

IGA-677 / RusNatSecPol / Lecture 8

Repression Backgrounder

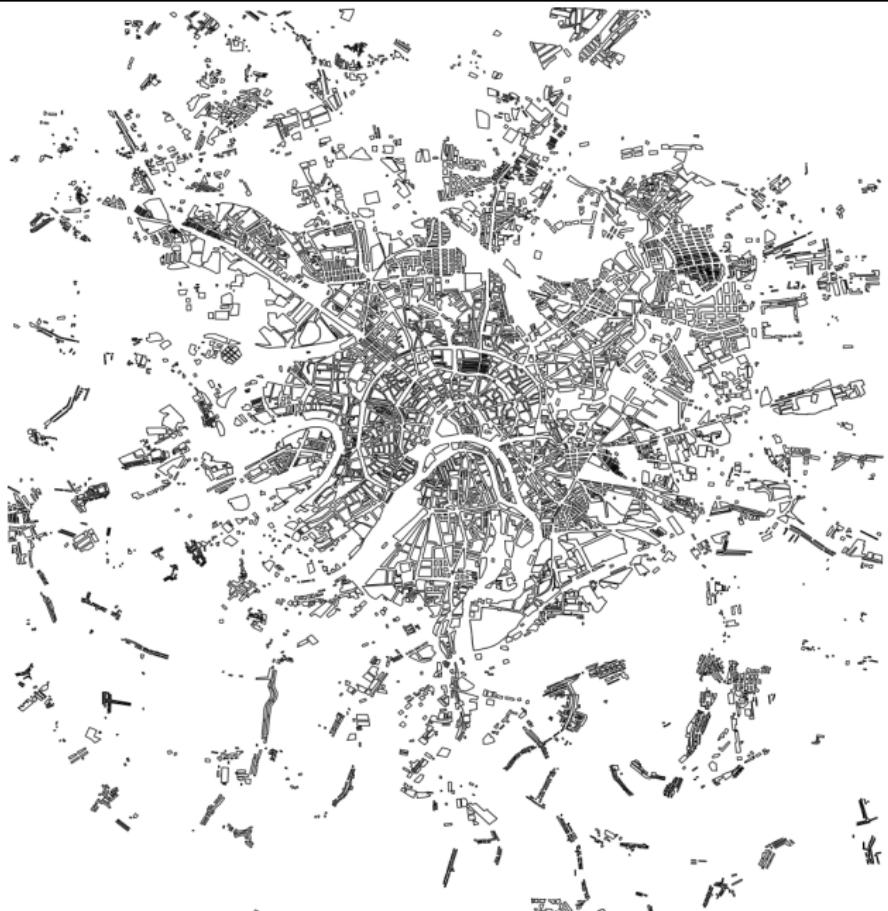
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Today's objectives

1. *Define:* what repression is
2. *Explain:* why states repress
3. *Explore:* effect of repression on dissent

Why repress?
Does repression work?



Why repress?
Does repression work?



Definition:

repression = use of violence and intimidation
to maintain political power



Figure 3: NKVD

REGIMES	YEARS	TOTAL
MEGAMURDERERS	1900-87	151,491
DEKA-MEGAMURDERERS	1900-87	128,168
U.S.S.R.	1917-87	61,911
China (PRC)	1949-87	35,236
Germany	1933-45	20,946
China (KMT)	1928-49	10,075
LESSER MEGAMURDERS	1900-87	19,178
Japan	1936-45	5,964
China (Mao Soviets) [3]	1923-49	3,466
Cambodia	1975-79	2,035
Turkey	1909-18	1,883
Vietnam	1945-87	1,670
Poland	1945-48	1,585
Pakistan	1958-87	1,503
Yugoslavia (Tito)	1944-87	1,072
SUSPECTED MEGAMURDERERS	1900-87	4,145
North Korea	1948-87	1,663
Mexico	1900-20	1,417
Russia	1900-17	1,066
CENTI-KILOMURDERERS	1900-87	14,918
TOP 5	1900-87	4,074
China (Warlords)	1917-49	910
Turkey (Atatürk)	1919-23	878
United Kingdom	1900-87	816
Portugal (Dictatorship)	1926-82	741
Indonesia	1965-87	729
LESSER MURDERERS	1900-87	2,792
WORLD TOTAL	1900-87	169,202

Why repression is important

- repression is a leading cause of death
- over 169 million people killed by own governments or occupying powers in 20th century (Rummel 1994)

Figure 4: Heavy toll

What kind of violence and intimidation?

Violations of *personal integrity rights*
(i.e. threat or harm to physical body)

Repression is *coercive*

1. Deterrence logic

- persuade passive opponents to not challenge state
- make alternative more costly than status quo

2. Compellence logic

- persuade active opponents to stop challenging state
- make status quo more costly than alternative



Figure 5: Yes, it adds up

Examples

1. Disappearances

- people have disappeared
- political motivation likely
- victims have not been found

2. Extrajudicial killings

- killings of individuals without due process of law

3. Political imprisonment

- incarceration of people for
 - non-violent opposition, speech
 - political/religious beliefs
 - non-violent religious practices
 - membership in political/ethnic/religious group

4. Torture

- purposeful inflicting of extreme physical/mental pain
- cruel or degrading treatment
- deaths in custody

Работники НКВД при допросах, врагов народа" применяли старорусскую пытку-дыбу...



Законченный Ильинским и Генеральным прокурором СССР Я. Вишинским, вопрос 5-й степени позволял вынуждать любые показания у "врага народа" на себя и других лиц и многие, чтобы избавить себя от дальнейших ожиданий, признавались" в шпионаже, диверсии, заговоре и т.д., сознательно или под pressure в убийственном цехе УФЧНКА...

Figure 6: Dyba

Violence and intimidation by whom?

Incumbent political authorities

1. State actors

- law enforcement
- intelligence agencies
- military

2. Non-state actors

- pro-regime militias
- mercenaries
- 'goons'



Figure 7: Police



Figure 8: Also police?

Violence and intimidation against whom?

Opponents of incumbent political authorities

1. Institutional opponents

- political parties
- rival elites
- NGOs
- peaceful protesters

2. Non-institutional opponents

- insurgents
- terrorists
- rioters
- violent protesters

Repression vs. civil war

- repression can occur outside of civil war
- civil war can't occur without repression
(unless there's no government to defend)



Figure 9: Protestors



Figure 10: Guerillas

Summary

Repression

- Actor: Incumbent political authorities
Target: Suspected opponents of the incumbent authorities
Action: Use or threat of physical violence
Context: Peacetime or wartime
-

Discussion:

Where to draw the line between **repression and law enforcement**?

- what if political opposition = crime under law?
- what if criminal organization is seeking to supplant or replace the government? (e.g. Pablo Escobar)
- what if a political opponent is prosecuted for a non-political crime?

Why repress?

Threat perceptions

External threats to the state

The “Fifth Column”

1. Logic

- states target real or potential agents of foreign powers (spies, saboteurs, traitors, collaborators)
- can occur in wartime or peacetime

2. The problem

- insufficient as explanation (some states do this more than others)
- and limited ('5th column' is small subset of repression)



Figure 11: Red scare

Internal threats to the state

Domestic Security Threats

1. Logic

- states repress to prevent/stop behavior that threatens
 - individual leaders
 - incumbent regime
 - government personnel
 - political system
 - economy
 - lives, beliefs, and livelihoods of constituents

2. The problem

- almost every state faces some challenge like this
- some repress, others don't
- *what matters more:* type of threat or type of state?



Figure 12: So many enemies

Internal threats to the state

Types of threat

1. How high is the destructive potential?
 - violence, property damage
 - vs.
 - traffic delays, noise complaints
2. How large is the support base?
 - mass popular support
 - vs.
 - political fringe
3. How frequent are the threatening acts?
 - sustained, long-term
 - vs.
 - periodic, isolated, rare
4. Where is the threat located?
 - center vs. periphery
 - high vs. low visibility areas



Figure 13: Threatening



Figure 14: Less threatening

Institutional constraints

International institutions

Human rights treaties

1. Logic

- signatories agree domestic human rights practices
- violation prompts sanctions from 3rd parties, other costs
- states that sign/ratify HR treaties less likely to repress

2. The problem

- selection effects
(are more repressive states less likely to sign in first place?)
- requires robust enforcement mechanism (credible threat)

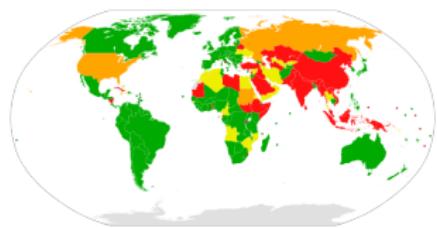


Figure 15: ICC members

Economic interdependence

1. Logic #1: Foreign investment

- investing in repressive states bad for business (divestment campaigns, boycotts)
- countries reliant on foreign capital less likely to repress

2. Logic #2: International trade

- more economic growth → less protest → less need for repression
- diffusion of norms

3. Logic #3: Economic sanctions

- sanctions cause hardship → government changes policy

4. The problem

- effect varies across sectors
- little empirical evidence that sanctions reduce repression



Figure 16: Magnitskiy

Regime type

Domestic democratic peace

1. Logic #1: **accountability**
 - repressive leaders are voted out
2. Logic #2: **norms**
 - democracies value free speech, tolerance, civil liberties
3. Logic #3: **institutions**
 - democracies provide venue for peaceful articulation of demands, corrective feedback
4. The problem
 - constraining effect varies by repression type
 - democracy is no panacea

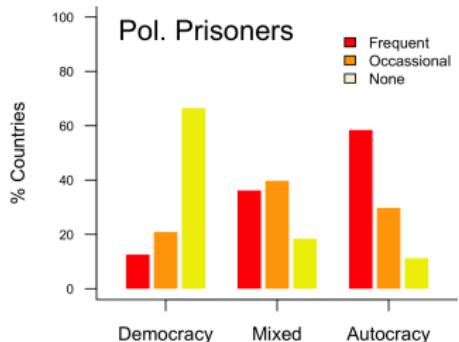


Figure 17: Fewer prisoners

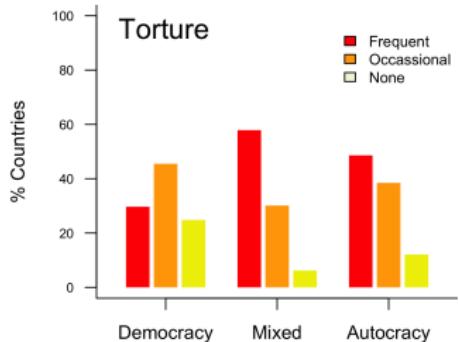


Figure 18: Plenty of torture

Does repression work?

What are the consequences?

does repression

- deter political opposition?
- escalate it?
- curvilinear effect?
- no effect?



Figure 19: King of the Ashes

Theory 1: Deterrence

- repression raises costs of dissent
- and amplifies collective action problems for opposition

more repression → less dissent

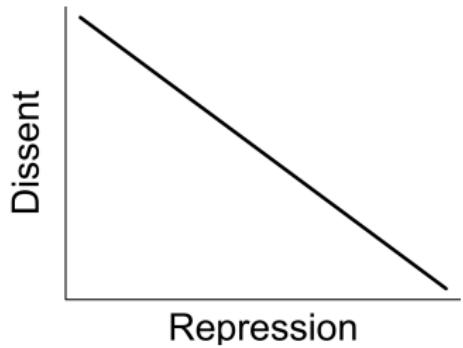


Figure 20: Deterrence

Theory 2: Alienation

- repression radicalizes opponents
- and solves collective action problems for opposition (backlash mobilization)

more repression → more dissent

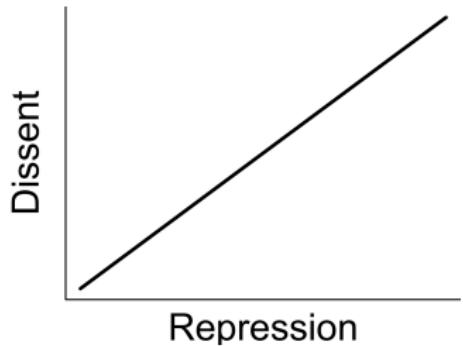


Figure 21: Alienation

Theory 3: Inverted-U hypothesis

- repression alienates
- but there is a threshold level of repression, beyond which opposition becomes unable to recruit and resist

“half-measures” → more dissent

mass repression → less dissent

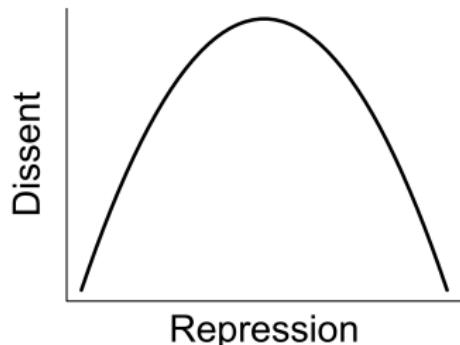


Figure 22: Inverted-U

Case study: Chechnya

Background: Caucasus Wars

1. 1816:
Aleksey Yermolov becomes viceroy,
begins conquest of N. Caucasus
2. 1817-1864:
Caucasian Imamate vs. Russia
→ mass resettlement, genocide
3. 1921-1926:
Akushinskiy insurgency vs. Bolsheviks
→ forcible disarmament
4. 1940-1944:
Islailov insurgency vs. Soviets
→ mass deportation to Central Asia
5. 1989: Chechens return home



Figure 23: Map of Caucasus

1st Chechen War, 1994-96

1. Prelude

- 1991: Chechnya declares independence
- Yeltsin ignores this at first
- low-level Chechen civil war

2. Main phase

- 1994: troops sent to restore order
- catastrophic Russian losses
- poor intelligence, heavy air power, indiscriminate artillery shelling

3. Settlement

- 1996: separatists recapture Grozny
- Russia signs peace agreement
- Chechnya becomes de facto independent



Figure 24: Restoring order



Figure 25: And leaving

2nd Chechen War, 1999-2011

1. Prelude

- 1997: Chechen leadership splits
- rise of Salafi-Jihadis
- 1999: Basayev, Khattab invade Dagestan to create Islamic state

2. Main phase

- 1999: Russia invades Chechnya
- 2000: Russia takes Grozny, cities
- 2000-2011: guerrilla war in forests, Russian indiscriminate reprisals

3. No settlement

- 2004: Russia enlists former rebels (Akhmat and Ramzan Kadyrov)
- “Chechenization” of conflict
- violence becomes more selective
- Chechnya becomes police state



Figure 26: Old friends



Figure 27: New friends

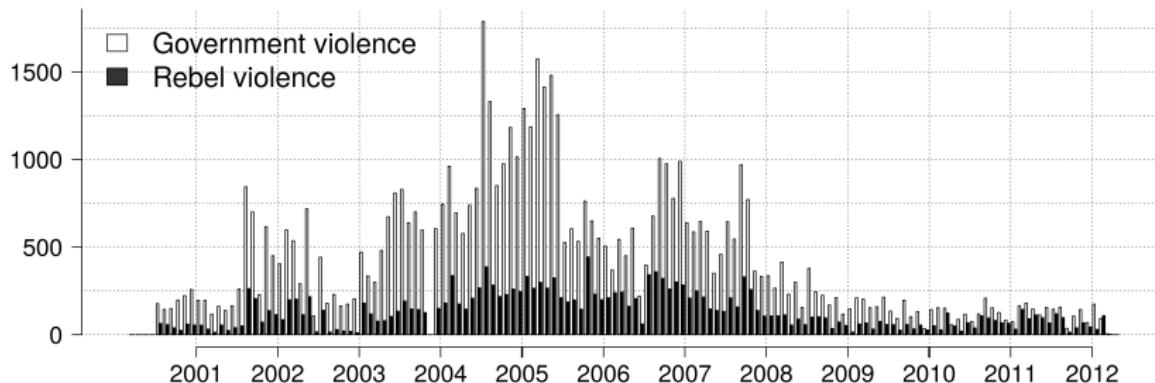


Figure 28: Government and rebel violence over time

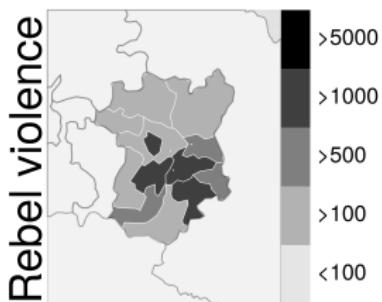


Figure 29: Insurgency

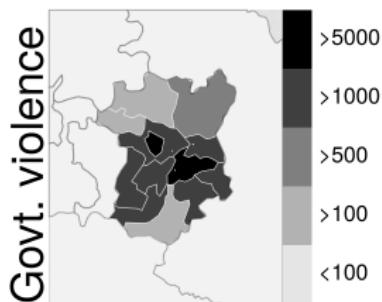


Figure 30: Counterinsurgency

What do the data tell us?

1. Threshold effect exists
 - government violence alienates at low levels, deters at high levels
2. Reaching the threshold is hard
 - in most cases, Russian violence was below the threshold level
3. Threshold level depends on tactics
 - selective tactics: lower threshold
 - indiscriminate: high threshold

What does finding #3 suggest about effectiveness of “Chechenization”?

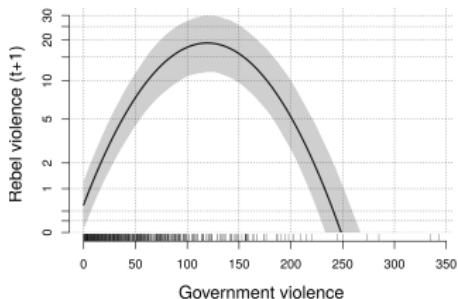


Figure 31: Polynomial model

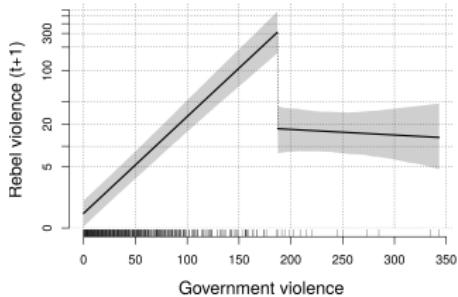


Figure 32: Threshold model

Cross-national evidence

Evidence from armed conflicts around the world, 1989-2019

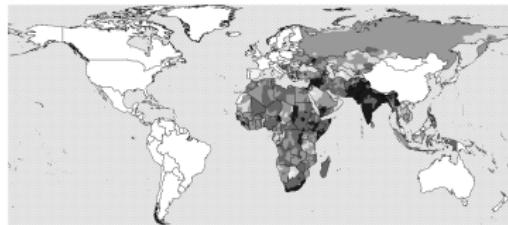


Figure 33: ACLED (100 countries)

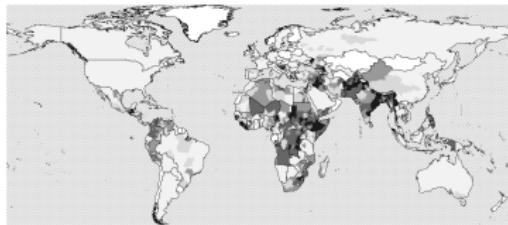


Figure 35: GED (121 countries)

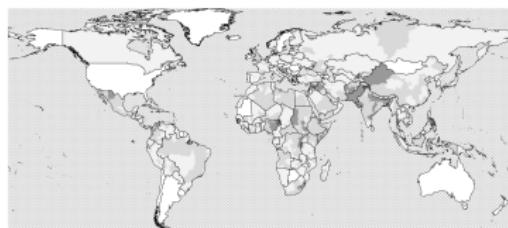


Figure 34: PITF (132 countries)

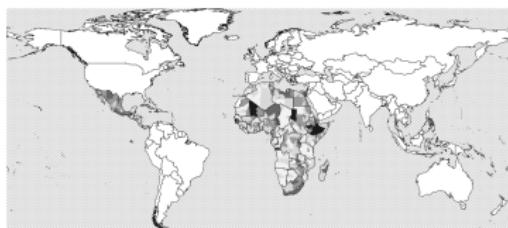


Figure 36: SCAD (60 countries)



Figure 37: Number of violence events per province

What do the data tell us?

1. Threshold effect exists
 - ^-shaped curve in 60%–96% of cases, depending on data source
2. Level of repression needed to reach threshold varies from case to case
 - some reach it after < 10 operations/month
 - others reach it after > 200
3. Repression still often inflammatory
 - /-shaped in 0%–12% of cases

Threshold is lower where:

1. Government has better information
2. Opponents cut off from foreign support
3. Opponents are silenced
4. Government signed human rights treaty

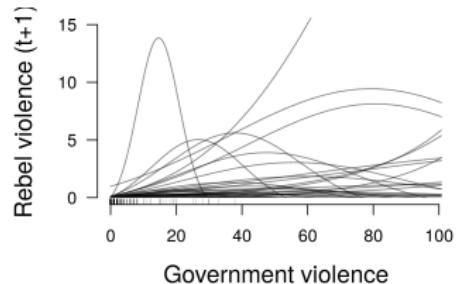


Figure 38: Polynomial model

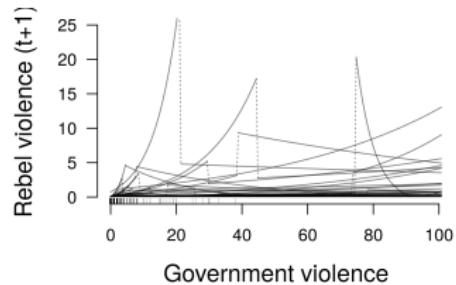


Figure 39: Threshold model

Discussion:

How to avoid creating a police state?

- is there always a trade-off between reducing government violence and preserving civil liberties?
- can you think of any countries that have avoided this pattern?

NEXT MEETING

Insurgency and Counterinsurgency (Tu, Oct. 3)

- Chechnya deep dive
- things to consider:
 - how much continuity/change do you see between Russia's approach to counterinsurgency in Chechnya and past campaigns (e.g. Western Ukraine after WWII)?
 - how has Russia's approach in Chechnya differed from U.S. approach in Iraq, Afghanistan?