THE PSYCHOLOGY OF REPRESSION AND POLARIZATION

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ABSTRACT

How does political polarization occur under repressive conditions? Drawing on psychological theories of social identity, the author posits that the nature of repression drives polarization. Repression alters group identities, changing the perceived distance between groups and ultimately shaping the level of affective and preference polarization between them through differentiation processes. The author tests the proposed causal relationship using mixed-method data and analysis. The results of a laboratory experiment reveal that exposure to a targeted repression prime results in greater in-group identification and polarization between groups, whereas exposure to a widespread prime results in decreased levels of these same measurements. The effect of the primes appears to be mediated through group identification. Case-study evidence of polarization between political opposition groups that were differently repressed in Egypt and Tunisia reinforces these results. The findings have implications for understanding how polarization, as conditioned by repression, may alter the likelihood of the cooperative behavior among opposition actors necessary for the success of democratic politics.

INTRODUCTION

POLARIZATION among political groups is central to much of what constitutes the academic study of politics. High levels of difference in affect and preferences have negative consequences for a host of behaviors of political significance, ranging from individual decisions about the community in which one socializes and lives to voting behavior and party affiliation to elites' cooperation in governing bodies and during democratic transitions.[1] Political scientists are increasingly turning to well-established findings in social psychology to offer explanations for individual preference formation and aggregate levels of political polarization. Foundational social-psychology literature tells us that both context and resulting group identities matter for the causes and consequences of group identification and differentiation, that is, the way individuals and groups see and position themselves relative

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[1] Iyengar et al. 2018; Free and Cantril 1967; Ellis and Stimson 2012; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Abramowitz 2010; Linz and Stepan 1996; Kitschelt et al. 1999; McFaul 2002; Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela 1992; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991; Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015.

to others.[2] In this article, I seek to expand what political scientists incorporate from psychological approaches to polarization by theorizing and testing how these universal cognitive processes may be altered by repressive contexts. I consider how exposure to state repression and the nature of that repression shape processes of group identification, group differentiation, preference formation, and ultimately, polarization.

I introduce a two-stage theory of the mechanism through which repression affects polarization between political groups. First, repression affects how actors identify themselves and the extent to which they distinguish themselves from other groups through established psychological processes of group identification. Second, group identification conditions groups' political preferences and the distribution of preferences among rival political groups by means of established psychological processes of group differentiation. The nature of repression—that is, whether it targets a specific opposition group or is widespread across all opposition groups—determines the resulting polarization. Widespread repression strengthens identification among competing opposition groups who experience the trauma of repression together, and this, in turn, decreases polarization between them. Targeted repression, following the logic of divide and conquer, increases polarization across opposition groups by strengthening group identification within individual groups.

I begin by situating my inquiry within the relevant literature on polarization, preference formation, and repression, after which I introduce my theory and outline the mixed-methods research design for testing it. I then present the results of laboratory experiments and detailed case-study evidence from Egypt and Tunisia to demonstrate how the nature of authoritarian regime repression conditioned levels of polarization between political opposition groups over time in each country. I conclude with the implications of my theory and findings for how polarization, conditioned by repressive contexts, may alter the likelihood of the cooperative behavior between opposition actors necessary for successful democratic politics.

POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND PREFERENCE FORMATION

Polarization is broadly conceptualized as the distance between parties on dimensions that matter for political cooperation, and it comprises two components: the extent to which groups dislike each other and

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[2] Turner 1978; Brown 1984; Brewer and Brown 1998.

the extent to which they disagree with each other. First, polarization includes affective distance in the realm of emotions, feelings, and attitudes.[3] In the words of Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, "identities are not primarily about adherence to a group ideology or creed. They are emotional attachments that transcend thinking."[4] *Affect* refers to the nature of a psychological attachment to a group and is measured not only by the positive assessments and warm feelings generated by in-group measurements, but also by the negative evaluations of the out-group.[5] For example, in the American context, identities like democrat and republican or liberal and conservative are often pitted against each other. Affective polarization occurs when group members hold negative views of and distrust members of the out-group and perceive a high level of social distance between their group and the out-group.

Second, polarization includes distance in policy preferences.[6] In preference polarization, group members perceive increasing disagreement with other groups on political issues of central importance. Increasing disagreement does not imply a change in motivating ideology, but rather a shift in its presentation. To draw again from the American context, the Democratic Party's motivating ideology is centered on creating a government that intervenes and regulates the economy to create social and economic equality. Although that ideology has not changed, the party's policy preferences have shifted as the party redefines which issues fall within the scope of government responsibility, which programs would best achieve these goals, and how to differentiate these positions from those of their Republican counterparts.

The study of polarization has produced a massive literature, which I categorize into explanations rooted in structural, strategic, and ideological variables. Broadly speaking, scholars argue that either the structural characteristics of the political system or the strategies and ideologies of political actors determine the political affect and preferences of groups, the distance between groups on these dimensions, and the resulting level of polarization in the system. In structural explanations, preference polarization reflects factors external to the political system, namely, historically formed social, political, and economic cleavages and the demographic distribution of society along lines of class, sector, region, ethnicity, or conceptions of religion and state. Polarization is assumed to be a more or less objective representation of structural differences in

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[3] Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015.
[4] Achen and Bartels 2017, 228.
[5] Ellis and Stimson 2012.
[6] Free and Cantril 1967; Ellis and Stimson 2012; Fiorina and Abrams 2008; Abramowitz 2010.

society because parties seek to maximize their vote share by mobilizing on causes and identities relevant to the electorate and by catering to a specified in-group at the expense of an out-group.[7]

In strategic explanations, parties create platforms to maximize vote share. Although platforms generally reflect cleavages in society, internal aspects of the political system interfere with how the distribution of societal cleavages is aggregated, creating political polarization. Most influential are those features that define the internal workings of the political system—primarily electoral rules and institutions, which complicate the translation of interests into political competition and enhance or diminish polarization. For example, particular electoral contexts may require certain thresholds for participation and thus compel specific kinds of partnerships, thereby forcibly creating in- and out-groups, altering campaigning strategies, and modifying party positions on issues.[8]

A third and final set of explanations for polarization focuses on parties' motivating ideologies. These theories often concentrate on parties with religious or radical ideologies, but could apply to all political parties. In these explanations, ideological adherence determines preferences and structures aggregate levels of polarization.[9] Ideology is fairly constant, with visible changes resulting from the parties' inclusion in electoral competition.[10] Ideology also underpins explanations for affective polarization. The idea of "party sorting" suggests that partisans come to politics with certain deeply held worldviews and that this mindset leads them to select the political affiliations that align with their views. Here, the underlying ideologies motivating individual partisans and political groups would also determine who is considered an opponent and to what extent in-group members feel negatively toward these out-group members.[11]

A number of constructive critiques note that these approaches are overly deterministic and often fail to provide convincing mechanisms for how structure, strategy, and ideology shape affect and policy preferences.[12] The issues stem from a common problem: these theories do not

[7] Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Evans and Whitefield 2000; Deegan-Krause 2007; Haggard and Kaufman 2016. See also Sigelman and Yough 1978; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Ura and Ellis 2012; Lupu and Riedl 2013; Iyengar et al. 2018.

[8] Sartori 1969; Cox 1987; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Iyengar et al. 2018.

[9] Huntington 1991; Przeworski and Sprague 1986; Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela 1992.

[10] Clark 2006; Wickham 2004.

[11] Mason 2015; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016; Bougher 2017.

[12] An excellent example comes from Katznelson and Weingast 2005, 13, who observe that "people and their preferences tended to be collapsed into categories established by the interplay of theory and history. Once defined, say, as peasants, kings, Protestants, bureaucrats, or other such positions in the social order, agents were, of course, recognized as the bearers of preferences, but their content almost could be taken for granted."

incorporate an understanding of the process through which political preferences form. Well-established research in social psychology demonstrates that preferences do not flow directly from structure, strategy, or ideology, but instead are created through a complex psychological process. The contemporary study of political behavior has increasingly incorporated findings from social psychology to understand the microfoundational cognitive processes through which individuals form and update politically relevant preferences.

Preference formation is the process through which beliefs and evaluations emerge and are updated by linkages between what people experience and what they feel—an "equilibrium between brain, body, and world."[13] In psychological processes of preference formation, the lived experience of context and resulting group identities matter for the way individuals form and update preferences. A focus on individual-level, cognitive processes of preference formation reveals an iterative causal chain through which lived experiences give rise to identities that create or update related beliefs, and ultimately form preferences. What political scientists call preferences, psychologists call attitudes, which are defined as "a person's general evaluation[s] of an object."[14] In this usage, "object" refers to a broad array of people, events, products, policies, and institutions, while "attitude" captures people's orientations toward these objects. In the realm of political preferences, objects often include politicians, political events, policies, and governmental institutions that either exist or have the potential to exist. Attitudes indicate the valence of the evaluation, whether positive or negative.

Identities are an important source of information for attitudes specifically and for preference formation more generally. In forming a preference, individuals draw on information, which is defined as "any data potentially relevant to" future choices.[15] The identities one holds and prioritizes determines how new information is evaluated and ultimately, which information is adopted. How one identifies oneself and who else one considers to be a part of that identity group has a significant effect on how an individual processes new information, and subsequently, updates attitudes and preferences. Information endorsed by a member of a trusted in-group makes that information more important and reliable, whereas information provided by a member of an out-group is downgraded and discarded. In short, identity ultimately determines attitudes

[13] Druckman and Lupia 2000, 3.
[14] O'Keefe 1990, 18.
[15] Druckman and Lupia 2000, 5.

by weighting certain information as more important or better than other information.[16]

The focus within preference formation on internal cognitive processes should not detract from the individual's broader context—the "world" component of the above definition. Outside influences clearly matter. Although individuals may have idiosyncratic tendencies, they also form opinions about other people and their ideas within certain external structures; identity only matters relative to other groups.[17] Thus the historical processes, institutional settings, and ideologies that constitute context are the starting point for politics. They also provide a baseline for identity formation, creating groups divided along specific dimensions of cleavage with potential for political mobilization and contestation. But while patterns of polarization are clearly derived in some way from the social, political, economic, and historical contexts in which political actors find themselves, these differences are not themselves deterministic of preferences and cannot fully explain variation in the distribution of political preferences along a given axis across cases without engaging psychological theories focused on the individual.[18] For example, the same levels of objective inequality or difference in opinion can result in varying levels of contentious politics and polarized preferences, and the way in which the translation occurs is conditional on the political context in which the preferences are formed and in which elites mobilize them.[19] As Scott Mainwaring writes, the way people act "cannot be inferred from their 'objective' circumstances; political action is contextual and strategic, but it also reflects the ideologies, values, and perceptions of actors."[20]

The missing or assumed link in many existing theories of polarization is identity, a central and influential component of preference formation. Structure, strategies, and ideology do not matter in and of themselves but rather matter in the way individuals and groups experience these components of context and place themselves within it. Lived

[16] Lupia and McCubbins 1998.

[17] Katznelson and Weingast 2005, 3–4, write that the best contemporary approach to institutions and preference formation requires that an understanding of the "building blocks of preferences—including interests, desires, values, opinions, tastes, and morals—be located inside thickly inscribed temporal and spatial contexts." But the focus remains on individual agency.

[18] See Hall 2005 and Hall 2010 for more in-depth discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of literature linking institutions and context with preference formation.

[19] For example, the comparative essays in Katznelson and Zolberg 1986 argue that similar structural conditions produced very different notions of class formation across European countries. They explain this variation by engaging the historical realities of the daily lives of groups of working people.

[20] Mainwaring 1989, 16.

political experiences and the identities they produce are ultimately the basis for translating structural conditions, institutional norms, and ideologies into political preferences. By failing to take the process of preference formation into account, existing theories do not fully account for how variation in context, both within and across regime type, matters for processes of polarization.

Repression as Context

Repression is defined as the coercive actions undertaken by regimes against actors challenging regime beliefs, institutions, and actions. The most concrete form of repression is physical coercive action undertaken by regimes against opposition actors. The physicality refers to the tactics regimes employ against opposition actors' bodies, including arrests, beatings, harassment, targeted assassinations, raids, torture, disappearances, mass killings, and forced exile. Although physical repression is not the only strategy available to authoritarian regimes to confront mobilized opposition, it is the most common tactic, the one most feared by opposition activists, and the one whose intentionality can be most directly observed. Accordingly, violent repression has received the most attention from academics, policymakers, and political activists, not least because it demonstrates the way a regime exploits the state's monopoly on violence to demobilize challengers.[21]

Although we could think about repression in both democratic and nondemocratic regimes, I focus on authoritarian contexts as the most likely ones in which to observe the effects of repression. Authoritarian contexts are characterized by repression, or severe state control of both society and politics.[22] Democratic regimes can and do use repression against the opposition,[23] but they do so more rarely and with more constraints imposed by voter accountability, more transparent legal structures, and democratic norms. And although authoritarian regimes can and do repress private citizens and rival elites, I focus my analysis on the repression of opposition political actors. In electoral authoritarian regimes, these are the nonregime elite actors who seek to contest elections with varying degrees of success.[24] Organized opposition actors are most regularly targeted by state repression as part of a policy of regime main-

[21] Davenport 2015, 29.
[22] Linz 2000.
[23] See Davenport 2015, for example.
[24] Albrecht 2010, 3. For additional examples, see Schedler 2006; Diamond 2002; Way and Levitsky 2002; Brownlee 2007.

tenance and survival, and these groups do the work of translating preferences into the realm of political contestation, however limited.

Existing studies have largely focused on the form and function of the repression of opposition, with an eye toward the regimes that employ repression as a defensive or survival strategy. The form of repression used by authoritarian regimes is defined in terms of which opposition groups are targeted by repression, and the form varies across cases. Early work on totalitarianism, such as Hannah Arendt's influential book, argues that repression is used by regimes with the intention of demobilizing entire societies.[25] Similarly, a seminal piece by Eva Bellin on the exceptional nature of the Middle East's authoritarian regimes suggests that any and all democratically minded regime challengers will be targeted for demobilization by regime repression.[26] But most contemporary authoritarian regimes rely on selective repression to divide opponents and perpetuate rule, with the relative balance and choice of targets differing across cases.[27]

Repression is most successful when it divides opposition actors and pits them against each other. (Here, success is defined from the perspective of the regime, that is, as favorable outcomes that minimize any reforms, concessions, changes in the regime, or electoral outcomes that would award more seats to the opposition.) Repression is more likely to succeed when it takes certain forms, specifically, when it is targeted and divides the opposition by affecting certain groups and not others. Conversely, the opposition is most effective at combating and winning reforms and concessions from the regime when it can unite and form a broad-based coalition, often around a single issue. The opposition is assumed to act strategically in response to the political opportunity structures created by the regime through repressive tactics. Repression alters the opposition groups' calculus by changing constraints and opportunities in a manner that hinders their ability to mobilize individually and to contest the regime. Repression then changes the probability of cooperation across groups when contesting the regime through elections, protest mobilization, or general demands of reform.[28]

Because most studies focus on how repression extends or curtails the longevity of regimes, the literature has tended "to neglect the targets and victims of state repression. . . . This leaves us in a situation where comparatively little effort is extended to understanding what impact re-

[25] Arendt 1966.
[26] Bellin 2004.
[27] Tarrow 1998.
[28] Lust-Okar 2005; Albrecht 2005; Howard and Roessler 2006; Schwedler and Clark 2006; Shehata 2010; van de Walle 2006.

pression has on the individuals subjected to it or on the broader society in which these actions take place."[29] Similar to studies on polarization, the literature on repression does not incorporate an understanding of preference-formation processes; it focuses on actors' strategies at the expense of asking how repression may shape the targeted actors' identities. Personal accounts of repression reveal that it is not simply a behavioral constraint but rather an influential lived experience—an emotional, psychological, and physical trauma that serves as a defining life event. In addition, repression is a contextual factor that provides information about one's group membership, and thus about group identity. Experiences of repression do not always result in increased cooperation, as many theories would lead us to expect, or to decreased mobilization, as regimes may hope. Instead, different forms of repression can lead either to increased resistance and opposition or to increased commitment to group goals and fellow group members.[30] If physical repression painfully reveals who else is being repressed and who isn't, it may serve to create identity boundaries that condition the relationship between repression and political behavior.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF REPRESSION AND POLARIZATION

I posit that repression affects levels of political polarization through a two-stage process. In the first stage, experiences of repression and the extent to which they are shared with other groups or are concentrated within one's own group, alter the salience and nature of in-group identification. The existence of a group requires what psychologists term "entitativity," a quality that can be defined as approximating groupness, or the perception among individuals that they constitute a group. Standard feelings of groupness and the ability to differentiate between one's in- and out-groups emerge from even the most arbitrary of group membership assignments and in basic group interactions.[31] Group identification requires an individual's awareness of belonging to a certain group and having a psychological attachment to that group based on a perception of shared experiences, attributes, interests, and beliefs with other group members.[32]

Experiences of repression adjust an individual's existing feelings of entitativity. Psychological studies have firmly established the impor-

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[29] Davenport 2015, 9.
[30] Peters 1985; Macmaster 2004.
[31] Tajfel et al. 1971; Turner 1978; Brewer 1979.
[32] Miller et al. 1981.

tance of shared experiences for creating identities.[33] Trauma is a particularly effective collective experience in creating and shaping identities, because it very clearly reveals information about what attributes and experiences individuals have in common. Émile Durkheim first observed that painful experiences promote cohesion and solidarity within preexisting groups of people experiencing them together,[34] and more recent studies have tested and confirmed this relationship experimentally.[35] Shared traumatic experiences not only strengthen existing identities, but can also create new ones by exposing unconnected individuals to the same trauma, suffering, and pain, thereby recategorizing group boundaries.[36] Traumatic experiences are particularly influential for identity formation because shared trauma places emphasis on shared attributes in a very visceral way.[37] In studies of collective memory, emotional and traumatic memories are found to spread deeper into networks because an individual is more likely to talk about such experiences with group members.[38]

Returning to the question at hand, the nature of repression affects how actors come to identify themselves in the same manner as the nature of shared trauma. The trauma of repressive acts reveals important information about who constitutes a fellow in-group member and strongly primes feelings of groupness with other victims. When a group is targeted exclusively, the traumatic experiences born of repression serve to strengthen in-group identification. In contrast, when multiple groups are collectively affected within a widespread repressive environment, repressive experiences are shared and do not increase identification with a narrower in-group. By exposing multiple groups to the same trauma, widespread repression serves to change the reference group for identity formation from a particular in-group to a larger collective of opposition groups, thereby strengthening intergroup identity. In other words, widespread repression creates feelings of entitativity that permeate previously constructed boundaries, with "opposition" as a larger concept serving as the basis of the identity, whereas targeted repression reinforces divisions with particular, individual opposition groups serving as the basis of identity.[39]

[33] Brewer and Brown 1998.
[34] Durkheim [1912] 2001.
[35] Bastian, Jetten, and Ferris 2014.
[36] Campbell 1958; Schuman and Scott 1989; Brown et al. 2009; Schuman, Belli, and Bischoping 1997; Wagner, Kronberger, and Seifert 2002.
[37] Brewer 1996.
[38] Berger and Milkman 2012; Harber and Cohen 2005; Sperber and Hirschfeld 2004.
[39] McCarthy and Zald 1977.

In the second stage, the nature and level of identification with an in-group identity conditions political polarization between opposition groups by influencing the processes of group differentiation. Social-identity theory holds that individuals constantly seek to maximize differences between their in-group and the out-group to reduce cognitive dissonance, and strengthened in-group identity necessarily induces comparatively higher levels of group differentiation.[40] The process of group differentiation occurs through in-group favoritism, in which group members exaggerate intergroup differences and emphasize intragroup similarities.[41] Groups highlight their defining shared features and attitudes in contrast to those of the out-group, prioritizing characteristics that are more central for the definition of group identity and downplaying more peripheral traits.[42] Group differentiation is exacerbated by situations in which in-group identity is primed through differential treatment or experiences, such as combative situations, in which groups are pitted against each other in conflict, or situations of relative deprivation, in which a group is disproportionately discriminated against by a third party.[43] The stronger levels of in-group identification resulting from these situations lead to greater levels of group differentiation.

Processes of group differentiation cause individuals to become more extreme in their in-group attitudes and preferences.[44] With groups formed around ascriptive characteristics, such as ethnicity or gender, the emphasized difference may be a shared physical feature and preferences can change with regard to in-group-favoring policies. But with political groups formed on the basis of common political ideologies, policy preferences related to group ideology and goals are the group's defining characteristic and become the attribute on which groups differentiate themselves when the strength of in-group identification increases. For example, processes of group differentiation "create a bipolar partisanship where individuals characterize the political parties into us and them and exaggerate perceived differences," which manifest in social distance and differences in policy preferences across groups.[45] The resulting polarization, including differences in affect and in preferences, is an indication of the political distance between groups.

To explicitly relate these psychological processes to political repres-

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[40] Tajfel and Turner 1986; Brewer and Brown 1998.
[41] Brewer and Brown 1998, 58.
[42] Kelly 1989; Simon 1992; Hogg and Turner 1987.
[43] Horwitz and Rabbie 1982.
[44] Mackie 1986; Ng and Wilson 1989.
[45] Greene 2004.

sion, the comparatively lower in-group identification resulting from widespread experiences of repression leads groups to recategorize boundaries, identifying less with their individual group and more with a larger collective of opposition groups. By perceiving themselves as part of a larger collective of opposition groups, parties do not differentiate among themselves, they feel more positively about out-groups and they converge on policy preferences. In contrast, the increased in-group identification resulting from targeted repression activates processes of group differentiation in which the targeted group distances itself from others as in-group identity increases. Increasing the strength of in-group identification increases the distance in affect and preferences between groups.

Research Design

To test my theory, I use a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis. More specifically, I pair a laboratory experiment with comparative case studies, believing the strengths of each approach offset the weaknesses of the other. The experimental setup provides more complete leverage on issues of endogeneity, external validity, and generalizability and provide the opportunity to observe, measure, and make causal inferences about the psychological mechanism underpinning my theory. Further, it eliminates potential confounding factors present in observational data, including a regime's strategic choice of repressive strategy, relative group size, preexisting relationships between groups, and group membership selection bias, from consideration by testing the theory in a controlled environment. Although it may be difficult to extrapolate from the laboratory to the real world, the case-study evidence from Egypt and Tunisia provides two coherent narratives and plausible evidence of the observable implications of the experimental results in historical cases. Moreover, the case studies address issues of internal and measurement validity.

To explore the effects of repression in a safe and ethical manner, I conducted lab experiments with a sample of adult citizens in Tunis, Tunisia. The lab-experiment approach allowed me to explore the effects of repression through subtle informational primes. It gave me control over the repressive content to which respondents would be exposed, and it permitted a full debriefing by enumerators to ensure that participants understood the imaginary nature of the scenario and could raise any issues or concerns that resulted from their participation. Because a laboratory is a controlled environment, the broader cultural and social con-

text is important in making the experiments believable for the participants. I chose Tunisia because it is a context in which the content of the repressive primes is relevant and realistic. Primes about repression should be expected to be most believable in a context where politically motivated repression has previously been employed by the state. In Tunisia, respondents were likely to have real-world reference points for political repression because of the country's long and widespread experience with it under its two previous authoritarian presidents.[46] Although state repression has significantly decreased since the 2011 uprisings, it remains a salient political topic.[47] Because of this legacy of repression (which is documented more thoroughly in the case study), I could realistically manipulate information about the targets of state repression. As such, the country's history may provide a hard test of my theory, given that the respondents may have internalized that history. In Egypt, where repression has been highly correlated with specific political groups at different times, respondents may have been less receptive to manipulation that disagreed with their knowledge of historical repression. In addition, the state of politics in Egypt in recent years has created a difficult environment for conducting research, and I was unwilling to jeopardize the safety participants or to put myself at risk. Although the repression treatment is randomized at the individual level, measurements occur at the group level, which is similar to how repression occurs in the real world. Individuals experience repression as a result of their group membership rather than as a result of their individual traits, and this perspective ultimately has implications for outcomes aggregated at the group level.[48]

To analyze the case-study evidence, I used the methodology of within-case process tracing, that is, the analysis of diagnostic evidence from processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a single case.[49] The same mechanism documented in the lab experiment is suggested by two historical examples of authoritarian regimes in which the state repressed opposition groups differently and that resulted in different levels of polarization among nonregime political groups. Egypt serves as a case of targeted repression under the authoritarian president Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011), while Tunisia serves as a case of widespread repression of opposition under Zine el-'Abidine Ben 'Ali (1987–2011). I chose Tunisia and Egypt as case studies to minimize differences.

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[46] Nugent 2019.
[47] Amnesty International 2016.
[48] Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017.
[49] Bennett and Checkel 2014; Mahoney and Thelen 2010.

In the two countries, I compared similar historical eras of repression and polarization under the same type of electoral authoritarian regime, and in both countries, the same axis of competition, that of the religious-secular divide, is salient. Although historical shifts in group identification are difficult to measure after they occur and outside a laboratory setting, given that they are internal cognitive processes, I could and did observe the nature of the repression to which groups are subjected and measured changes in affective and preference polarization in these two real-world cases. Through comparison, the Tunisia and Egypt case studies demonstrate the complex relationship between the nature of repression and that of polarization.

LABORTAORY-EXPERIMENT TEST OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISM

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

To conduct the experiments, I worked in partnership with an independent research company based in Tunis. The lab experiments were conducted with a sample of 434 Tunisian adult citizens between May 13 and May 20, 2016. Each respondent was paired with a Tunisian enumerator who read the instrument to the respondent and filled out the answers on a tablet computer.[50] After being asked a number of questions to record basic demographic information, recruited respondents were randomly assigned to a fictitious group called the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity. In addition to learning their group assignment, respondents were also told about a rival peer group, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice. The text below was read to each respondent with the bracketed text randomized across participants.

> Since 2011, many organizations working on political issues have been created. Based on your answers to the previous questions, you have been assigned to the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity with other individuals who have the same opinions and ideas as you do in terms of [policies pertaining to matters of religion and politics/policies pertaining to economic matters]. The group holds events, debates, and conferences about political and social issues affecting Tunisians on [matters of religion and politics/economic matters]. In addition, the group mobilizes its members to demonstrate for causes the group supports.

> Your group, the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity, is a very popular one and membership is highly exclusive. It has a number of peer organizations including The Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, which runs similar events but whose members hold different opinions about [religion and politics policies/economic policies] from yours.

[50] More information on the organization of the experiment is available in Nugent 2020b.

Please keep your membership in the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity group in mind as you proceed with the tasks ahead of you.

This setup requires three points of clarification. First, the group names—the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity and the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice—were chosen to represent a generic name similar to those used by organizations that formed in Tunisia during the period of liberalization following the 2011 revolution. Similar names invoking themes of social justice and political equality have been used by groups that mobilize on a number of political, social, and economic causes and that are secular or Islamist in their orientation. To the best of my knowledge, these two specific names were not in use at that time.

Second, I chose to use a meaningful characteristic—common preferences—rather than generic identifiers alone, such as groups A and B or teams Red and Blue, as are sometimes employed in the minimal-group paradigm as the basis for group membership.[51] Countless studies have demonstrated that individuals do meaningfully identity with randomly assigned and contentless groups in lab-experiment settings, but it was unclear to me what individuals' group-related preferences would be in these situations beyond simple material group interests, or how these preferences may be altered or updated. Assigning membership to a group with more content than the typical minimal group was intended to capture movement in political opinions related to that group membership later in the experiment.

Third, I assigned respondents to one of two types of groups: one based on economic policy preferences or one based on policy preferences related to religion and politics. The use of these two groups was a deliberate choice to determine whether group membership defined by similar preferences regarding religion and politics was different from membership based on shared economic preferences, or whether members of these groups were affected differently by repressive conditions than members of economic preference–based groups. Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan observe that "systems will come under much heavier strain if the main lines of cleavage are over morals and the nature of human destiny than if they concern such mundane and negotiable matters as the prices of commodities, the rights of debtors and creditors, wages and profits, and the ownership of property."[52] Their observation suggests that differences in certain preferences, especially those related to economics and tangible material trade-offs, may be more malleable or

[51] Tajfel et al. 1971.
[52] Lipset and Rokkan 1967, 94.

easier to compromise on than philosophical differences with less clear, less concrete solutions. But because the same patterns emerged from initial analyses of both types of groups, I pooled the data from the two group assignments for my analyses.

Respondents then completed a priming task in which they were asked to brainstorm about the group to which they were assigned. This task was intended to increase the salience of this group in each respondent's mind before continuing with the experiment. Respondents were asked to describe the policies, slogans, activities, and other members of the group to the enumerator. The answers to the priming questions are beyond the scope of this article, but they demonstrate that respondents understood their group assignment, found it believable, and could construct a group narrative consistent with their assignment. For example, one respondent assigned to the religious-group treatment and who identified herself as highly supportive of the statement, "The government and parliament should enact legislation according to Islamic law" in pretreatment questions, described her in-group as consisting of like-minded individuals similarly invested in a state that combined religion and politics and her out-group as consisting of individuals highly supportive of secularization policies.

Next, respondents were randomly assigned to one of three repressive treatments: one that served as an active control, one that primed a widespread repressive environment, or one that primed a targeted repressive environment against the respondent's assigned group. The treatment assignment occurred through informational primes, which included facts about Tunisia's current emergency law, and differed only in terms of the policies' targets. The control text below was read to all participants, while the widespread and targeted treatment groups received a second paragraph of information:

Control: As you may know, the Tunisian government extended the state of emergency for three months on March 22, 2016. The emergency measure allows the government to ban any type of strike or gathering. However, over the past few months, various groups have been involved in organizing events to denounce terrorism and participating in strikes demanding security and protection in the country.

Widespread: Control text + The police claim that the events violate the terms of the state of emergency, and are placing all groups, including your group, the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity, as well as the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, under investigation to determine whether they have been involved in planning or participating in these events. Until the investigation is concluded, the groups will not be able to hold meetings or host events,

and members will be put under surveillance. The police maintain the right to arrest group members pending the results of the investigation.

Targeted: Control text + The police claim that the events violate the terms of the state of emergency, and are placing your group, the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity, under investigation to determine whether it has been involved in planning or participating in these events. Until the investigation is concluded, the group will not be able to hold meetings or host events, and members will be put under surveillance. The police maintain the right to arrest group members pending the results of the investigation.

Outcome Variables

To test both components of my two-stage theory, I measured in- and out-group identification and affective and preference polarization in questions following the repressive condition assignment. To measure in-group identification, respondents were asked six questions about the strength of their identification with the group to which they had been assigned. These questions were adapted from a battery of social identity questions known as the Identification with a Psychological Group scale.[53] It is a standard battery used for determining individuals' level of identification with a number of social and political groups.[54] The question read was: "I'd like to ask you a few questions about your feelings about other members of and your membership in the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'absolutely disagree' and 10 is 'absolutely agree,' to what extent do you agree with the following statements?"

—1. When someone criticizes the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity, it feels like a personal insult.
—2. I am very interested in what others think about the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity.
—3. When I talk about the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity, I would usually say "we" rather than "they."
—4. The Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity's successes are my successes.
—5. When someone praises the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity, it feels like a personal compliment.
—6. If a story in the media criticized the Tunisian Organization for Social Dignity, I would feel embarrassed.

Respondents were asked the same questions about the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, their out-group. Recorded responses to the questions loaded onto one factor and thus were summed

[53] Mael and Tetrick 1992.
[54] Brewer and Silver 2000.

and rescaled to range from ten to one hundred for ease of interpretation.[55]

To measure affective polarization, respondents were asked three questions about members of the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Justice, the group to which they had not been assigned. These questions were designed to capture their feelings toward the out-group with regard to trust, empathy, and cooperation. The question read was: "I'd like to ask you a few questions about your feelings about the other social organization we mentioned before but to which you do not belong, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'absolutely disagree' and 10 is 'absolutely agree,' to what extent do you agree with the following statements?"

—1. How much do you trust members of the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice?
—2. How much do you empathize with members of the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice?
—3. How willing would you be to cooperate with members of the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice?

Recorded responses to the questions loaded onto one factor and thus were summed and rescaled to range from ten to one hundred for ease of interpretation.[56]

To measure preference polarization, respondents were asked their opinions on a number of policies, but were told the average opinion of the out-group before reporting their level of agreement. The questions posed to respondents varied based on their group assignment. Respondents who were assigned to a group with people of similar opinions on economic policies received the following three questions:

—1. The government should privatize more public companies, like SONEDE [Sociéte Nationale d'Exploitation et de Distribution des Eaux] and STEG [Société Tunisienne de l'Electricité et du Gaz].[57] For comparison, the average member of the other group, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, answered seven.
—2. The government should impose both a wage cap as well as a minimum wage to ensure equality of income. For comparison, the average member of the other group, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, answered three.

[55] Cronbach's α = .75 for the in-group questions and .69 for the out-group questions, using responses only from the control (i.e., nontreated) group.
[56] Cronbach's α = .76, using responses only from the control group. They were also analyzed separately.
[57] SONEDE is a national water supply authority founded in 1968 under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture. STEG is the Tunisian Company of Electricity and Gas, a public electric company founded in 1962.

—3. The government should increase taxes on the wealthy in order to increase spending on social welfare programs. For comparison, the average member of the other group, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, answered five.

Meanwhile, respondents who were assigned to a group of people with similar opinions on policies related to religion and politics received the following three questions:

—1. The Tunisian government should prioritize legislation that preserves the Islamic heritage of the state. For comparison, the average member of the other group, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, answered seven.
—2. The parliament should enact personal status laws according to Islamic law. For comparison, the average member of the other group, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, answered three.
—3. The government should mandate the separation of religion from politics. For comparison, the average member of the other group, the Tunisian Forum for Freedom and Social Justice, answered five.

Principal component analysis revealed that the three questions asked in each of the group assignments loaded onto one factor. I pooled results across the three questions for each type of group, constructing a dependent variable measuring the respondent's average distance from the out-group's position across the three questions.[58]

HYPOTHESES

Above, I posited a two-stage psychological process through which repression influences processes of polarization. My theory leads to four hypotheses to be tested by the experiment. The first two hypotheses concern the comparison of distance from the out-group across different treatment assignments, as measured by questions capturing both affective and preference polarization. The last two hypotheses address the centrality of group identification as the mechanism through which different repressive environments alter levels of polarization per the theory. My hypotheses, all constructed relative to the control, are as follows:

—H1a (affective polarization). Lower levels of positive feelings toward the out-group will be observed in the targeted treatment group, whereas higher levels of positive feelings toward the out-group will be observed in the widespread treatment group.
—H1b (preference polarization). Larger distances from the stated pref-

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[58] Because internal reliability was not remarkably high for these indexes (Chronbach's α = .44 for the economic questions; Chronbach's α = .63 for the religious questions), I also ran separate regressions disaggregating the three components into separate variables, and the same pattern holds. Results available on request from the author.

erences of the out-group will be observed in the targeted treatment group, whereas smaller distances from the stated preferences of the out-group will be observed in the widespread treatment group.

—H2a (in-group identification). Higher levels of in-group identification will be observed in the targeted treatment group, whereas lower levels of in-group identification will be observed in the widespread treatment group.

—H2b (out-group identification). Lower levels of out-group identification will be observed in the targeted treatment group, whereas higher levels of out-group identification will be observed in the widespread treatment group.

Results

The observed values support hypotheses 1a and 1b: priming a widespread repressive environment fosters less polarization, or distance from the out-group, in either affect or policy preferences than priming the control and targeted repressive environments. Figure 1 displays the average treatment effect on positive affect toward the out-group, as measured by the three-item affect index, across treatment groups. The y-axis measures the difference in average levels of positive affect toward the out-group on a scale of 10 to 100 across treatment groups. Positive affect toward the out-group is highest in the widespread treatment group; although this is not significantly different from the control (p = .12), it is in the expected direction. On the 10 to 100 scale, the control group reported an average of 62.79 on the out-group affect index, the widespread treatment group reported an average of 67.19, and the targeted treatment group reported an average of 61.85. The difference in positive affect toward the out-group is significant between the widespread and targeted treatments (p = .05).

Figure 1 also displays the average treatment effect in terms of the average distance from the out-group's preferences by treatment group. (This measurement has been standardized to represent observed distance as a percentage of total possible distance.) The y-axis measures the average difference in percentage points of distance from out-group preferences across treatment groups, with the minimum possible being zero and the maximum being one. The widespread treatment group is closest to the out-group, and significantly more so than not only the targeted treatment group, but also the control group. The control group was an average of 70.72 percent of the total distance away from the out-group, whereas the widespread treatment group was an average of 55.2 percent, and the targeted treatment group an average of 76.7 percent.

In addition, the observed values support hypothesis 2a. In-group
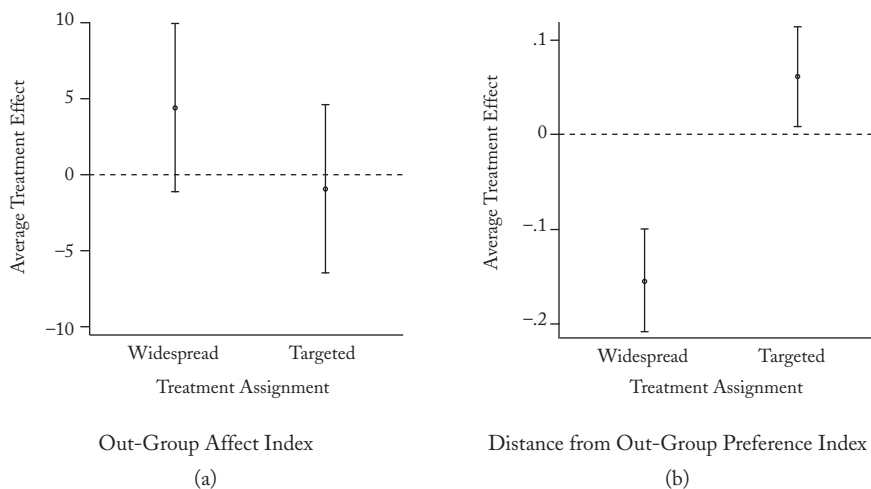
FIGURE 1
AFFECTIVE AND PREFERENCE POLARIZATION BY TREATMENT GROUP

identification is significantly lower in the widespread treatment condition and significantly higher in the targeted treatment condition when compared to the control group, as shown in Figure 2. Respondents in the control, widespread, and targeted treatment groups reported average levels of in-group identification of 66.3, 61.11, and 76.79, respectively, on a scale of 10 to 100. Similarly, the observed values provide some support for hypothesis 2b. Out-group identification is lower in the targeted treatment group condition ($p = .06$), though the widespread treatment group is not statistically different from the control. Respondents in the control, widespread, and targeted treatment groups reported average levels of out-group identification of 55.54, 57.05, and 49.74, respectively, on a scale of 10 to 100. In both figures, the y-axis measures the difference in levels of identification with the in- and out-groups on the 10 to 100 scale across treatment groups.

POLARIZATION AND GROUP IDENTIFICATION: ADDITIONAL MECHANISM TESTS

The descriptive results demonstrate that treatment assignment predicts levels of in-group identification and levels of polarization as expected. Beyond the observable differences across primed repressive environments, I posit that repression alters the degree of polarization through shifts in group identification. The correlations presented below dem-
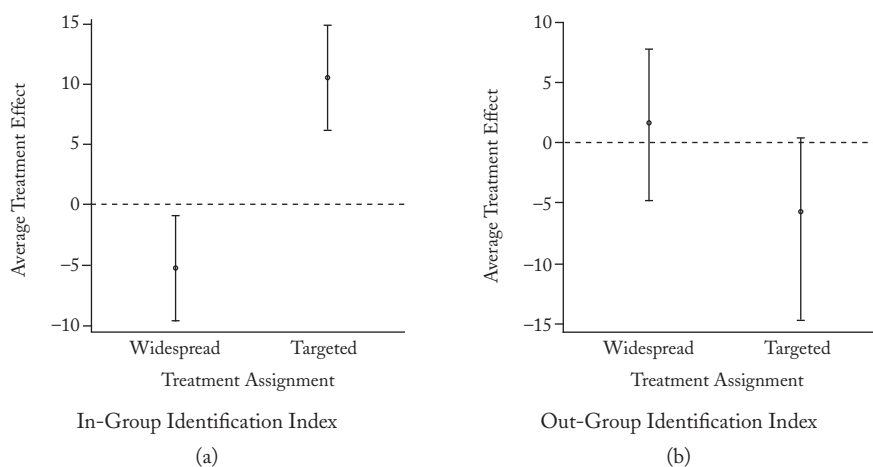
FIGURE 2
GROUP IDENTIFICATION BY TREATMENT GROUP

onstrate that the relationships are in the predicted direction. There is a negative relationship between in-group identification and positive feelings toward the out-group, whereas there is a significant and positive relationship between out-group identification and positive feelings toward the out-group (Table 1). Regression results also demonstrate that there is a significant and positive relationship between higher levels of in-group identification and distance from the stated position of the out-group, and also a significant negative relationship between out-group identification and distance. Similar patterns hold in models with and without covariates (Table 2).

I conducted an additional analysis to test whether increased in-group identification may plausibly mediate the relationship between repressive environments and polarization per the mechanism outlined in my theory. This approach is outlined by Reuben Baron and David Kenny and is particularly helpful for thinking about mediation in a setting where the variable has not been directly manipulated.[59] Here, the independent variable is treatment assignment, the mediator is group identification, and the dependent variable is average affective or preference distance from the out-group. Again, the treatments are not significant for out-group affect, but the relationship is in the expected direction (Table 3). Out-group identification is a strong predictor of out-group affect and also reduces the size of the effect for the widespread treat-

[59] Baron and Kenny 1986.

TABLE 1

GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND POSITIVE AFFECT TOWARD OUT-GROUP

| | Positive Affect toward Out-Group | | | |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
In-group identification	−0.059 (0.054)	−0.073 (0.058)		
Out-group identification			0.558*** (0.036)	0.546*** (0.037)
Covariates		yes		yes
Constant	67.749*** (3.571)	75.096*** (10.409)	34.489*** (2.270)	42.667*** (8.695)
Observations	415	404	396	386
R²	0.002	0.051	0.363	0.389

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01; ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results; standard errors in parentheses

TABLE 2

GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND DISTANCE FROM OUT-GROUP PREFERENCES

| | Distance from Out-Group Preferences | | | |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
In-group identification	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)		
Out-group identification			−0.002*** (0.0005)	−0.002*** (0.0005)
Covariates		yes		yes
Constant	0.470*** (0.041)	0.487*** (0.092)	0.776*** (0.030)	0.799*** (0.085)
Observations	417	407	394	385
R²	0.061	0.117	0.040	0.110

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01; OLS regression results; standard errors in parentheses

ment. When difference in preferences of the out-group is the dependent variable, in-group identification slightly mediates the effect of both treatments, as does out-group identification (Table 4). The size of the treatment effect decreases for the widespread treatments, and the significance of the treatment effect of the targeted prime loses significance and magnitude when in-group identification is added to the regression.

TABLE 3

TREATMENT ASSIGNMENT, GROUP IDENTIFICATION, AND POSITIVE AFFECT TOWARD OUT-GROUP

	Positive Affect toward Out-Group			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Widespread treatment	3.181 (2.994)	2.416 (2.977)	0.523 (2.450)	0.432 (2.576)
Targeted treatment	−0.694 (2.765)	−1.244 (2.973)	0.774 (2.492)	−0.270 (2.717)
In-group identification		-0.049 (0.065)		0.053 (0.058)
Out-group identification			0.547*** (0.038)	0.553*** (0.040)
Covariates	yes	yes	yes	yes
Constant	67.705*** (9.735)	73.038*** (10.417)	42.338*** (8.694)	38.484*** (9.567)
Observations	417	404	386	375
R^2	0.046	0.055	0.389	0.388

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01; OLS regression results; standard errors in parentheses

TABLE 4

TREATMENT ASSIGNMENT, GROUP IDENTIFICATION, AND DISTANCE FROM OUT-GROUP PREFERENCES

	Distance from Out-Group Preferences			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Widespread treatment	−0.154*** (0.028)	−0.150*** (0.028)	−0.147*** (0.029)	−0.145*** (0.029)
Targeted treatment	0.063** (0.027)	0.047* (0.028)	0.063** (0.028)	0.052* (0.029)
In-group identification		0.001** (0.001)		0.001* (0.001)
Out-group identification			−0.002*** (0.0004)	−0.001*** (0.0005)
Covariates	yes	yes	yes	yes
Constant	0.746*** (0.089)	0.660*** (0.098)	0.849*** (0.092)	0.760*** (0.104)
Observations	417	407	385	377
R^2	0.191	0.217	0.232	0.246

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01; OLS regression results; standard errors in parentheses

REPRESSION AND POLARIZATION IN EGYPT (1981–2011) AND TUNISIA (1987–2010)

The following section documents repression and polarization in Egypt and Tunisia. Egypt serves as a case of targeted repression under Mubarak, while Tunisia serves as a case of widespread repression of opposition under Ben ʿAli. These time periods correspond to the last regime prior to the Arab Spring uprisings, which resulted in regime change and an initial transition period in both countries in early 2011. The detailed case-study evidence from these two countries demonstrates how the nature of regime repression conditioned levels of polarization between political opposition groups over time.

VARIATION IN REPRESSION

Under authoritarian presidents Ben ʿAli and Mubarak, Tunisia and Egypt were each estimated to have thirty thousand political prisoners.[60] Although these numbers suggest similarities between the countries, a closer look at the demographics of their political-prisoner populations and the extent to which repressive experiences were shared across political opposition groups, reveals different repressive environments in each country.

In Tunisia, repression was a ubiquitous experience for the regime's active political opposition under Ben ʿAli. Upon seizing power in a bloodless coup on November 7, 1987, Ben ʿAli promised a number of democratic reforms and in December 1987 released thousands of political prisoners, but soon after the regime's repression of opposition came in overlapping waves. First, after a strong showing in the 1989 parliamentary elections and two contentious events likely fabricated by the regime,[61] the Islamist opposition group Ennahda became the first target of repression under the new president. Roughly eight thousand of the Ennahda's top and middle leadership were arrested between 1990 and 1992. Of them, 279 were tried in two cases in Tunisia's military tribunal, with forty-six individuals receiving life sentences and 219 receiv-

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[60] See Holder 1994 and Khalil 2014. These numbers were also confirmed to me in interviews with former political prisoners, activists, and members of human rights organizations, although individuals were quick to mention that this figure was based on commonly accepted knowledge and did not rely on firm documentation.

[61] First, armed militants from a jihādī group attacked the Bab Souika ruling party headquarters. The group was not affiliated with Ennahda, but the regime denounced Ennahda's condemnation of the attack as lukewarm (Ritter 2015, 116). In the same year, the regime announced that it had thwarted a coup-plotting scheme between members of the military and Ennahda, which became known as the Baraket Essahel affair, after the town in which meetings allegedly took place. Both appear to have either been fabricated or exaggerated by the regime to justify the crackdown.

ing between one and twenty-four years in prison.[62] Next, the regime expanded its target to leftist parties. Leaders from the Tunisian Ba'athist Movement were arrested after the second Gulf War,[63] and leaders of the Tunisian Communist Workers Party (Ḥizb al-'Umāl ash-Shyu'ī et-Tunsī, known by the acronym PCOT) were regularly arrested between 1991 and 2002. During the regime's third wave of repression, leaders of the center-left Ettakatol and Congrès pour la République (al-Mu'tamar min 'ajl el-Jumhuriyya and CPR, respectively) increasingly faced repression in the late 1990s. Even legalized opposition was not immune from repression. In 1995, two leaders from the Mouvement des Démocrates Socialistes were sentenced to prison for writing an open letter criticizing the president's behavior and the political environment he was creating.

In contrast, the Mubarak regime employed a targeted repressive environment against its opposition. Between 1981 and 2010, the regime overwhelmingly repressed the Muslim Brotherhood while it permitted leftist organizations to operate and co-opted center secular parties, with varying degrees of success. The targeted repression against the Brotherhood was visible in the differential treatment to which the organization was subjected. First, the sheer number of Brotherhood arrests was staggering. Internal Brotherhood statistics record roughly one hundred thousand arrests carried out against the thirty thousand members of the group, averaging roughly three arrests per active member, during the last decade of Mubarak's rule.[64] Second, state repression targeted the organization through waves of arrests as the Brotherhood increasingly demonstrated its ability to challenge the regime in parliament, in the country's strong professional associations and syndicates, and in the streets.[65] These arrests occured in response to Brotherhood-organized mass mobilization and randomly to collect information on the organization.[66] In addition, the regime's targeted repression against the Brotherhood was most evident near the time of the national parliamentary elections, which were scheduled at five-year intervals. The regime arrested thousands of Islamist campaign workers, supporters, and candidates in the periods surrounding these contests.[67] The targeted nature

[62] See Human Rights Watch 1993.

[63] Al-Madini 2012, 63.

[64] Author interview with Husayn al-Qazzaz, Muslim Brotherhood adviser and confidant of Brotherhood financier Khairat el-Shater, Istanbul, Turkey, June 15, 2016.

[65] Abed-Kotob 1995.

[66] Campagna 1996. The most well-known incident was the Salsabīl affair. In February 1992, security forces raided the offices of a computer company by the same name, owned by prominent Muslim Brotherhood members, including Khairat el-Shater and Hassan Malek. The information obtained during the raid was later used to arrest eleven leaders in December of the same year.

[67] Wickham 2013.

TABLE 5
REPRESSION IN TUNISIA AND EGYPT

Tunisia 1987–2010
    Widespread repression,
    similar treatment
    across groups
	~30,000 political prisoners
	Distinctive waves against opposition groups
	• 1989–1991: Islamists
	• 1991–2002: Leftist parties
	• 1997–2005: Center-left parties, personal rivals

Egypt 1981–2011
    Targeted repression,
    different treatment
    across groups
	~30,000 political prisoners
	Targeted waves against Muslim Brotherhood
	• 1995
	• 2000
	• 2005
	• 2010

of the repression against the Brotherhood was also apparent in the regime's legal strategy. Beginning in 1995, the government referred and sentenced a large number of Brotherhood leaders to military tribunals in three major cases, one that year, one in 2000 and one in 2006. In these tribunals, typical judgments resulted in three-, five-, seven-, and ten-year sentences and often included hard labor. The legal approach was notable because the regime had not used this tactic against political opposition since 1965, under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and also because it did not use the same protocol for secular opposition leaders arrested during the same period. The differences in repression across the two countries are summarized in Table 5.[68]

VARIATION IN AFFECTIVE AND PREFERENCE POLARIZATION

As the number and variety of repressed Tunisian opposition groups increased, their shared trauma of widespread repression was an experience in which individuals' identification with their immediate opposition groups was not primed or made more salient; instead, individual groups came to identify with a larger collective of active opposition. As the Ennahda members and leadership began to be slowly released from prison in November 1999 and join the general population,[69] and as repression affected a younger generation of leftist and secular opposi-

[68] For additional information, see Campagna 1996; Wickham 2002, 215; Al-Awadi 2004; El Ghobashy 2005, 373; International Crisis Group 2008.

[69] Human Rights Watch reported that hundreds of prisoners, including sympathizers and low-ranking members of Ennahda and ten identified as PCOT members, were released by the Ben 'Ali regime ahead of meetings with the European Union's Council of Ministers in Brussels, which were scheduled within a framework of the US-Tunisian Association Agreement. The release of Ennahda leadership followed in the 2000s.

tion groups, repression became an increasingly shared experience that bridged and narrowed ideological divides across the opposition. The opposition's collective experience of repression significantly decreased polarization between these groups by altering the levels of in-group identification.

The manner in which opposition members described their feelings toward other opposition groups in the late 1980s reveals a lack of collective identification (as a unified opposition movement) and negative affect toward competing groups. At that time, most secular opposition groups maintained that political Islam was inherently contradictory to democracy and that religion had no place in Tunisian politics.[70] As a result, these groups supported the Ben 'Ali regime's denial of Ennahda's right to participate in the democratic process, and they displayed high levels of animosity toward the Islamist opposition.[71] Ennahda narratives of the 1989 to 1992 period document the widespread belief that secular opposition members had either tacitly or explicitly supported repression against them. Samir Dilou, jailed for ten years as a leader of the Union Générale des Etudiants de Tunisie and a member of the Ennahda executive committee, reflected that it appeared that "the other opposition parties were silent or conspired with the regime" during the crackdown.[72]

But as state repression broadened its scope, positive affect developed among competing opposition groups. As early as 1991, the secularist Harakat Tahrir came to regard itself and Ennahda as being "in one trench" because repression increasingly targeted anyone demanding democratic reforms.[73] As some members of the ruling party Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique were affected, even they began to demonstrate more positive affect toward Islamists. For example, Mohamed Mzali was the secretary general of the ruling party and had served as prime minister under Habib Bourguiba between 1980 and 1986. When the regime targeted Mzali in the late 1980s as a scapegoat for pervasive economic troubles,[74] he fled to France in exile. Just a few

[70] Al-Madini 2012, 260.
[71] Haugbølle and Cavatorta 2011, 334.
[72] Author interview with Ennahda leader Samir Dilou, Tunis, Tunisia, November 17, 2014.
[73] Al-Madini 2012, 105.
[74] As the country witnessed strikes and riots related to price increases at the end of the Bourguiba regime, the president laid the blame on Mzali, dismissed him from the ruling party, and replaced him as prime minister with Rachif Sfar, previously the minister of finance. Mzali left the country for France, and in a politically charged case against him, was sentenced in absentia to four years imprisonment and fifteen years of hard labor. In 1991, he published his own account of his ordeal under Bourguiba and accused Ben 'Ali of being just as dictatorial as his predecessor. In the book, he speaks highly of Ennahda. Later, Mzali and Ennahda, along with former Bourguiba-era minister and Popular Unity Party founder Ahmed Ben Salah, who had been exiled under Ben 'Ali in 1989, jointly issued a statement

years later, in 1991, Mzali described Islamist ideas as "legitimate in a country whose inhabitants are Muslim" and categorized Ennahda as consisting "for the most part, of men of honor, pacifists and democrats."[75] As early as 1994, upon being released from prison into exile in France, CPR cofounder Moncef Marzouki reached out to Ennahda leadership to coordinate their opposition activities. After the trauma of the repression he experienced as a candidate in the 1994 presidential elections, he appealed to Tunisians to "forget about the divide between secularists and Islamists, and instead focus on the divide between democrats and non-democrats."[76] Marzouki's statement reflected a newfound empathy for Ennahda, which he now considered "democrats," and demonstrated positive affect between the secularist and Islamist opposition.

Moreover, the jailed leadership of Ennahda emerged from prison identifying more strongly with the broader opposition movement. It embraced collective human rights causes and expressed positive affect toward other political groups. Experiencing tremendous repression in an atmosphere of collective suffering appears to have strengthened the commitment of the Ennahda leadership to issues of human rights. Reflecting on sixteen years of imprisonment, Ennahda's secretary general Hamadi Jebali said, "If you were to ask me, 'Hamadi, were you broken by this [experience]?' I would say no. My suffering made me more convinced of the importance of human rights, political liberties, and the democratic project."[77] In a 2009 interview, senior Ennahda figure Sadok Chourou reflected on what the suffering of the group had meant for its political vision: "During my time in prison, Ennahda had decided that the goal of its political work was to achieve a comprehensive and inclusive national reconciliation that restores political equilibrium and prevents a monopoly by any one party in deciding the fate of the country."[78] These statements illustrate a shift in the way Ennahda talked about its political identity, which was now firmly entrenched within a broader, collective opposition.

Party platforms, manifestos, and official statements issued by the parties demonstrate convergence among the Tunisian opposition on central issues of state identity and the role of religion. Initially, the parties' platforms indicated a high level of division on policy preferences

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that criticized Ben 'Ali and called for a national alliance against him later that year and made a similar declaration in 1995. Murphy 1999, 217.

[75] Mzali 1991.

[76] As quoted in Wolf 2017, 101.

[77] Author interview with Ennahda leader Hamadi Jebali, Sousse, Tunisia, December 10, 2014.

[78] Interview by Sayyid Zayed with Ennahda leader Sadok Chorou. Transcript available (in Arabic) at https://archive.islamonline.net/?p=402.

related to religion and politics. In 1989, secular parties supported a ban, proposed by the regime, on all religion-based parties as part of their larger commitment to a secular public sphere. But by 2011, the parties' platforms had come to reflect changes in the distribution of policy preferences regarding religion and politics. The convergence came from centrist preference shifts by Islamist and secular opposition groups. Preference change occurred over the state's role in enforcing a combination of or, conversely, a separation of religion and politics and over the protection of individual religious liberties. Ultimately, parties across the spectrum articulated a preference for the state to protect differences of opinion and religious practice in private spaces defended by the state, rather than to enforce a given version of Islamism or secularism on citizens' behavior.

In addition, two major collaborative initiatives in the early 2000s solidified an agreement among opposition leaders about how religion and politics would be handled officially in a potential postauthoritarian era. The first initiative was the 2003 *Appel de Tunis* (Call from Tunis). In May 2003, thirty-two members of the Tunisian opposition met secretly in Aix-en-Provence, France, to negotiate an agreement and to offer a united front against the Ben 'Ali regime. On June 17, twenty-seven participants signed a pact resulting from the meeting, the first formal and public agreement between secular and Islamist opposition groups. The document underscored the freedom of religion, the neutrality of mosques, and a pro-Palestine and pan-Arab position as points of agreement among the opposition. The second initiative was the 2005 *Collectif du 18 October* (October 18th Collective), a semiformal coordination between the opposition that persisted through the 2010 uprising. The Collectif was a joint effort by legal and illegal opposition groups, operating in Tunisia and in exile, to formulate a set of shared principles and reform demands around which to rally opposition to the Ben 'Ali regime. The initiative drew its name from the day on which eight members of the opposition had announced a month-long hunger strike to protest state abuses related to freedom of expression and human rights. The content of the document issued by the Collectif in December mirrored many of the articles from the 2003 Appel, but expanded the diversity of parties and groups participating and agreed for the first time to a single list of reform principles.[79] The 2005 document included an entire section titled "Relations between Religion and the State," which focused on questions of religious freedom, national identity, and the

[79] Jaafar 2014, 130–32.

state's future role in institutionalizing these concepts. The document struck a balance between the independence of religion from the state and the independence of the state from religion. The resulting vision was a democratic, "civil state grounded in republican principles and respect for human rights," yet one that "must give special consideration to Islam . . . while avoiding any monopoly or any misuse of religion, as well as guaranteeing the right to practice any religion and belief in the effective implementation of religion and worship."

In contrast, in Egypt the concentration of physical and psychological repression within the Brotherhood cadres made it an experience in which in-group identification was primed, and the identity of the larger opposition became increasingly fractured among groups that were co-opted, tolerated, or targeted. Moreover, the groups accused one another of working with the regime. As a result of opposition groups not identifying as a larger opposition movement, the political system shifted from one in which there was cooperation and consensus at the beginning of Mubarak's regime, to one deeply divided over mutual enmity, conflicting identities, and disagreement about the role of religion in politics. At the advent of the Mubarak regime, the Brotherhood held positive affect toward competing groups and felt connected to the liberal and secular groups who were also mobilizing to oppose the regime. The Brotherhood General Guide Umar al-Tilmisani recalled that an unusual wave of arrests during the final days of Anwar Sadat's presidency in 1981 brought together individuals from many different schools of thought and opinion, noting positively, "There were those among the Communists who prayed with us."[80] Furthermore, he identified a unified, collective opposition, responding to a question about the possibility of Islamic and leftist forces with, "Anyone who calls for freedom is my ally and I am his." Tilmisani even went so far as to describe members of other opposition groups as "extremely charming," referring directly to two prominent communists, Dr. Ismail Sabri Abdullah and the Wafd Party leader Fuad Siraj Al-Din Pasha.[81]

But with the onset of targeted repression against the Muslim Brotherhood under the Mubarak regime in the 1990s, the organization experienced increasing in-group identification and decreasing identification with other groups. Targeted repression altered the group's identity, and members increasingly identified as isolated, estranged from the broader opposition, and uniquely victimized. As a result, the Brotherhood's collective affect toward secular opposition groups grew increasingly nega-

[80] Ramadan 1993, 172.
[81] Ramadan 1993, 172.

tive. A report titled, "The Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak: From Appeasement to Confrontation," is emblematic of this narrative.[82] The report accuses the regime of detaining tens of thousands of its members, levying seven military trials against the Brotherhood, and launching systematic media campaigns to undermine the group's legitimacy, popularity, and success. The report claims that Mubarak used the organization as a "scarecrow," but goes even further to claim that by the hand of the regime, "[the Brotherhood] has received consecutive blows and been subjected to the ugliest shades of injustice, abuse, and racism—like what happened in South Africa and America between those with white skin and [those with] black skin." Similarly, in a 2011 interview, Brotherhood leader and financier Khairat El-Shater remarked that waves of repression against the group "resulted in a feeling of oppression and being tied down."[83]

Moreover, the Brotherhood narrative drew a firm boundary between its members, who had suffered for their specific cause and for the general cause of democracy, and members of other opposition groups, who had been co-opted by the regime. Gamal Heshmat, a member of the Shura Council who served in parliament and was jailed under Mubarak, noted that leftist and liberal opposition to the regime "also opposed the Brotherhood. . . . It even encouraged the security apparatus in its tyrannical goal. Liberals in Egypt only ever wore a costume of liberalism."[84] Amr Darrag, a member of the Brotherhood's political organization from 2000 to 2006 and a founding member of the Freedom and Justice Party, similarly criticized the secular opposition, particularly leftists: "Those who were 'performing' opposition were not actually independent of the regime's agenda. The opposition—particularly the leftist opposition—was cooperating with state security against us."[85]

At the same time, the Egyptian opposition became increasingly polarized on how to define the nature of the state regarding religion and politics. In the 1980s, the Brotherhood found common cause with secular opposition groups, even running on joint platforms. But by the 2011 uprising, the Brotherhood's preferences had hardened, calling for Islam to serve as the basis for legislation and for both state and religious institutions to actively advance their particular vision of Islamism. As

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[82] Accessed on Ikhwan Wiki, an official website maintained by the Brotherhood with curated information about the organization. Available (in Arabic) at https://www.ikhwanwiki.com/index.php?title, accessed January 22, 2020.

[83] Interiew by Professor Josh Stacher with Brotherhood leader and financier Khairat El-Shater, Cairo, Egypt, March 24, 2011.

[84] Author interview with Gamal Heshmat, Istanbul, Turkey, June 18, 2016.

[85] Author interview with Amr Darrag , Istanbul, Turkey, June 13, 2016.

early as 2000, the Brotherhood's platform articulated a collective preference for a stronger state role in enforcing sharia. The preferences indeed guided the organization for the next five years. They were reiterated nearly verbatim in March 2004 during a conference outlining the Brotherhood's reform initiative. From then on, as Carrie Wickham writes, "Islam and the 'fixed values of the nation' would hence serve as the ultimate reference point for the new political order, setting the outer limits of free expression and assembly."[86] The platform also outlined preferences for state behavior, including "giving the proponents of the *da'wa* [invitation to Islam, or proselytization] the freedom to explain the principles and characteristics of Islam, the most important of which is its comprehensiveness as a guide to all aspects of life"; "encouraging people to worship and to abide by good and upright morals"; and "purifying the media of everything which violates the rulings of Islam and established norms." All "freedoms" were couched in language providing space for individual religious practice but simultaneously implied a strong role for the state in mandating specific religious behaviors.

Conclusion

In this article, I introduce a plausible process through which the repression that defines authoritarian regimes affects the processes of polarization in these systems, and draw on central insights from social psychology on the causes and consequences of group identification. Repression affects how actors come to identify themselves, shaping related affect and the distribution of preferences among political groups. Repressive environments target either a specific opposition group or many such groups. Targeted repression, following the logic of divide and conquer, creates fractured identities and increases polarization across the opposition. In contrast, widespread repression reduces the within-group identification of opposition groups, which in turn decreases polarization between these groups. I test this argument with mixed-methods data and analysis, combining laboratory experiments with detailed case studies. Although subtle priming of repressive environments against fictional groups, lasting only a few minutes and comprising just a few lines of text, was able to create the hypothesized effects in the lab, similar effects occurred in much greater magnitude over time in Egypt and Tunisia. In those countries, repression physically and psychologically affected individuals across multiple years, and even decades, when these

[86] Wickham 2013, 106.

state-inflicted traumas targeted group memberships that members cared about much more deeply and to which they more strongly related than those created in the experiment.

Undoubtedly, there are other ways in which repression may affect polarization among political groups. For example, widespread repression creates a different socialization environment than targeted repression and may newly create close networks and personal connections among previously antagonistic opposition groups.[87] In addition, organizations under siege in a targeted-repression environment may defensively change their structure and their demands of loyalty from members in a manner that can alienate moderates, further polarizing it from other groups in affect and preferences.[88] These factors are not relevant for the experimental setup, but in real-world cases, repression probably affects polarization through all three reinforcing channels. Future scholarship should test the extent to which each component accounts for aggregate polarization and whether affective and preference polarization are related differently to each potential effect of repression.

Additional research is necessary to explore how repression and the polarization it creates among political groups may condition the likelihood of cooperative behavior among these groups, with implications for successful democratic reform and transition. Affective and preference polarization, as conditioned by the nature and strength of group identities, have consequences for compromise and cooperation between groups. Social psychological accounts confirm that attitudes toward others and policy preferences resulting from processes of group differentiation precede—and indeed, determine—cooperation.[89] Lower affective and preference polarization facilitate compromise and cooperation among groups, whereas high levels of polarization breed hostility.[90] The extent to which certain configurations of repression, notably, targeted repression, may keep authoritarian regimes undemocratic by polarizing its opposition and preventing cooperation among these groups is thus an important implication of my findings and suggests a new mechanism scholars should consider when researching the behavioral effects of repression.

A number of studies find regime repression to be most effective for regime survival when it divides opposition actors and pits them against

[87] Edwards 1970.
[88] Davenport 2015.
[89] Struch and Schwartz 1989; Campbell 1965.
[90] Brewer and Brown 1998, 565.

each other.[91] In these studies, scholars maintain that opposition groups act strategically in response to political opportunity structures created by a regime's repressive tactics. Repression alters groups' calculus for strategic action by changing constraints and hindering their ability to individually mobilize against the regime, in turn changing the likelihood of cooperation across groups in contesting the regime. But careful studies of opposition cooperation demonstrate that even under favorable opportunity structures, "opposition cohesion or the ability of various groups to unite around a common agenda for change and to mobilize either jointly or concurrently against the authoritarian regime is not a given."[92] Indeed, decreases in polarization precede—rather than result from—cooperative behavioral outcomes. The level of negative affect and distance in policy preferences determines the opposition's level of cohesion, its ability to compromise, and ultimately its effectiveness in winning reform and concessions from the ruling regime.[93] Scholars should disentangle the extent to which repression facilitates opposton cohesion through an identity mechanism rather than through opportunity structures.

Similarly, scholars argue that polarization conditions the cooperative behavior that is so important for elite cooperation in contingent theories of democratic transition. A higher degree of polarization reduces the likelihood that actors will compromise and cooperate over fundamental questions of identity and procedure during moments critical to the success of democratic consolidation.[94] As is evident in the case studies of Egypt and Tunisia in this article, particular repressive environments created different levels of polarization over a period of decades. But the real-world story does not end with the uprisings and regime change witnessed by these two countries in 2010–2011. Within three years of uprisings, high levels of affective and preference polarization among political elites quickly derailed the transition process in Egypt, enabling the resurgence of authoritarianism, whereas in Tunisia, positive affect and low levels of preference polarization among political groups facilitated compromise and agreement on the outlines of a political transition process and the identity of the reformed Tunisian state.[95] Future research on democratic transitions must add the psycho-

[91] Albrecht 2005; Howard and Roessler 2006; Lust-Okar 2005; Schwedler and Clark 2006; Shehata 2010; van de Walle 2006.
[92] Shehata 2010, 11.
[93] Bratton and van de Walle 1997, 198.
[94] For example, see Kitschelt et al. 1999; Linz and Stepan 1978; McFaul 2002; Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela 1992; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991.
[95] Nugent, forthcoming.

logical legacy of repression to the authoritarian legacies under study by considering how political identities inherited from the authoritarian period condition the success of subsequent developments.[96]

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887120000015.

DATA

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[96] See Grzymala-Busse 2007; Hicken and Kuhonta 2015; Kalyvas 2006; Mainwaring 1989; Riedl 2014; Blaydes 2018.

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