulting in indiscriminate and sometimes more violent repression. On the other hand, Unitary & Socially Inclusive organizations, aiming to counter mass-oriented popular unrest, possess enhanced intelligence capabilities, facilitating strategic decision-making, resulting in surveillance, targeted pre-emption, and selective violence, consequently, less violent repression overall.

While Greitens' mechanism on Intelligence gathering capacity has garnered support in numerous empirical studies ([Makara, 2016](#); [Dworschak, 2020](#); [Winward, 2021](#); [Carey and González, 2021](#); [Cebul and Grewal, 2022](#); [Steinert, 2023](#)), it is essential to acknowledge contrasting findings to Greitens' theory in the broader literature. Findings by [Lee \(2009\)](#) and [Pion-Berlin et al. \(2014\)](#) show that military organizational cohesiveness makes insubordination less likely and military fragmentation makes insubordination more likely. [Lutscher \(2016\)](#) research argues that minimal and high-security apparatus fragmentation make insubordination more likely, similarly, [Rød \(2023\)](#) unpublished manuscript and [Hendrix and Salehyan \(2017\)](#) research shows that military factionalism makes repression less likely. Additionally, findings by [Dahl \(2016\)](#) argue that division of the security apparatus makes insubordination. Most recently, [Mehrl and Choulis \(2023\)](#) found that physical integrity rights violations are

higher in countries that have secret police, this is in contrast to the Greitens' idea that Unitary or non-Fragmented security apparatus would have better intelligence capacity and would theoretically result in reduced repression of civilians

This diversity in findings prompts a crucial question: Are different dimensions, particularly the inclusive-exclusive and united-fragmented dimensions, contained within structures that potentially exert different causal effects? In pursuit of a more nuanced understanding, this research seeks to disaggregate these variables further, concentrating specifically on the united-fragmented dimension of Greitens' theory.

2.2 Secret Police Organizations and State Repression

Greitens' theory posits that the fragmentation of a state's security apparatus can significantly impact the intelligence-gathering capacity and the incentives to escalate or dampen violence. Understanding this, our exploration delves into the effect of the fragmentation dimension on a state's intelligence-gathering capacity, vis-à-vis its Secret Police force, to unravel its distinct implications for state repression.

Secret police organizations and state repression have been historical features of authoritarian regimes, employing covert methods to maintain control, suppress dissent, and eliminate perceived threats to the ruling authority (Berman and Waller, 2006). One of the defining characteristics of secret police organizations is their ability to gather intelligence through surveillance, espionage, and infiltration of opposition groups. They use a range of sophisticated techniques, from wiretapping and monitoring online activities to employing informants within civil society organizations. This extensive surveillance apparatus enables them to identify and neutralize perceived enemies of the state, real or imagined, thereby suppressing dissent and quashing any potential challenges to the ruling regime. Leaders with authoritarian tendencies depend on having intelligence agents embedded within the state hierarchy to keep a close watch on their subordinates (Barros, 2016)

Mehrl and Choulis (2023) contributes significantly to the literature on Secret Police Organizations and State Repression by re-examining the intricate relationship between these entities and repression. Their research stands out for identifying and exploring four distinct mechanisms—deterrence, targeting, organizational practices, and institutional self-preservation—that interconnect secret police and state repression. Their key contribution lies in their empirical investigation, where they collect and analyze global data on the existence of secret police. The results of their study bring forward compelling findings, indicating a positive association between secret police and increased physical repression. Notably, Mehrl and Choulis shed light on the conditions under which this association is most pronounced. Specifically, they highlight that secret police are more likely to be linked with heightened physical repression when they are tasked with developing a reputation to deter dissidents or when multiple rival security organizations exist within the same context.

However, a notable criticism arises from their use of human rights as a measurement of state repressive repertoires. Their reliance on Fariss' latent human rights protection scores as an indicator may introduce certain limitations and potential biases into the analysis. Firstly, human rights indices often encapsulate a broad spectrum of rights and liberties, making it challenging to discern the specific mechanisms and tactics employed by state security forces. This lack of specificity may mask the nu-

ances between selective and indiscriminate repression, potentially overlooking crucial variations in the nature and targeting of state actions. Secondly, human rights scores might not adequately capture the subtle yet crucial distinctions between types of repression. A measure like Fariss' latent scores could conflate instances of targeted suppression against specific opposition groups with more widespread and indiscriminate abuses against the general population. This oversimplification might hinder a comprehensive understanding of the unique dynamics at play when secret police organizations are involved in state repression. Lastly, the subjective nature of human rights assessments may introduce a degree of interpretative bias, as different researchers may have varying perspectives on what constitutes a human rights violation. This subjectivity can influence the reliability and replicability of findings, potentially undermining the robustness of the research.

The failure to differentiate between different measures of repression is also found in previous studies that explored the impact of security apparatus structure. They have consistently utilized measures of a continuous dependent variable of repression that do not differentiate between targeted and indiscriminate repression. Specifically, research conducted by [Carey and González \(2021\)](#) used Gibney's Political Terror Scale, while [Mitchell et al. \(2014\)](#) relied on the CIRI Physical Integrity index. Additionally, [Rød \(2023\)](#) manuscript utilized Weidmann and Rod's Mass Mobilization in Autocracies Database.

Given the lack of nuances towards specific forms of repression, such as mass state violence or arbitrary arrests, I intend to enhance and reshape [Mehrl and Choulis \(2023\)](#) research by introducing two distinct dependent variables, aiming to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexities associated with selective and indiscriminate repression. By doing so, I aim to refine and broaden the scope of their study, delving deeper into the diverse manifestations of state repression that can arise in the presence of Secret Police. This differentiation stands as a key value addition of my analysis, setting it apart from previous research methodologies and providing a nuanced understanding of the relationship between security apparatus structure and repression outcomes.

2.3 Presence of Secret Police and Pattern of Repression

The theoretical foundation of this research is grounded in the multifaceted impact of Secret Police Organizations on state repression, as reflected by existing literature and empirical findings. [Greitens \(2016\)](#) laid the groundwork by introducing the Fragmentation aspect within coercive institutions, emphasizing its role in influencing intelligence-gathering capacity and incentives for escalating or dampening violence. Furthermore, the understanding that secret police operations contribute not only to deterrence but also to more selective targeting is crucial ([Dimitrov and Sassoon, 2014](#); [Kalyvas, 2006](#); [Steinert, 2023](#)).

The presence of Secret Police organizations is posited to increase the selective targeting of repression events in authoritarian regimes, aligning with the deterrence mechanism proposed by Greitens. As secret police enhance the quantity and quality of information on anti-government activities, regimes become better equipped to distinguish between dissidents and the general public ([Dimitrov and Sassoon, 2014](#); [Kalyvas, 2006](#); [Steinert, 2023](#)). This heightened intelligence enables regimes to selectively target and quell opposition movements before they escalate, offering a more efficient alternative to overt and widespread repression ([Davenport, 2014](#); [Dragu and Lupu, 2021](#)).

Conversely, theoretical arguments extend to suggest that the presence of Secret Police Organizations may also decrease the reliance on indiscriminate targeted repression events in authoritarian regimes (Gohdes, 2020; Xu, 2021). The information generated by secret police informant networks and surveillance operations allows regimes to identify and locate political opponents, facilitating selective targeting instead of indiscriminate repression. The targeting mechanism indicates that secret police decrease regimes' dependence on widespread repression, providing a more nuanced and strategic approach to maintaining control (Lyall, 2009; Souleimanov and Siroky, 2016). Building upon these theoretical arguments, this research posits the following hypotheses:

H1a: The presence of a Secret Police force increases selectively targeted repression events in authoritarian regimes.

H1b: The presence of a Secret Police force decreases indiscriminate repression events in authoritarian regimes.

H1c: The presence of a Secret Police force increases selectively targeted repression and decreases indiscriminate repression events in authoritarian regimes.

These hypotheses encapsulate the dual nature of Secret Police Organizations, suggesting that their role goes beyond mere deterrence, influencing the very nature and selectivity of state repression in authoritarian settings.

2.4 Competing Security Organisations and Indiscriminate Repression

Greitens (2016) institutional survival logic proposes that the relationship between the Secret Police force and state repression in authoritarian regimes is intricately tied to the degree of competition within the broader security apparatus. This perspective posits that state institutions, including the Secret Police, engage in competition for limited resources and strive to ensure their continued existence and influence within the regime.

Specifically, when the Secret Police face robust competition from other branches of the security apparatus, particularly counterbalancing paramilitaries with similar tasks and specialties, the incentive to demonstrate their efficacy and value to the regime becomes a key component for survival (Greitens, 2016). The tasks assigned to the Secret Police often involve safeguarding the regime against domestic political opposition and internal defections within the ruling coalition. Notably, these tasks overlap with those carried out by counterbalancing paramilitaries, which are tasked with protecting against challenges from regime insiders and the military Böhmelt and Pilster (2015); De Bruin (2018).

Therefore, the institutional survival logic suggests that in environments where there is a higher number of counterbalancing paramilitary organizations sharing similar responsibilities, the Secret Police face increased pressure to showcase their effectiveness by neutralizing perceived threats. As such, I propose:

H2: The effect of the Secret Police force on state repression in authoritarian regimes is moderated by the number of counterbalancing security apparatus, with the effect of Secret Police force presence diminishing as the number of counterbalancing security apparatus increases.

3 Research Design

3.1 Data & Selected Variables

The research design employs a comprehensive set of variables and datasets to investigate the intricate relationship between Secret Police Organizations, institutional fragmentation, and state repression in authoritarian regimes.

For the primary Independent Variables, the presence of a Secret Police force and the degree of institutional fragmentation, I utilize the replication data provided by [Mehrl and Choulis \(2023\)](#). Mehrl and Choulis's binary indicator for the existence of at least one secret police organization serves as a foundational element, while the degree of institutional fragmentation is operationalized through the number of counterbalancing organizations, extracted from [De Bruin \(2021\)](#) dataset.

To measure the Dependent Variables, representing various types of state repressions, this study relies on [Bagozzi et al. \(2021\)](#) dataset derived from the Conflict and Mediation Event Observations Event (CAMEO) dataset originally developed by [Gerner et al. \(2002\)](#) and the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) dataset from [Boschee et al. \(2015\)](#). Bagozzi and team narrowed the dataset to domestic events involving government source actors and civilian target actors. Subsequently, events were filtered to encompass only those considered 'material conflict,' while protest events were excluded. Applying 'one-a-day' filtering minimized duplicates, and the remaining events were then aggregated to the country-year-action level for the years 1996–2016. This meticulous approach ensured a nuanced and reliable measure of the diversity of repressive repertoires across states, which resulted in the categorization of 30 CAMEO event types.

However, my analysis focuses on a refined selection of 22 CAMEO event categories which is then coded as either Selective or Indiscriminate Repression Events. The frequencies of events for each repression category, as provided by Bagozzi and team, are detailed in the Appendix descriptive statistics Table A2 and A3. In determining which CAMEO event categories to code for Selective or Indiscriminate repression, I draw on the precise conceptualizations found in the existing literature, particularly studies by [Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood \(2017\)](#) and [Demirel-Pegg and Rasler \(2021\)](#). Additional rationale for excluding specific event categories can be found in the dedicated section of the Appendix. The dependent variables, Selective Repression Events and Indiscriminate Repression Events, is thus a continuous variable within the non-democratic country sample.

For Control Variables, the approach mirrors that of Mehrl and Choulis, encompassing population size, economic development, regime type, and coup attempts. These variables, identified as influential factors in state repression, also align with factors that would affect the willingness and opportunity for the existence of a Secret Police force. Diverging from the methodology employed by Mehrl and Choulis - which incorporated interstate and intrastate events as control variables, I opted to entirely exclude Interstate and Intrastate country-year event data. This decision was driven by the recognition that including such data might inadvertently encompass numerous incidents that do not align with the specific conceptualization of 'repression' under consideration, but instead, may primarily constitute as acts of war.

The top-half of figure 1 provides an initial bivariate comparison of the different repression events

between countries with and without a secret police, highlighting a more pronounced level of Selective repression events in nations where a secret police is operational, but a somewhat insignificant difference of Indiscriminate repression in nations where a secret police is operational. While the bottom-half of the figure 1 provides an initial comparison of the number of Selective and Indiscriminate repression events in varying numbers of Counterbalances, but indicates no obvious distinction in higher levels of Counterbalances.

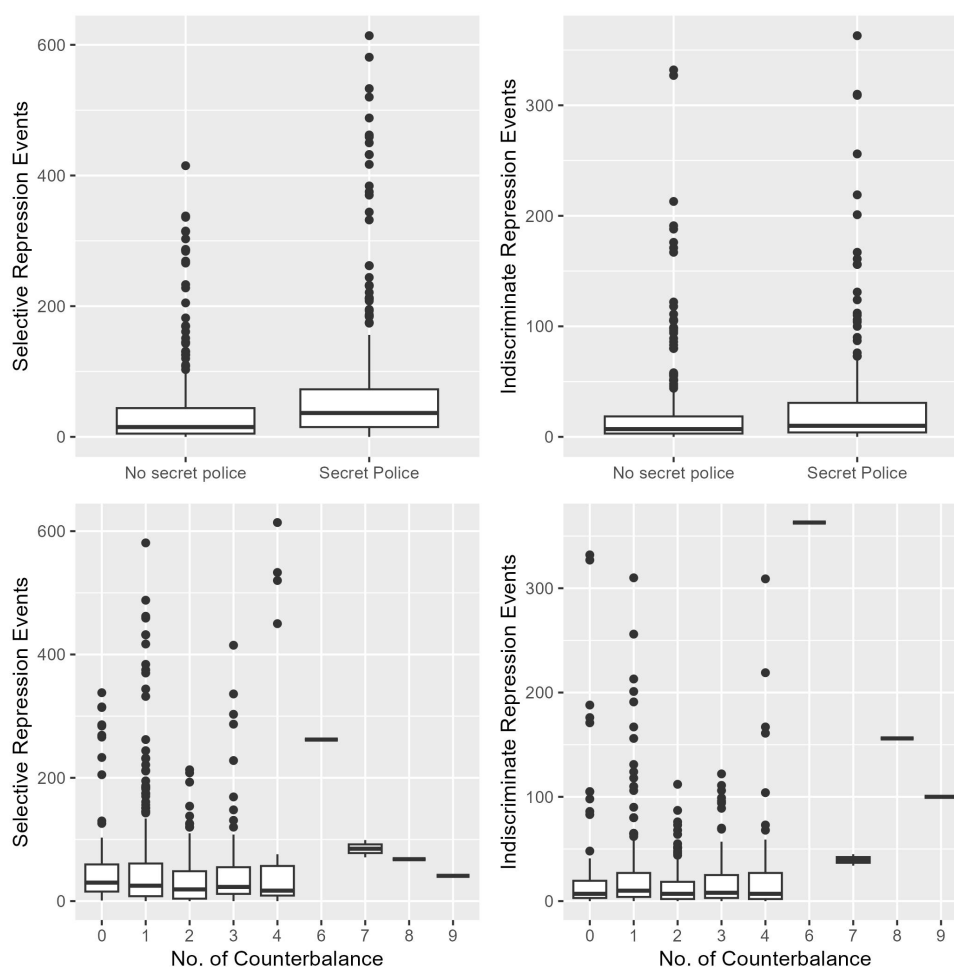


Figure 1: Box Plot on Repression Patterns in the presence of Secret Police and different Number of Counterbalances

3.2 Methodology

The initial box-plot outcome lacks the representation of potential confounding variables and moderating relationships that could impact a state's repressive patterns. To delve deeper into this relationship, I employ Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. To address confounding factors, country-fixed effects are incorporated, along with theoretically motivated control variables.

4 Results & Discussion

Table 1: Secret Police and Repression Pattern

	Repression Pattern					
	v_Selective	v_Indiscrim	v_Selective	v_Indiscrim	v_Selective	v_Indiscrim
	Selective	Indiscriminate	Selective	Indiscriminate	Selective	Indiscriminate
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Secret Police	25.809 (24.648)	24.898* (14.897)	196.628*** (46.791)	54.037* (28.712)	185.001*** (41.914)	49.717* (28.051)
Counterbalance	-56.566*** (6.708)	-13.037*** (4.054)	-17.637 (11.258)	-6.396 (6.908)	-13.196 (10.089)	-4.898 (6.752)
ln Population					94.300*** (24.052)	35.179** (16.097)
ln GPD p.c.					66.160*** (8.882)	22.307*** (5.944)
Regime					-17.881 (10.982)	-6.025 (7.350)
Coup Attempt					3.222 (14.185)	3.743 (9.493)
Interaction			-51.992*** (12.177)	-8.869 (7.472)	-53.868*** (10.852)	-9.535 (7.263)
Observations	601	601	601	601	601	601
R ²	0.118	0.024	0.147	0.027	0.333	0.095
Adjusted R ²	0.033	-0.070	0.062	-0.069	0.262	-0.001

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01 | Standard Errors Clustered on the Country in Parentheses.

Table 1 presents the findings from six models - all with country-fixed effects, assessing the impact of secret police organizations on Selective and Indiscriminate state repression events.

Models one and two are simple models including the two key independent variables - the presence of Secret Police and the Number of Counterbalance, on Selective and Indiscriminate repression events respectively. Models three and four introduce an interaction variable between the two key independent variables, while models five and six incorporate additional controls related to structural and conflict factors highlighted in the above Research Design section.

Across most of these specifications, consistent evidence emerges supporting [Mehrl and Choulis \(2023\)](#) findings that countries with secret police involvement tend to exhibit higher levels of repressive

activities - both Selective and Indiscriminate. However, the magnitude of the effect diverges between Selective and Indiscriminate repression events. As shown in the coefficient estimate for model 5, a unit increase in Secret Police increases the number of Selective repression events by 185 times. Conversely, the results from the Indiscriminate Repression model 6, only show an increase in the number of Indiscriminate repression events by 49.7 times, indicating a significant but comparatively smaller positive association, roughly 3.7 folds less than the former event.

This finding supports hypothesis *H1a*, however, it does not lend any credible evidence to hypothesis *H1b*. Consequently, the anticipation that an escalation in Selective repression would concurrently lead to a reduction in indiscriminate repression, as postulated in hypothesis *H1c*, is not supported by the findings. While their presence correlates with an increase in selective and strategic repression patterns in general, it does not suggest a potentially mitigating effect on indiscriminate repression events. Taken all together, it may appear to challenge the broader arguments put forth by [Greitens \(2016\)](#), where a higher intelligence capacity theoretically translates to reduced violent repression. It could still be argued via these findings, that there exists a tendency to minimize the use of violence, and would instead favor alternative forms of repression, such as strategic, surveillance, and selective pre-emption. However, it is essential to recognize the nuanced nature of violence reduction, as the degree of violence minimization can be subjective, therefore, caution should be exercised in endorsing the argument that the presence of State Police unequivocally results in a decrease in the overall intensity of repression.

Subsequently, the introduction of an interaction term between the presence of Secret Police and Counterbalance in models five and six demonstrates that a higher number of Counterbalance moderates the impact of Secret Police on repression events, this is as *H2a* hypothesized, based on organizational practices and institutional self-preservation mechanisms. However, the statistically insignificant coefficient in model 6, indicates that this moderating effect only applies to Selective Repression events.

In summary, although the findings show support that Secret Police facilitate Selective repression activities through the provision of information, it does not lend support to the notion that secret police serve as a deterrent to indiscriminate or mass violence activities.

Simulation & Visualization

To best visualize and verify the differences induced by the moderating variable, two Monte Carlo simulations for each repression event - model 5 and model 6, were constructed in figure 2, based on two scenarios: low and high number of Counterbalance. The simulations were made from a thousand iterations with [Tomz et al. \(2003\)](#) statistical package, offering insights into the variability of predicted outcomes under specified conditions. An additional visualization was made in figure 3 to provide easier substantive interpretation of the results, however, it should be noted that the continuous scale on the x-axis holds no substantive meaning, and the presence of Secret Police remains a binary variable. An additional plot visualizing the moderating variable can be found in figure 4.

The result of figure 2 validates the aforementioned proposition, that the presence of Secret Police results in a generally higher number of Repression Events, moreover, the same conclusion can be made as above, that the presence of Secret Police indicates a higher number of Selective repression activities. However, due to the overlapping confidence intervals for no Secret Police scenarios with zero in figure

3 and figure 2, no substantial comparison or conclusion can be drawn from the absence of a Secret Police force on a state's repression repertoire.

Moreover, due to the negative simulated values in all the scenarios for high-Counterbalance count, no substantive conclusion can be drawn on the moderating effect of the number of Counterbalance, thus hypothesis *H2* remains inconclusive, as the simulation results do not provide sufficient evidence to support or refute the notion.

The presence of negative simulated values in the scenario results suggests that the model, trained on the available data, is producing predictions that fall below zero for certain combinations of predictor variables. In the context of these regression models, negative predictions can be interpreted as the model's estimation of repression events being below the observed baseline. This phenomenon might arise due to extrapolation beyond the observed range of predictor values or limitations in the model's ability to accurately capture the underlying patterns in the data (Muller and MacLehose, 2014).

While negative predicted values may seem counterintuitive, especially when dealing with count data like repression events, it is essential to be critical when drawing conclusions amidst the limitations. Thus, further refinement of the modeling approach would be required. Future research should be given to the range of predictor values used in these simulations, potential model misspecifications, and the impact of noise in the data.

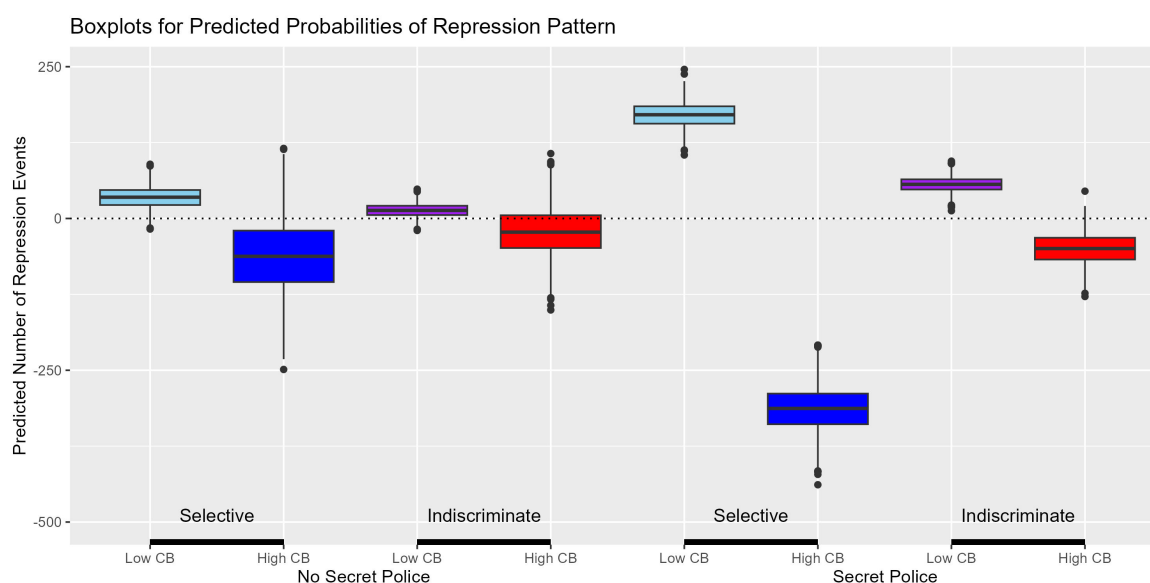


Figure 2: Boxplot illustrates the simulated distribution of predicted repression events - Selective and Indiscriminate repression, under the varying scenarios of Secret Police presence and distinct levels of Counterbalance (CB). The box represents the interquartile range (IQR), with the median indicated by the horizontal line inside the box, and any data points beyond this range are considered outliers.

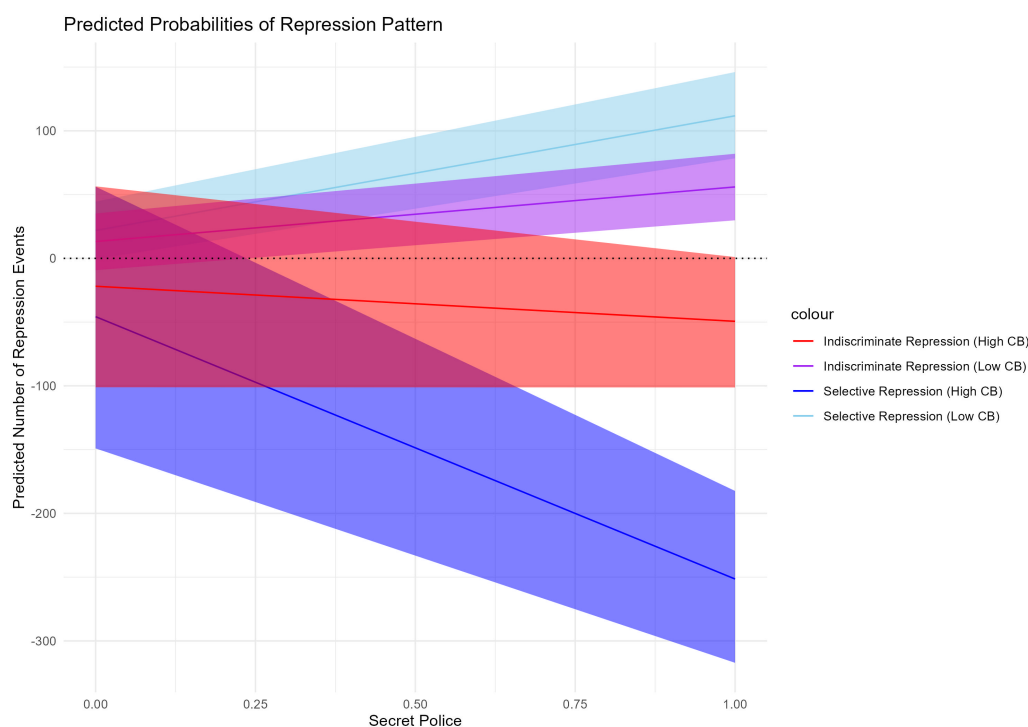


Figure 3: Effect of Secret Police presence moderated by a low and high level of Counterbalance (CB) on the different repression patterns. *Blue & Sky Blue color*: Selective Repression events (model 5). *Red & Purple color*: Indiscriminate Repression events (model 6). The shaded polygon area represents the 95% confidence intervals, with the line traversing 0 on the y-axis indicating zero difference.

Concept Validity & Robustness Check

To consider temporal dynamics, additional model estimations were made to include the incorporation of year-fixed effects - flexible time-trends specific to each country, in the Appendix table A4. Model 6 on Indiscriminate Repression loses its statistical significance in light of these additional specifications, but the effects for model 5 remain the same, implying the robustness of the above conclusions.

Additionally, [Escribà-Folch et al. \(2020\)](#) highlighted that the presence of secret police organizations is influenced by the type of autocratic regime. For instance, military regimes may favor establishing organizations within the armed forces to secure their survival. In contrast, autocracies based on legitimacy, such as monarchies, might perceive less need to create such safeguards. Moreover, recent studies on authoritarianism have emphasized the level of regime personalization, which includes aspects such as the leader's direct control over the security apparatus, the establishment of paramilitaries or a new security force loyal to the leader, and the imprisonment or execution of officers from other factions without a fair trial [Frantz et al. \(2020\)](#). This implies that leaders with highly personalized rule are not only more inclined to create secret police forces but also that having such security services is a defining characteristic of increased personalization.

Given these arguments, I re-estimate the final two models five and six in Appendix table A5, by including additional control variables indicating whether a country is a military and a personalistic regime - similar to what was adopted in [Mehrl and Choulis \(2023\)](#) research. A similar result to this

additional specification, in which model 6 on Indiscriminate Repression loses its statistical significance, but the effects for model 5 remain the same.

To delve deeper into the statistically insignificant effect observed in model 6 on Indiscriminate Repression events, I opted for an alternative operationalization of this dependent variable in Appendix table A6. I disaggregated it into CAMEO sub-events, including property damage, collective crowd control actions, unconventional violence, and the use of civilians as human shields. This alternative specification shows that the presence of Secret Police has a positive and statistically significant effect on only property damage and collective action events - albeit with a much smaller magnitude than model 5. The lack of statistically significant results in the other CAMEO sub-events may be attributed to the markedly low sample count of such occurrences.

In all, the outcomes from these supplementary specifications reinforce the conclusion that secret police organizations are linked to a larger number of Selective repression activities, enhancing the confidence in the robustness of this single association.

Limitations

Recognizing the methodological limitations in this study is crucial, particularly concerning the reliance on media-based event data for the dependent variable. The use of datasets like ICEWS and CAMEO, derived partially from media reports, introduces potential biases and challenges in accurately capturing the full spectrum of events. [Demarest and Langer \(2022\)](#) and [Dietrich and Eck \(2020\)](#) underscore the known unknowns and biases in media reporting of political violence, urging us researchers to navigate these limitations with caution.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the empirical analyses and exploration of diverse hypotheses have provided key insights, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between Secret Police presence and different forms of repression.

The results consistently support the hypothesis that the presence of Secret Police is associated with an escalation in selectively targeted repression events within authoritarian regimes (*H1a*). However, the evidence falls short of providing substantial support for the expectation that the presence of Secret Police leads to a decrease in indiscriminate repression events (*H1b*). Additionally, the nuanced hypothesis suggesting that an increase in selective repression would concurrently result in a reduction in indiscriminate repression (*H1c*) is not substantiated by the findings.

One notable contribution of this analysis lies in adopting a distinction between selective and indiscriminate repression as different dependent variables, offering a more nuanced perspective on the intricacies of state repression. Previous studies examining the effect of security apparatus structure, particularly security organizations beyond the regular police and military, on repression have consistently employed measures of the dependent variable of repression that fail to distinguish between selective and indiscriminate events. Although facing challenges in the simulation results, this aspect enriches the discourse on the complex interplay of security apparatus in authoritarian settings.

As we navigate this complex landscape, it becomes evident that the role of Secret Police organizations in authoritarian regimes warrants continual scrutiny, fostering a more comprehensive comprehension of the intricate dynamics shaping political repression. This research serves as a stepping stone for future inquiries into the varied dimensions and contextual factors that shape the influence of Secret Police on different forms of repression within authoritarian settings.

Character Count \approx 38,730

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A Appendix

A.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table A1: A descriptive statistics table of all the main variables used for analysis.

Main Variables	Mean	Std.Dev	Min	1st Quartile	Median	3rd Quartile	Max
Secret Police Presence	0.44	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
No. Of Counterbalance	1.78	1.24	0.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	9.00
Selective Repression Events	54.32	89.33	0.00	8.00	23.00	56.00	614.00
Indiscriminate Repression Events	23.54	44.07	0.00	3.00	8.00	25.00	363.00
Ln Population	16.74	1.23	13.74	15.99	16.70	17.23	21.01
Ln GDP Per Capita	7.69	1.40	5.16	6.53	7.70	8.44	11.30
Regime	0.69	0.46	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Coup Attempt	0.02	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00

Table A2: The selected CAMEO event variables as coded into Selective repression events.

Selective Repression Variables	Mean	Std.Dev	Min	1st Quartile	Median	3rd Quartile	Max
Coerce, not specified below	3.04	8.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	86.00
Arrest, detain, or charge with legal action	45.57	75.22	0.00	5.00	19.00	50.00	515.00
Expel or deport individuals	1.74	2.95	0.00	0.00	1.00	2.00	23.00
Abduct, hijack, or take hostage	0.88	2.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	28.00
Physically assault	2.99	6.62	0.00	0.00	1.00	3.00	63.00
Attempt to assassinate	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Assassinate	0.10	0.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.00

Table A3: The selected CAMEO event variables as coded into Indiscriminate repression events.

Indiscriminate Repression Variables	Mean	Std.Dev	Min	1st Quartile	Median	3rd Quartile	Max
Seize or damage property	1.40	3.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	28.00
Use tactics of violent repression	4.88	11.26	0.00	0.00	1.00	4.00	125.00
Use unconventional violence	0.57	1.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.00
Use civilians as human shield	0.01	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Use conventional military force	12.53	24.14	0.00	1.00	4.00	13.00	206.00
Impose blockade, restrict movement	0.06	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00
Occupy territory	0.16	1.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	31.00
Fight with small arms and light weapons	3.37	8.12	0.00	0.00	1.00	3.00	112.00
Fight with artillery and tanks	0.14	0.91	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	16.00
Employ aerial weapons	0.24	1.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	39.00
Violate ceasefire	0.01	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Use unconventional mass violence	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Engage in mass expulsion	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Engage in mass killings	0.14	0.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.00
Engage in ethnic cleansing	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00

From the original 30 CAMEO event types, variables such as the CAMEO-172 “Impose administrative sanctions”, CAMEO-204 “Use weapons of mass destruction”, and all categories within the CAMEO-15 group of “Exhibit Force Posture” because they are generally not state-actor on citizen-target repression events.

A.2 Additional Regression Table & Plots

Table A4: Temporal dynamics: country and year two-ways fixed effects.

	Repression Pattern	
	v_Selective Selective	v_Indiscrim Indiscriminate
	(1)	(2)
Secret Police	130.546*** (40.453)	28.504 (28.218)
Counterbalance	-25.283*** (9.665)	-9.803 (6.742)
ln Population	-112.619*** (35.103)	-51.908** (24.487)
ln GPD p.c.	13.723 (10.848)	-0.867 (7.567)
Regime	-18.891* (10.399)	-7.234 (7.254)
Coup Attempt	2.922 (13.568)	5.559 (9.465)
Interaction	-38.732*** (10.488)	-3.142 (7.316)
Observations	601	601
R ²	0.210	0.035
Adjusted R ²	0.100	-0.099
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table A5: Additional autocratic regime type control variables.

	Repression Pattern	
	v_Selective Selective	v_Indiscrim Indiscriminate
	(1)	(2)
Secret Police	176.870*** (42.363)	44.151 (28.287)
Counterbalance	−13.521 (10.354)	−6.002 (6.914)
ln Population	89.761*** (24.604)	31.398* (16.429)
ln GPD p.c.	66.794*** (8.990)	23.041*** (6.003)
Coup Attempt	4.933 (14.762)	3.806 (9.857)
Personalist Regimes	10.077 (25.071)	14.654 (16.740)
Military Regime	−7.252 (61.751)	11.201 (41.233)
Interaction	−54.175*** (11.052)	−8.728 (7.380)
Observations	601	601
R ²	0.330	0.096
Adjusted R ²	0.257	−0.003

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

Table A6: Alternative Dependent Variables of Model 6.

	Indiscriminate Repression Events			
	govcit_CAMEO171 Property Damage	govcit_CAMEO175 Collective Actions	govcit_CAMEO180 Unconventional Violence	govcit_CAMEO184 Human Shield
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Secret Police	5.852*** (1.721)	21.106** (8.187)	1.387 (1.411)	0.079 (0.124)
Counterbalances	−0.203 (0.414)	−2.473 (1.971)	−0.018 (0.340)	−0.013 (0.030)
ln Population	0.024 (0.987)	0.194 (4.698)	−1.022 (0.810)	0.010 (0.071)
ln GPD p.c.	2.469*** (0.365)	9.583*** (1.735)	0.455 (0.299)	−0.010 (0.026)
Regime	−1.779*** (0.451)	−7.658*** (2.145)	−0.148 (0.370)	0.004 (0.033)
Coup Attempt	0.221 (0.582)	−0.077 (2.771)	0.861* (0.478)	−0.001 (0.042)
Interaction	−1.434*** (0.445)	−5.323** (2.120)	−0.191 (0.365)	−0.026 (0.032)
Observations	601	601	601	601
R ²	0.192	0.158	0.015	0.008
Adjusted R ²	0.105	0.068	−0.091	−0.099

Note:

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

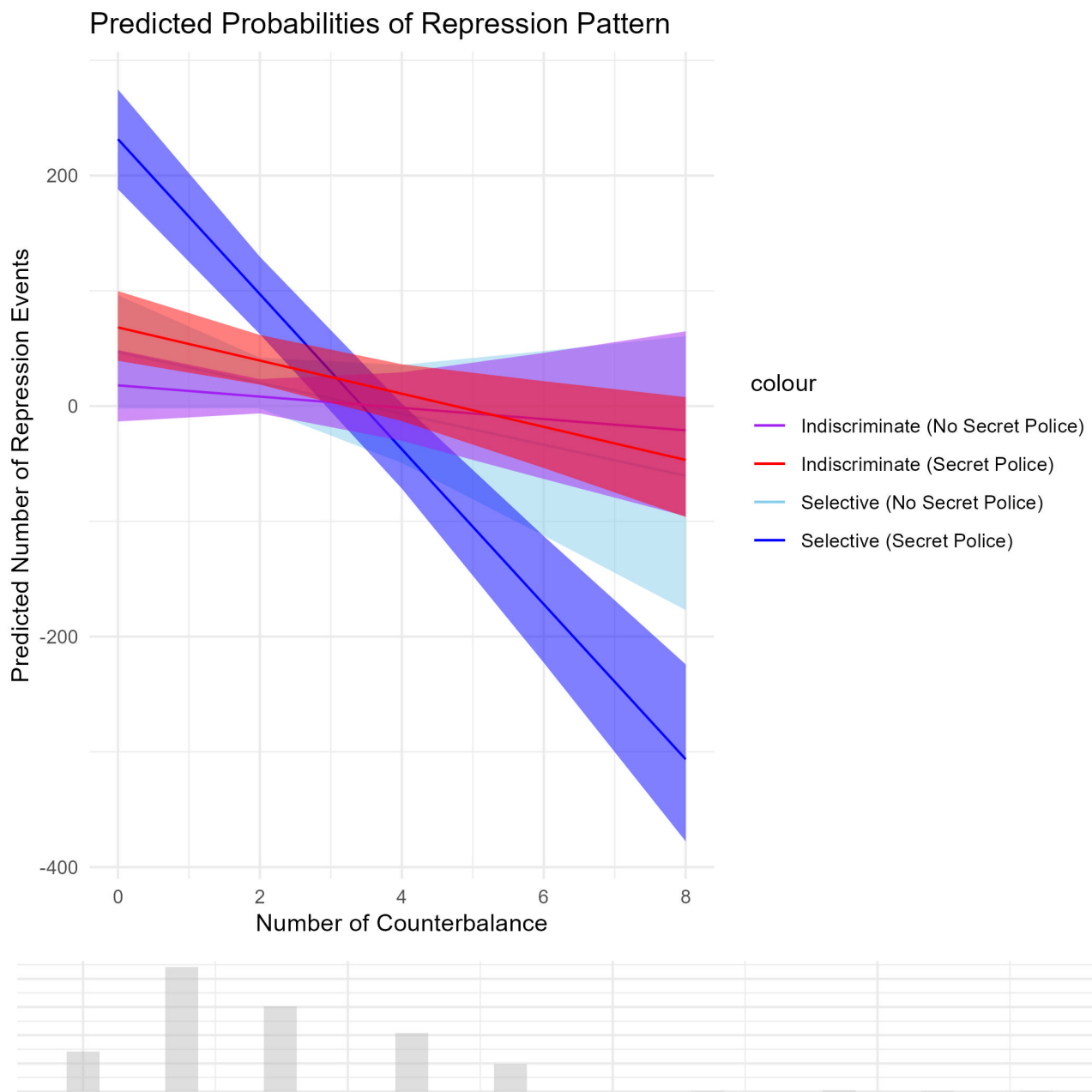


Figure 4: Visualization of the Moderating Variable - number of Counterbalance, in the presence and absence of Secret Police force. Effect of Secret Police presence moderated by a low and high level of Counterbalance (CB) on the different repression patterns. Blue Sky Blue color color: Selective Repression events (model 5). Red Purple color: Indiscriminate Repression events (model 6). The shaded polygon area represents the 95% confidence intervals, with the line traversing 0 on the y-axis indicating zero difference