Brutal Externalities
How Repression Increases International Conflict[*]

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Abstract

Under what conditions does repression affect international conflict? Research suggests that if repression solidifies a leader's hold on power, the leader may be more likely to initiate international conflict. However, if repression signals a regime's weakness, existing theories predict that its opponents will take advantage and target the repressor. Instead, I argue that where repression contains dissent, it reduces the costs of mobilizing for and backing down from international conflict. I instrument for repression with self-employment rates and find that states that repress are more likely to initiate conflict—even after controlling for regime type, civil war, and military capabilities. Simultaneously, extreme repression virtually guarantees that no state will target the repressor.

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Introduction

Repression and international conflict frequently appear together. President for life Isaiah Afwerki of Eritrea presides over one of the world's most repressive regimes and launches attacks on larger neighboring countries nearly every year, and North Korea's totalitarian regime follows a similar pattern of constant military mobilization, extreme repression, and international conflict. Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq maintained secret prisons and police while fighting a bitter war with a repressive theocracy in Iran in the 1980s. The pattern is not limited to autocracies: some democracies, like the United States and Britain, have a history of massive repression and frequent international conflict. Furthermore, some autocracies, like Singapore, rarely repress domestically or participate in international conflict. Scholars posit that international conflict leads to simultaneous repression (Kalyvas 2006, Rummel 1998) but few have asked if repression also affects international conflict. Under what conditions does domestic repression lead to international conflict?

A rich literature finds that domestic institutions shape international conflict decisions (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, Chiozza and Goemans 2011, Weeks 2008), but few study the effects of institutions or processes other than regime type. Research establishes that domestic dissent and international conflict encourage repression (Davenport 2007a, Ritter and Conrad 2016, Rummel 1998) and that repression can dramatically alter domestic politics, but scholars have not asked if repression can affect future international conflict behavior. One body of research argues for peace through insecurity: if repression cements a leader's hold on power domestically, the leader should be less likely to start international conflicts and less likely to become

a target of international conflict (Chiozza and Goemans 2011). However, scholars often see repression as a sign of regime weakness, positing that regimes repress only when they have exhausted other strategies of control (Fearon and Laitin 2003, Goodwin 2001). If repression signals domestic weakness, repressive regimes should start conflicts less often but other states should target them more. I find that the peace through insecurity and the repression as weakness expectations are incomplete: repressive regimes initiate conflict often, yet rarely become targets.

I argue that when regimes control domestic dissent through repression, they decrease the costs of later military mobilization, which simultaneously makes the repressor a less attractive target and a more belligerent conflict initiator. Where regimes choose to repress, they mobilize domestically while restricting feedback from their population. Repression therefore decreases mobilization costs prior to international conflict: the regime has mobilized personnel and restricted dissent. However, by restricting dissent, repression erodes a regime's ability to transmit credible information to international opponents through its domestic institutions. The theory has two empirical implications: decreased mobilization costs should make a repressor a less attractive target internationally, but decreased costs and restricted dissent should increase a repressive regime's propensity to start international conflicts.

The following section establishes the puzzle in the context of the literature on repression and international conflict. The next section presents a theory of international conflict behavior in the presence of repression. The theory suggests that regimes' strategic choices can erode their institutional constraints. The empirical section evaluates the theory's implications with a global dataset on repression and

international conflict. The results show that repressive regimes are dramatically less likely to become targets of international conflict but are positively associated with initiating international conflict. An instrumental variable framework addresses endogeneity between repression and international conflict. The results hold with instruments for repression and controls for regime type, capabilities, and civil war, among others, and the results are robust to changes in measures and estimators.

Repression and International Conflict

International security scholars agree that international conflict is highly associated with domestic repression (Rummel 1998, Enterline and Gleditsch 2000, Davenport 2007b). In line with much of the international relations literature on repression, this project defines repression as extrajudicial killing, torture, disappearances and political imprisonment by state agents (Wood and Gibney 2010). Scholars demonstrate that international conflict can suspend the institutions that normally constrain domestic abuses (Davenport 2007b, Kalyvas 2006). Emergency powers evoked during conflicts can contain clauses that remove due process while granting state agents like law enforcement a broader mandate over the use of force (Davenport 1996). Furthermore, international conflict may change domestic populations' preferences about repression. Many citizens seem to prefer harsher punishments for dissidents during wartime and others may be more willing to turn a blind eye to domestic repression when international conflict takes center stage (Davenport 2007a). Empirically, international conflict is strongly and positively associated with a simultaneous increase

in repression (Rummel 1998) and past conflict is strongly and positively associated with an increase in future repression (Poe and Tate 1994).

Scholars of repression agree that regimes initiate repression to contain domestic dissent, but they disagree on the effects of repression (Lichbach 1987, Moore 1998, Ritter and Conrad 2016). Many scholars suggest that repression is a sign of regime weakness, and claim that regimes only resort to repression when they have exhausted all other means of control (Fearon and Laitin 2003, Goodwin 2001). For example, Goodwin (2001) suggests that regimes repress in the years leading up to revolution or state collapse. However, other scholars find that repression successfully contains domestic dissent under broad conditions (Davenport 2007b, Ritter 2014, Tilly and Goldstone 2001). Additionally, organized repression is a costly and logistically complex strategy that weak regimes may have difficulty implementing. Finally, even as human rights have improved o average, the empirical record contains many examples of powerful, repressive regimes that persist for decades, including present-day Russia and China (Fariss 2014).

International security scholars have largely overlooked the possible effects of repression on international conflict. Scholars recognize that repression can have dramatic and long-lived effects on domestic populations and institutions. However, few have asked if those effects also alter how repressive regimes participate in later conflicts with international opponents. A notable exception is Enterline and Gleditsch (2000), who ask if repression affects international conflict and vice versa, but find that the two are largely independent, and that repression may have a small, positive association with international conflict. This project finds that repression has a pos-

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itive association with conflict initiation, and argues that where repression contains domestic dissent, it lowers military mobilization costs and erodes domestic feedback mechanisms, making repressive regimes less attractive targets but more likely to initiate conflicts with international opponents.

Military Mobilization Costs and Domestic Feedback under Repression

Existing theory establishes that decreasing military mobilization costs make regimes less attractive targets and more belligerent initiators (Filson and Werner 2002, Slantchev 2005), and that regimes can use autonomous domestic institutions to credibly communicate in international crisis bargaining (Fearon 1997, Weeks 2012). I argue that repression decreases mobilization costs and changes domestic institutions, affecting future conflict behavior. I do *not* suggest that regimes repress citizens to signal international opponents: regimes begin repressing for purely domestic reasons. However, international actors observe repression and its effects on domestic institutions. Specifically, international actors observe if the regime has contained dissent and if the regime represses fringe dissidents, the mass public, or elites. Furthermore, repression erodes the strength and autonomy of key domestic institutions, decreasing a regime's ability to signal through them. Both processes make a regime a less attractive target, but more likely to start an international conflict.

Repression Reduces Mobilization Costs by Containing Dissent

When a regime represses its citizens, it sends a stark message to its population that it will punish dissent with armed force. Regimes frequently make repression public and scholars have established that they do so in order to send a message to a broader population: do this and we will hurt, disappear, or kill you (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, Green 1994). In many instances, repression succeeds in containing dissent and after observing repression, many citizens are less likely to dissent through protest, organizing, rebellion, or other tactics (Ritter and Conrad 2016). Additionally, it appears to have a lasting chilling effect: once regimes establish a repressive reputation, they do not have to continually repress to maintain it; many citizens refrain from dissent out of fear (Davenport 2007b). For example, scholars working in Guatemala and Paraguay find that repression contains dissent through widespread fear long after soldiers leave and secret prisons close (Green 1994, Lambert and Nickson 1997).

Repression reduces military mobilization costs by containing dissent. Regimes can mobilize quickly and cheaply when citizens are afraid to protest, support anti-war candidates, or refuse military service. Repressive regimes like Iraq, Iran, Eritrea, and North Korea, among others, can quickly draft tens of thousands of new recruits, commandeer private resources, and redirect public funds towards the military with little opposition. For example, Eritrea maintains compulsory military service for most of its adult population (Connell 2011). Likewise, in conflicts with Iran and Kuwait, the Hussein regime in Iraq commandeered private resources and increased

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military spending at the expense of other programs, all with little blowback (Weeks 2014, chap. 4). During the Iran-Iraq war, the repressive theocracy in Iran drafted child soldiers for suicide missions and faced little domestic dissent. Conversely, when less repressive European nations considered joining the 2003 U.S.-led coalition in Iraq, they experienced giant protests decrying conflict participation and military spending, as well as opposition candidates running on anti-war platforms.

Repression Undermines Communication Mechanisms

Repression erodes institutional constraints. In general, leaders lose office if they lose conflicts (Chiozza and Goemans 2003). However, repressive leaders can threaten and punish any opposition that tries to capitalize on military failures in later elections or can cancel elections altogether. Thus, repression erodes communication channels between a regime, elites, and mass actors. Initial repression may target clear dissidents like rebels, protesters, and fringe groups. If the level of repression increases, it can contain dissent from a wider range of actors. Repressive regimes, even those with elite audiences, can use their repressive apparatuses to control domestic dissent when they back down from threats and conflicts.

Under regimes that repress sparingly, repressed people are likely to be outside of the regime's audience or such a small part of it that repression does not affect audience costs. For example, the United States, a democracy, routinely engages in limited repression of some activists, hardly enough to affect the overall electorate (Wood and Gibney 2010). Likewise, Saudi Arabia, a monarchy with an established elite audience, targets its repression at dissidents outside of the elite audience that

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holds sway over political decisions. As repression increases, it is more likely to affect a regime's domestic audience. For example, in highly repressive Eritrea, security forces repress citizens and their own personnel, and elite purges are common (Connell 2005); the same is likely true for North Korea (Demick 2010). Repression or purges of elite audience members happen in other types of authoritarian states as well: Argentina and Bolivia's repressive military juntas of the 1970s and 1980s featured fights between factions that included counter-coups and political arrests of elites.

Weeks (2014) argues that nondemocratic regimes can still generate audience costs if the leader is dependent on an elite audience. Repression may attenuate this mechanism by giving leaders tools and opportunities to threaten, dismantle, or purge a previously independent elite. In other words, repression as a strategy may undermine institutions that check a regime's domestic reach. Due to this possibility, opponent states may be uncertain if an elite audience will persist or be able to remove a poorly performing leader. This suggests that repressive governments' domestic strategies erode their ability to send credible information internationally through domestic institutional mechanisms, such as audience costs.

Mechanisms and Implications

Repressive regimes lower military mobilization costs and erode institutions by violently containing dissent. This domestic process should affect future international conflict behavior: all else equal, lower mobilization costs should make the repressor a less attractive target. If a repressor lowers mobilization costs, existing theory predicts that it increases its chance of victory in a conflict (Slantchev 2005). An

increased chance of victory then means that a repressor will be more likely to react to an attack by escalating instead of backing down (Filson and Werner 2002). International opponents should then be less interested in starting a fight with a more reactive opponent that has a higher chance of victory.

Lower mobilization costs and a higher chance of victory also make a repressor more likely to initiate conflict. All else equal, the higher chance of victory makes a regime more likely to initiate conflict (Filson and Werner 2002, Slantchev 2005). Additionally, if repression erodes domestic feedback mechanisms, it should compound the regime's interest in initiating conflict. With dissent contained, the regime has less to fear domestically if it loses a conflict. Finally, if repression erodes communication mechanisms, the regime has a harder time using *ex ante* hand-tying tactics to credibly signal to international opponents and settle a dispute short of armed conflict (Fearon 1997). The theory implies the following patterns in the data:

Table 1: Mechanisms and implications:

Mechanism	Implication
Repression decreases mobilization costs, increasing the likelihood of victory	International opponents are less likely to target more repressive regimes.
Repression decreases mobilization costs, increasing the likelihood of victory; and repression erodes domestic communication	More repressive regimes are more likely to initiate conflict than less repressive regimes.

As Table 1 summarizes, the theory posits that repression decreases military

mobilization costs, which increases the likelihood of victory. Repression also buttresses initiation behavior by eroding domestic institutions that facilitate feedback and opposition, such as an independent judiciary and free and fair elections with a viable opposition party (Davenport 2007b). Empirically, the theory predicts a decrease in conflict targeting but an increase in international conflict initiation.

Research Design

The project combines data from Correlates of War (COW) and the Political Terror Scale (PTS) for the main models and measures from the World Bank, Polity IV, the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) project, the Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Data project, Chris Fariss's human rights measures, Jessica Weeks's authoritarian audiences dataset, Joseph Young's job insecurity dataset, and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) for controls and robustness checks (Bremer et al. 2004, Fariss 2014, Gleditsch et al. 2002, Marshall and Jaggers 2002, Sarkees and Wayman 2010, Singer et al. 1972, Stinnett et al. 2002, Weeks 2014, Young 2008).

The resulting dataset takes country-year observations as the unit of analysis. The dependent variables come from the Militarized International Disputes (MIDs) dataset, the main independent variables originate in the PTS index, the instruments come from World Bank Development Indicators, and the controls come from adjusted XPolity scores, COW civil wars, COW geographic contiguity, and the COW composite index of national capability (CINC) datasets, which includes population and national production components. The dependent variables are binary—did a

country initiate or become a target of a crisis in a given year—and I therefore use probit models to estimate the independent variables' effects.

Sample

The dataset consists of country-year observations from nearly every country in existence between 1949 and 2015. Ideally, the sample would cover all modern states over all years that a given state has existed, but data availability limits the project. Activists began collecting reliable repression data on a global scale in the 1970s and several control variables stop at 2000 or 2010. Likewise, the sample does not include all states because Polity does not code states with fewer than 500,000 citizens. However, sparser models on larger samples—for example, Chris Fariss's latent repression data starts in 1949 and ends in 2013—do not change the sign or significance levels of the main coefficients; these results are included in robustness checks in the replication files.

There is considerable missing data in the dataset, which presents a problem because regression requires complete observations. The default solution to missingness is list-wise deletion, which excludes every observation with missing information. One alternative is multiple imputation, which builds a multivariate normal distribution of variables and fills in missing data with simulated draws from the distribution, generating less biased estimates than list-wise deletion (King et al. 2001, Little 2002, Rubin 1987). The analyses presented in the results section use listwise deletion and the appendix contains robustness checks with a multiply imputed dataset; the effects are consistent with those reported here.

Dependent Variables

The MID dataset generates two binary dependent variables: conflict initiation and conflict targeting. The dataset is one of the main datasets in the international conflict literature and it tracks military crises that escalated to war as well as the many more conflicts that states settle short of war. For the initiation variable, a country that initiated a crisis in a given year received a 1 and all others received a 0; for the target variable, a country that was the target of a crisis in a given year received a 1 while all others received a 0.

To address the autocorrelation between yearly observations for the same country, I created peace years, peace years squared, and peace years cubed variables for each country and included them as regressors. The procedure inserts a third order Taylor series approximation to the hazard into the probit (Carter and Signorino 2010). Carter and Signorino (2010) introduced this simple method as an efficient and equivalent alternative to more complicated approaches for analyzing time in cross sectional data with limited dependent variables, like splines and fixed effects (Beck et al. 1998, Wilson and Butler 2007). This cubic polynomial approach outperforms fixed effects and performs in line with splines. Unlike splines, it is nonparametric and does not require the researcher to specify or assume big changes at any point in time. The cubic polynomial approach is the most appropriate and efficient option for this dataset because the autocorrelation plots differ significantly across countries.

Independent Variables

The main independent variable comes from the PTS index, though the results are consistent with alternative measures for repression, as demonstrated in the robustness section in Table 6. PTS defines state terror as violations of physical or personal integrity rights carried out by a state or its agents, such as extrajudicial killing, torture, disappearances and political imprisonment (Wood and Gibney 2010). PTS averages Amnesty International and U.S. State Department data to place countries on a 1 to 5 scale. A score of 1 means that a country respects personal integrity rights: Rule of law exists, people are not imprisoned for their beliefs, and torture and political murder is virtually nonexistent. A score of 5 means that all citizens risk imprisonment, torture or death by state agents (Wood and Gibney 2010). Most regimes that we reflexively consider repressive, like Iran, Syria, and North Korea, score a 4 or 5 in a given year while most we consider free, like Switzerland and Costa Rica, score a 1 or 2. Countries that score a 3 are typically transitional countries, great powers, and autocrats that rely on fear from past repression, like Brazil, the U.S., and Russia. Thus, the main independent variable is a categorical variable ranging from 1 to 5. The repression index uses a one year lag to distinguish the analyses from studies on repression during conflict.

For the first control variable, I recoded the COW civil war data into a binary variable indicating if a country was in a civil war (1) or not (0) in a given year. The project uses the COW civil war data instead of the UCDP data because the 25 deaths threshold in the UCDP data means that many events often regarded as repressive—such as marches that government forces open fire on—are recorded as

civil conflict. For example, the nonviolent protests that security forces attacked following the Iranian elections in 2009 are coded as a civil conflict. Thus, there is too much overlap between the UCDP data and this study's concept and measure of repression. Even with that caveat, repression remains significant in models with the UCDP measure as a control, but the magnitude of the effect is low. This control addresses the robust finding that repression increases during civil war and addresses the possibility that the findings are driven by an overall increase in state violence (Findley 2013, Gleditsch et al. 2008, Young 2013).

CINC scores control for observable capabilities. This addresses the concern that an increase in capabilities could simultaneously increase a state's capacity to repress its citizens and engage in conflict. CINC includes population and three measures of production highly associated with conflict. Using CINC instead of population and GNP did not significantly affect the estimates of any other independent variables. To ensure that repression is not simply an alternative way to measure autocracy, the project uses adjusted Polity scores to control for regime type. As Vreeland (2008) established, some Polity criteria use instability, civil war and repression in coding; thus, the project uses XPolity scores, which remove those criteria. As an alternative measure of regime type and to ensure that differences in authoritarian institutions are not driving the results, the project analyzes data with Weeks's autocratic regime type variables instead of XPolity. Finally, measures of leader job insecurity developed by Joseph Young (2008) control for the increasingly common finding that a leader's security drives high-level conflict decisions (Chiozza and Goemans 2011, Ritter 2014, Wolford 2007). The job insecurity measures are in robustness checks but not the main

models because the measure was rarely significant and including it barely moved the other variables.

Endeogeneity, Instrumental Variables, and the Exclusion Restriction

One robust finding is that war causes simultaneous and future repression (Davenport 2007a, Poe and Tate 1994, Rummel 1998). An extension and alternative explanation to this paper's theory could be that governments repress in order to prepare for conflict. If this is true, repression would increase prior to conflicts, but looming conflict would drive the decision to repress. The project does not dispute that war causes simultaneous repression, particularly when war suspends institutions that check repression (Davenport 2007a, Kalyvas 2006). The theory and results suggest that repression has two, separate relationships with international conflict: as the literature has established, war can increase current and future repression. Second, this project suggests that repression can also be an important cause of later international conflict. Instrumental variable probits model this possibility.

An ideal instrument is strong and valid, meaning that it is highly associated with the endogenous variable in the analyses but not correlated with the disturbance term (Sovey and Green 2011, Stock and Yogo 2005). Validity means that an instrument should only affect the outcome variable through its association with the endogenous variable. Theory and statistical tests can build a case for an instrument's strength and validity.

This project uses two instrumental variables: overall self-employment rates and self-employment rates for male citizens. The self-employment instruments come from World Bank development indicators and measure the percentage of a country's working age population and working age males that are self-employed in a given year. The instruments are strong: overall self-employment has a first stage F statistic of 124 while male self-employment has a first stage F statistic of 117, far above the convention of 10 and the more nuanced guidelines in Stock and Yogo (2005).

Theoretically, labor statistics are tied to repression in that working conditions affect a population's capacity for as well as interest in dissent. Compared to formally employed people, the self-employed often have more flexible schedules and will not fire themselves over political views and participation. Additionally, self-employment tends to be more unstable than formal employment, which may give some people more reason to dissent, potentially triggering repression. Therefore, theory and correlation suggest that self-employment rates are a strong instrument for repression: Self-employment rates highly correlate with repression and theory suggests why that should be the case.

Conflict research does not find any existing direct empirical connections between self-employment and international conflict and existing theories do not suggest any direct connection. Countries with high self-employment tend to have smaller industries, which could diminish a country's observed capabilities, but these are already accounted for in CINC scores. Even if this were the case, self-employment would affect conflict participation through another variable, not directly. Furthermore, it is unlikely that states take self-employment relative to direct employment into account

when deciding to attack: governments may consider strategic resources like iron and oil, trade routes and flows, GDP per capita, and fighting age population—again, variables partially measured by CINC scores—but it is hard to imagine a scenario in which self-employment rates factor directly into that calculus. We cannot directly test the exclusion restriction because we do not know the true model of conflict or its true errors (Sovey and Green 2011), but existing theories on conflict and self-employment do not suggest any direct association; see Schneider et al. (2010) for a comprehensive overview of factors that influence self-employment globally with no mention of international conflict and see Bennett and Stam III (2009) for a review of variables that influence international conflict with no allusion to self-employment or labor market structure.

Alternative Explanations

In addition to the instrumental variable analysis, we can evaluate the observable implications of the alternative explanations. Chiefly, if governments repress to prepare for conflict, we would expect to see a spike in repression right before conflict, which I do not find (see online appendix). Finally, I lag the repression variables in the empirical models in order to evaluate repression that is temporally prior to conflict, and I account for time since past conflict. While lags do not solve this problem alone, they do ensure that I am not measuring conflict and simultaneous repression. Together, the instruments, lagged repression variables, and the lack of support for the alternative explanation's empirical implication suggest that anticipated conflict

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is not driving the results.

Finally, many studies theorize repression as a signal of domestic instability or weakness (Fearon and Laitin 2003, Vreeland 2008, Young 2013). Bargaining theories imply that international and domestic opponents will try to extract concessions from a weakening regime (Ritter 2014). Additionally, governments frequently and publicly condemn other states' repression, threaten repressive states, and in extreme cases like genocide have signed treaties that require intervention to stop it (Hafner-Burton 2005, Simmons 2009). Following this line of reasoning, we should expect an increase in repression to increase the likelihood that the repressor is a target in international conflict. I assess this possibility with the empirical model; support for the repression as weakness hypothesis would be evidence against this paper's probing attack theory.

Results and Discussion

Repression has a significant effect on whether a country engages in international conflict the following year or not. A one point increase in measures of repression has a significant effect on crisis participation. The results hold for three measures of repression and in probit and instrumental variable probit models. Material capability and number of borders were consistently significant as well. Civil war had a positive influence but was not consistently significant. Many scholars argue that repression can lead to civil war and that extensive repression occurs during civil war (Fearon and Laitin 2003, Kalyvas 2006, Young 2013); thus, civil war variables could

be picking up effects that are actually driven by repression or repression and civil war measures could overlap. Regime type was significant in one model specification and none of Weeks's six authoritarian regime categories were consistently significant; this is also the case with lagged repression variables in Weeks's dyadic analyses (see online appendix). Together, these largely insignificant results suggest that repressive domestic strategies impact conflict participation more than the presence or absence of many domestic institutions.

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the descriptive statistics for the sample, which contains 166 distinct countries and 12,436 unique country-year observations. Countries engage in a MID in 2,537 of the country-years; in other words, 20% of the observations include a MID. Of those 2,537, 2,293 of them initiated the conflict and 268 are targets; countries join together in formal and temporary alliances to attack targets, leading to lopsided initiation numbers. This makes for a sample where 18% of the observations are of a MID initiator and but only 2% are targets. Simultaneously, 686 observations or 6% were during a civil war. Most countries during most years generally respected human rights: 60% of the sample with a PTS score received less than a 3 on the PTS scale. However, 25% scored between 3 and 4 and 15% scored 4 or higher for extreme repression. Governments with a lagged score of 4 or higher started 25% of all conflicts in the sample. In summary, the sample includes a large number of MIDs and a small number of years of extreme repression, after which a disproportional number of MIDs occur.

Table 2: Binary variable proportions

Variable		
MIDs	20% participants	80% nonparticipants
MID targets	2% targets	98% not targeted
MID initiators	18% initiated	81% did not initiate
Civil war	6% occurring	94% no civil war

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for key variables:

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Political Terror Scale (PTS)	2.45	1.11
Capabilities Index (CINC)	.006	.1
XPolity	.74	4.96
Self-employment Rate (% of employment)	29.69	20.21
Male Self-employment Rate	30.25	18.06

Table 4 presents estimates on MID targets from a model with full controls and XPolity, a model with full controls and Weeks's regime categories, and two instrumental variable models. Repression significantly decreases a country's chance of becoming a target in an international conflict, lending support to the theory's first implication over the alternative that repression increases targeting. In contrast to popular belief and the alternative hypothesis, extreme repression does not appear to lead to opportunistic targeting. In fact, an increase in repression drastically reduces the likelihood that other countries will target the repressor.

Table 4: Probit regressions of repression on MID targets

	Models			
	Probit 1	Probit 2	Instrument 1	Instrument 2
Repression	-.38***	-.29***	-.49**	-.48**
	(.08)	(.06)	(.16)	(.16)
Material capabilities	1.48	.74	2.82	2.66
	(1.9)	(1.55)	(2.06)	(2.0)
Borders	.05***	.06***	.06***	.05***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Civil war	.23	.22	.24	.23
	(.16)	(.17)	(.17)	(.17)
XPolity	.02		.02	.02
	(.01)		(.03)	(.03)
Junta		-.62		
		(.35)		
Strongman		.27		
		(.21)		
Machine		-.86**		
		(.31)		
Boss		-.08		
		(.22)		
Other Authoritarian		-.02		
		(.13)		
New Regime		-.64***		
		(.17)		

N = 3851 N = 3684 N = 1207 N = 1147
Carter & Signorino time adjustment coefficients suppressed.
Standard errors in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed.
*$p \leq .05$ **$p \leq .01$ ***$p \leq .001$

The summary statistics on targeting paint an even starker picture: from 1975 to 2000, states targeted only one country that scored a 5 for extreme repression the year

before: Uganda in 1977. Furthermore, Cuba, Angola and Zaire—three notoriously repressive regimes themselves—initiated the conflict. Seven other states scored a 4 or more and were targeted, while there were 120 other conflicts with less repressive targets in the same period.

Turning to the initiation results in Table 5, we see a statistically and substantively strong effect in the opposite direction, supporting the theory's second implication. The table shows that for every additional point on the repression scale, a country becomes significantly more likely to initiate a conflict the following year than a country that does not increase repression. The significance of the results depends somewhat on the choice of instrument: initiation is positively associated with past repression in three of four models, and is positively but insignificantly associated with past repression when male self-employment rates serve as an instrument for repression.

Table 5: Probit regressions of repression on MID initiation

	Models			
	Probit 1	Probit 2	Instrument 1	Instrument 2
Repression	.19***	.17***	.23*	.21
	(.03)	(.03)	(.12)	(.12)
Material capabilities	10.95***	7.98***	12.55***	12.61***
	(1.69)	(1.89)	(1.66)	(1.71)
Borders	.03**	.03**	.02	.03
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Civil war	.14	.05	-.02	-.01
	(.09)	(.08)	(.2)	(.20)
XPolity	.00		.00	-.01
	(.01)		(.03)	(.02)
Junta		-.01		
		(.15)		
Strongman		-.1		
		(.11)		
Machine		-.23		
		(.12)		
Boss		-.16		
		(.15)		
Other Authoritarian		-.05		
		(.19)		
New Regime		-.07		
		(.08)		

N = 3851 N = 3684 N = 1207 N = 1147
Carter & Signorino time adjustment coefficients suppressed.
Standard errors in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed.
*$p \leq .05$ **$p \leq .01$ ***$p \leq .001$

From 1975 to 2000, 28 countries scored a 5 and then initiated a conflict in the following year, often more than once, for a total of 69 conflicts initiated after

extreme repression. This result presents strong evidence for the theory's implication that repression makes conflict initiation relatively more attractive.

The predicted probabilities of conflict participation visualize the effect of repression on MID target and initiation patterns. As the first graph in Figure 1 illustrates, states with no repression have roughly a 7% chance of becoming conflict targets in a given year. Holding all other variables constant at their means, that country's chance of becoming a target approaches zero as it nears the top of the PTS scale.

Figure 1: Predicted Probability of MID Targeting and Initiation
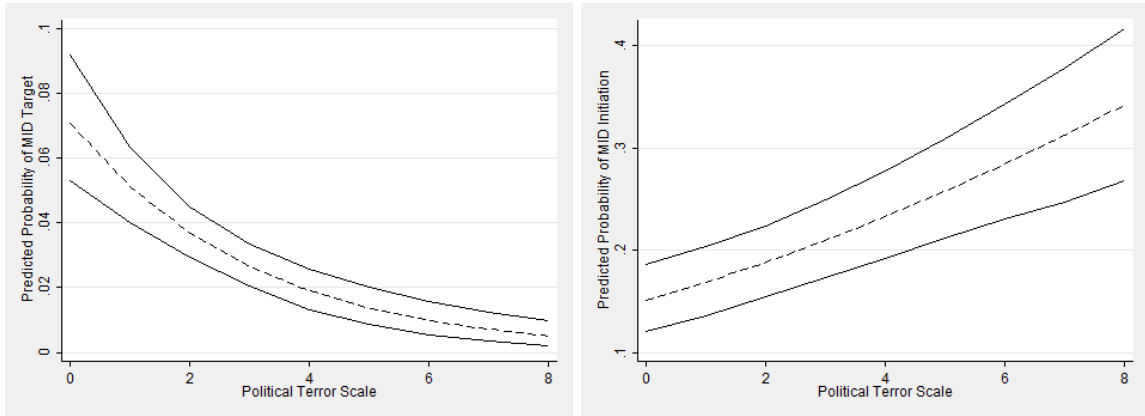
The predicted probabilities of conflict initiation in the second graph display similarly dramatic effects. A state with no repression in a given year has about a 15% chance of starting a conflict the following year. However, if we hold all other variables constant and move that hypothetical state to the other end of the PTS scale, it has about a 35% chance of starting a conflict. In other words, moving from one end of the PTS scale to the other could more than double the likelihood that a

state initiates a conflict—even when we hold observed capabilities, borders, civil war participation, and regime type constant. Instead of the initiation and target effects washing out, the increase in initiation and decrease in targeting combine to produce a net increase in international conflict participation, though it is not significant in the IV probit models (see online appendix).

To summarize, the analyses suggest that the previous year's repression has a substantive and statistically significant relationship with international conflict the next year. Regime type does not have a significant effect on this behavior. States that increase repression now are more likely to engage in international conflict next year, and they are especially more likely to initiate international conflict. At the same time, states that repress today are much less likely to become targets in international conflicts tomorrow. A quick look at key cases supports these trends: North Korea initiated conflicts nearly every year between 1976 and 2000 but was a target of none. Eritrea, probably the most repressive country without nuclear capabilities, has initiated over 20 crises since independence in 1993. The only time Eritrea became a target, the initiator was another repressor, Ethiopia.

Robustness

The models presented here are the main models with the most theoretically appropriate measures. The analyses were performed adding control variables in one at a time, with and without errors clustered by country, and with different lags and time controls. The results are robust to different model specifications; the significance and magnitude barely change as controls are added or subtracted. This is also the case

when the U.S., Russia, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea are dropped from the sample. Additionally, as Table 6 demonstrates, the results are generally robust to alternative measures of repression, such the CIRI index and Fariss's latent repression measure.

Table 6: Probit regressions with alternative measures of repression

	Targets		Initiators	
	Probit 1	Probit 2	Probit 1	Probit 2
Repression: CIRI score	-.15***		.08***	
	(.03)		(.01)	
Repression: Latent measure		.22***		.18***
		(.04)		(.03)
Material capabilities	3.07	4.26***	10.35***	9.20***
	(2.05)	(1.19)	(1.89)	(1.84)
Borders	.04**	.04**	.03**	.04***
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
Civil war	.07	.20	.12	.17
	(.16)	(.13)	(.09)	(.09)
XPolity	-.01	-.01	.00	.01
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)
	N = 3095	N = 6702	N = 3095	N = 6702

Carter & Signorino time adjustment coefficients suppressed.
Standard errors in parentheses. All tests are two-tailed.
*$p \leq .05$ **$p \leq .01$ ***$p \leq .001$

The online appendix contains additional tables with more extensive robustness checks and alternative measures for other variables, including the UCDP civil conflict data, two measures of job insecurity, ICB crises, and change in repression score. The results from the multiply imputed dataset are also similar to the results presented here.

Conclusion and Implications

Repression appears to systematically change later international conflict participation. The statistical results demonstrate that past repression has a strong, robust, and significant relationship with later international conflict. In particular, repressive countries are much more likely to initiate conflicts but dramatically less likely to become conflict targets. I argue that repression may lead to international conflict where it contains domestic dissent, prevents domestic actors from removing poorly performing leaders, and erodes elites' ability to make credible statements in negotiations with international opponents. When repression establishes these conditions, repression lowers the costs of military mobilization, which increases a regime's interest in initiating international conflicts while making the repressor a less attractive target.

The theory and the statistical results paint a pessimistic picture. Leaders repress to contain dissent domestically and stay in power. However, doing so makes peaceful negotiations less informative and initiating a conflict easier. States that increase repression seem to successfully deter attacks from other countries while increasing conflict internationally by initiating disputes more frequently than other states. The case of Eritrea demonstrates this process: President Afwerki has remained in power for decades by brutally repressing citizens and, as the regime has employed more violence against its own populace, it has initiated more conflicts with its neighbors (Connell 2011).

The study leaves several interesting questions unanswered, in large part due to a lack of fine-grained data on repression and international conflict. Available data

cannot directly assess the theoretical mechanisms proposed here; to thoroughly do so, we would need monthly, weekly, or daily data on aspects of military mobilization like number and placement of troops, defense appropriations, and weapons deployment. Future research could gather historical, case, or interview data on what government observers think of potential targets' repression and if they see it as a signal related to mobilization costs could also assess the theoretical mechanisms. Likewise, comparable, global survey data on citizens' support for conflicts as well as protest data could help assess whether repression reduces mobilization costs, as would finer grained monthly, weekly, or daily data on repression that breaks strategies out by type. Additionally, this theory explains and uses data on visible repression. While some repression is intentionally very public, human rights observers note that governments keep some repression carefully hidden. Why and when do states want domestic and international audiences to know about violent acts or not? Finally, future research could disaggregate repression into specific practices, including nonlethal forms of repression, to assess which practices have the most pronounced effects on citizens, leaders, and opposing states.

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