

Undermining Resistance: Mobilization, Repression, and the Enforcement of Political Order

This study examines attempts by authorities to undermine overt collective challenges, such as protests, riots, or armed attacks, by targeting activities that precede and/or support such behavior. After providing a theory of how repression and resistance develop, the study analyzes unique data drawn from the confidential records of the Guatemalan National Police to assess the use of repression during the years between 1975 and 1985. Empirical tests demonstrate that 1) government forces anticipate challenger development by identifying the mobilization activities nascent challengers rely on to initiate and sustain overt collective challenges; and 2) that the use of repression designed to undermine such efforts is specifically targeted against radical (i.e., highly transformative) claims making. Implications are drawn for how we understand and study political order and conflict.

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How do governments enforce political order? Prevailing views correspond to a relatively simple sequence of events. Episodically, dissidents are able to overcome the internal barriers to collective action and engage in overt collective challenges, such as protests, strikes, riots, or armed attacks (Beyerlein and Hipp 2006; Gates 2002; McAdam 1986; McAdam et al. 2001; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow 1994). To protect political order, governments respond to overt collective challenges with repression (Carey 2010; Davenport 1995; 1996; 2007; 2010; Earl et al. 2003; Moore 2000; Pion-Berlin 1988; Poe and Tate 1994; Poe et al. 1999; Valentino et al. 2004).¹ Contestation then ensues as governments and challengers engage in open conflict (Cunningham et al. 2009; Davenport forthcoming; Kalyvas 2006; Moore 1998; Pierskalla 2010; Ritter 2014).

Although useful in many ways, the view adopted above is limited. For example, while it is often suggested that a key reason challenges are not observed in a particular situation is because expectations of repression prevent dissidents from organizing (e.g., Conrad and Ritter 2012; Lacina 2014; Pierskalla 2010), existing theory provides few details on how governments might anticipate the development of overt collective challenges or how they attempt to undermine this behavior (e.g., Danneman and Ritter 2014; Herreros and Criado 2009; Nordas and Davenport 2013). Understanding how governments anticipate and/or undermine overt collective challenges is important because if authorities attempt to eliminate threats without exclusively relying upon repressive responses to overt activity, then models that fail to identify relevant state action have neglected an important channel through which governments enforce political

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

order. Indeed, if government forces repress individuals who are hoping to challenge the regime and if they succeed at incapacitating the dissident's organization, this form of "preemptive" repression would provide a novel mechanism for restraining threats. Under this circumstance, explanations for challenger emergence will have to address preemptive repression, while explanations for civil conflict will have to be amended to account for the selection of surviving movements into subsequent conflagrations.

The current study provides insight into why repression is applied in anticipation of and in conjunction with overt collective challenges as well as when and where such repression can be expected. In addition to engaging with overt behavior, governments seek to subvert the most costly challenges by applying repression against mobilization (i.e., the formation and support of an opposition organization from which overt collective challenges can be initiated and sustained). Governments do not attempt to address all mobilization attempts, but focus their efforts on those mobilizing in support of highly transformative redistributions of political power. Upon observing "radical" mobilization, authorities repress to eliminate influential leaders, deplete organizational resources, and subvert overt challenges.

This study provides empirical evidence to support these claims by analyzing new data collected from the confidential records of the Guatemalan National Police. These records contain unprecedented details on the myriad of covert mobilization activities engaged in by challengers as well as the spectrum of repressive behavior employed by government forces. Analysis of the police data demonstrates that 1) government forces anticipate challenger development by identifying the mobilization activities nascent challengers rely on to initiate and sustain overt collective challenges; and 2) that the use

of repression designed to undermine such efforts is specifically targeted against radical claims making.

While exploring these issues, the investigation demonstrates how misconceptions regarding the dynamics of political repression manifest themselves empirically as well as theoretically. By comparing results generated from the Guatemalan National Police records against data collected from international and Guatemalan newspapers, the analysis reveals how biases in newspaper data predispose analysts to the conclusion that governments only employ repression in response to overt collective challenges, while missing repression directed against more covert mobilization activities. The full range of repressive activity and useful insights into its application will only be revealed when new and better data are brought to bear.

The article proceeds as follows: First, I review the academic literature on political order and conflict. Second, a model of repressive action is presented that distinguishes repression targeting mobilization from repression directed against overt collective challenges. I then present the data, research design, and analysis. Finally, in the conclusion, I discuss the implications of the study for understanding political order and conflict.

Defending Political Order

Over the past few decades, research on political repression and human rights violations, social movements, and civil war has sought to explain how governments enforce political order. Each approach has had a somewhat different but generally overlapping understanding of the topic.

For instance, one body of work has emerged to focus on government coercion, such as political imprisonment, torture, disappearances, and mass killing (e.g., Carey 2006; 2010; Conrad and Moore 2010; Davenport 1995; 2007; Gartner and Regan 1996; Moore 2000; Pierskalla 2010; Poe and Tate 1994; Regan and Henderson 2002; Shellman 2006; Tilly 1978; Valentino et al. 2004). Often referred to as the “threat-response theory” (Earl et al. 2003), the dominant model expects governments to employ higher levels of repression in response to an increase in observed dissident threats.² The theory has as its underlying foundation a conceptualization of policymaking in which governments respond to overt collective challenges to the regime by engaging in repressive behavior to control or eliminate challengers (e.g., Davenport 1995; Earl et al. 2003; Pion-Berlin 1989; Poe and Tate 1994; Poe et al. 1999). Recent studies are beginning to push in the direction of a more forward-looking model, but such work remains limited in part because the micro-foundational mechanisms linking prospective decision-making to the repression of specific events or individuals have yet to be well articulated (e.g., Danneman and Ritter 2014; Herreros and Criado 2009; Moore 1995; Nordas and Davenport 2013; Pierskalla 2010; Walter 2006).

At the same time, a rich literature on social movements has focused directly on the emergence of challenges to political order. Since Olson’s (1965) seminal study, it has generally been assumed that the internal barriers to collective action are so great that nonparticipation can be taken as a default position, rather than a facet of the existing

² Despite early work pushing scholars towards definitional clarity (e.g., Davenport 1995), the concept of threat remains imprecisely defined in the literature (e.g., Carey 2006, 3; Earl et al. 2003, 586; Poe et al. 1999, 293). Most often scholars conceptualize threats to the state as a function of the scope (e.g., Earl et al. 2003, 583; Valentino et al. 2004, 386;) or form (e.g., Carey 2010, 171; Poe et al. 1999, 293; Valentino et al. 2004, 386) of overt collective challenges. Specific forms of overt collective challenges that have come to signify threats to the state include protests (Earl et al. 2003), riots (Carey 2010), terrorism (Carey 2010), civil war and insurgency (Poe et al. 1999; Valentino et al. 2004).

interactions between governments and challengers. As a result, studies of social movements have tended to focus on factors influencing the capacity of organizations to overcome their internal collective action problems, while overlooking the competition for resources that occurs between governments and challengers during mobilization (e.g., Beyerlein and Hipp 2006; Conrad and Ritter 2012; Klandermans 1984; McCarty and Zald 1976; Siegel 2009; Snow and Benford 1988). Where repression enters such research, causal explanations have centered on how unobservable expectations of repression hinder resolution to the collective action problem, rather than on any systematic and observable efforts authorities commit to anticipate and subvert the development of political challenges (e.g., Lacina 2014; Pierskalla 2010). And where scholars have examined the effects of repression on social movements empirically, research has not yet systematically addressed the effects of repressive behavior directed against activities other than overt collective challenges (e.g., Davenport et al. 2005; Daxencker and Hess 2012; Dugan and Chenoweth 2012; Moore 1998; Rasler 1996).

Among scholars studying the emergence of large-scale conflicts between governments and challengers (i.e., civil wars), opportunity-based arguments stress how the ability of insurgents to challenge the government results in part from the limited coercive capacity of weak states (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003; Gleditsch and Ruggeri 2010). But such work sees state repression as largely structurally determined and only briefly references the strategic interplay between nascent insurgents and the government.³ By treating repression as a structure, opportunity-based theories marginalize government

³ This is at least partially because theories of civil war have been constructed around bodies of evidence that negate potential challengers who would have emerged if not for the actions of the state (Lewis 2012).

strategies to restrain dissent operating within the state's structural constraints (McAdam et al. 2001, pp 43-45).

In sum, understandings of conflict could be improved with increased attention to government efforts to subvert the development of potential challenges. If governments anticipate and successfully undermine overt collective challenges without engaging this behavior directly, then existing theories will have to be revised in a number of important ways.⁴ First, prevailing models of political repression will have to be amended to recognize that government forecasts of future challenges are as important for inspiring repressive behavior as responses to ongoing threats. Second, theories of social movement mobilization will need to pay greater attention to understanding how movements struggle to outpace government attempts to undermine mobilization. Finally, rather than the dominant concern with structural variables theorized to influence challenger or state capacity, understandings of the emergence of large-scale conflict will need to pay greater attention to how the interaction of these two dynamic forces (repression and mobilization) impact prospects for conflict escalation. Should government forces successfully demobilize the opposition, an absence of overt collective challenges would occur not because movements could not organize internally, but because the government was able to outcompete challengers and reduce their capacity to engage in overt challenges. This will impact prospects for conflict escalation as well as the possibility for a change in political order.

⁴ It should be noted that establishing an empirical link between repression and radical mobilization does not prove the effectiveness of such repression. I return to this in the conclusion.

From Mobilization to Repression

This section presents an argument for how and why governments employ repression designed to subvert the development of overt collective challenges. The argument begins with the assumption that governments wish to stay in power. They extract some rents from being in office and allocate concessions and repression in order to manage threats and maximize their net resources. In choosing to apply concessions or repression, governments consider the costs of these policy instruments and their impacts on both ongoing and future challenges.⁵

Moving beyond extant theory, this paper argues that governments not only consider the presence of observable challenges (e.g., Davenport 1995; Earl et al. 2003; Valentino et al. 2004) or unobservable, latent probabilities of challenges (e.g., Danneman and Ritter 2014; Herreros and Criado 2009; Nordas and Davenport 2013), but aim to improve the specificity of their expectations by monitoring their citizenry to identify the observable indicators heralding the development of the most threatening overt collective challenges. Governments recognize that the outcome of repression targeting overt collective challenges is highly unpredictable (e.g., Davenport et al. 2005). At the same time, the repression of those not directly engaged in challenges is costly as it involves resource allocations, the possible sacrifice of human life, and potential political backlash. As a result, governments must balance the costs of repression designed to subvert challenger development against (1) the probability of a threat being realized into overt

⁵ The present study aims to understand decisions to repress. While the relative costs of concessions are theorized to influence repressive decision-making, a more expansive understanding of decisions to make concessions is beyond the scope of this research. For relevant work see Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2010), Moore (2000), Rasler (1996), Ritter (2013) and Shellman (2006).

collective challenges, and (2) the probable costs of dealing with those challenges should they materialize.

To improve their forecasts of the likelihood and costs of future overt collective challenges, governments must consider two factors. First, they focus on the behaviors of potential challengers, seeking to identify the most relevant actions signaling challenger development. Second, they attend to the demands challengers are likely to express should a challenge occur, seeking to identify the potential costs of conflict bargaining if overt collective challenges materialize. Below, I present a model of challenger development in order to specify the behaviors and demands inspiring repressive efforts to subvert challengers. Based on this model, I develop hypotheses specifying where and when such repression can be expected.

Mobilization, Repression and the Enforcement of Political Order

Political order is often conceptualized as a dyadic relationship between the powerful and the (potentially) compliant (e.g., Arendt 1970; Huntington 1968; Lukes 2005). However, it is perhaps better conceived as a triadic relationship between the powerful, the (potentially) compliant, and the (existent or non-existent) organized opposition. This is the case because opportunities for challenging the regime vary to the extent that there is, in fact, a viable alternative to compliance. In the absence of an organized opposition, many who would otherwise defy government authority find compliance to be in their self-interest. Resistance can take the form of foot dragging or other “weapons of the weak,” but without a viable alternative to the existing power

structure to align with, individuals often find open resistance personally impractical (Scott 1985; 1990).

At times, small bands of individuals are able to overcome such restraints and engage in “mobilization,” which describes the process of forming and supporting an organized alternative to the government through small, generally clandestine activities such as organizing meetings, articulating organizational objectives, distributing information, campaigning for funds, training members, and recruiting new participants (Gaventa 1982, pp 24-2; Tilly 1978, p 54). Distinct from overt collective challenges, which are outwardly targeted at political authorities, mobilization is designed to draw individuals and resources into an organization in order to sustain a platform from which overt collective challenges can be planned, communicated, and directed (Chong 1991; McCarthy and Zald 1977).

Mobilization is difficult and requires extensive contributions from a small number of individuals (Olson 1965). These organizers must be willing to overcome incentives to comply with the regime and act as first movers in a potential challenging organization (Oliver 1984). Such actions are demanding both because they require personal contributions to a highly uncertain effort and because early action leaves organizers vulnerable to identification by the state. But the contributions of core members are critical because organizations cannot inspire others to participate in overt collective challenges without first reaching the minimal threshold of mobilized resources necessary to express collective demands and coordinate collective behavior (Marwell and Oliver 1993).

From the core group of organizers and the resources they mobilize, overt collective action can spring up, be sustained, and potentially grow. Overt collective challenges have the potential to set in motion cascades of participation (Granovetter 1978). As a result, challenges have the capacity to escalate rapidly from seemingly insignificant degrees to levels that threaten the regime (Kuran 1989). However, cascades of participation cannot proceed unless organizers are able to mobilize sufficient resources to spark and sustain such behavior.

Governments recognize how significant mobilization is for inspiring and sustaining overt collective challenges and translate their beliefs about mobilization into expectations for future threats. Prior experience dealing with challengers along with evidence from neighboring states provides the background necessary to formulate expectations for the development of challenges to political order (e.g., Moore 1995; Danneman and Ritter 2014; Shellman 2006). Sophisticated surveillance apparatuses are established to monitor social behavior and detect movements toward overt collective challenges (e.g., Lewis 2012). Governments look to identify behaviors such as meetings, seminars, fundraising, and recruitment drives, which typically take place outside of the direct observation of the government and do not directly threaten its authority, but involve the coordination of individuals organizing in support of collective challenges.

Where mobilization is identified, it presents clear incentives for government forces to intervene with repression.⁶ Allowing such behavior to progress means accepting the possibility that overt collective challenges can be coordinated and sustained, which means risking open contestation with challengers. Upon observing mobilization,

⁶ To be clear, this conceptualization is concerned with repression directed at particular groups attempting to mobilize, rather than blanket restrictions on civil liberties.

governments can direct repression against organizers in an effort to drain the mobilizing organizations of critical individuals and deplete the resources available to inspire and sustain overt collective challenges.

Hypothesis 1: *Mobilization is expected to be related to increased political repression.*

In deciding to repress mobilization, governments must not only consider the probability that overt collective challenges develop, but also weigh the costs of coercion against the challenges' predicted costs. Repression of this sort is costly and government forces cannot reasonably be assumed to have the capacity to repress all forms of mobilization. Yet at the same time, not all forms of mobilization are equally threatening and worthy of government attention.

The anticipated demands of potential challengers are critical in this regard, as challenger demands directly impact the probability of settlement, and thus the expected costs of conflict. Of greatest concern for political authorities are those mobilizing in support of "radical" transformations in political power, such as overthrowing existing elites or revolutionizing the rules governing the polity (Gamson 1975; Gartner and Regan 1996; Tilly 1978). If challenges are expected to emerge, but dissidents are expected to make demands that fall short of radical redistributions of power, governments have the opportunity to negotiate with challengers and retain power at minimal costs.⁷ Conflict may still emerge as each side faces asymmetric information on their opponent's

⁷ Decisions to fight or negotiate with non-radical challengers are expected to be made based on the scope of the realized overt collective challenges (e.g., DeNardo 1985). In either case, the expectation is that conflict should be resolved quicker and at substantially less costs for the government than conflict over radical demands.

capacities or resolve. However, as long as there exists at least one agreement that both parties prefer to fighting, the two groups will eventually converge on a settlement (Walter 2009).

But if challengers are expected to demand radical transformations in power, conflict bargaining can be expected to center on issues considered indivisible by governments and challengers. Challengers are likely to demand that political authorities step down as a necessary condition to any settlement, which puts the government in an all-or-nothing position to defend its status.⁸ In this case, there are no agreeable settlements that are mutually preferable to conflict and the government must fight until it is ousted or until it achieves a decisive military victory. As a consequence, conflicts over radical demands tend to be longer, more costly, and more difficult to resolve (Thomas 2012; Wood 2005; Wucherpennig et al. 2012).

Because mobilization supporting radical ideals has the potential to spark and sustain more protracted and costly overt collective challenges, government forces weigh the utility of repressing this form of mobilization differently from repressing non-radical mobilization. In this case, governments attempt to suppress the development of the most costly challenges by targeting radical mobilization with repression.

Hypothesis 2a: *Increases in political repression are expected to take place when mobilizers support radical redistributions of political power.*

Hypothesis 2b: *Increases in political repression are not expected to take place when mobilizers support less radical demands.*

⁸ Toft (2003) develops a related argument regarding demands for dividing the state's territorial integrity.

Data

Identifying the repression of mobilization requires data that track the coercive actions of government forces as well as the covert and overt activities of dissidents. To acquire such information, I created an events database using records found in a unique archive of confidential police documents, the *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* (AHPN), which was produced by the Guatemalan National Police between 1975 and 1985 (Morales Alvarado 2009; Weld 2014). During most of the 20th century, the Guatemalan National Police employed a central depository to store the records produced by the inner workings of their bureaucracy (e.g., memos passed up and down the chain of command, arrest records, log files summarizing daily activity, and investigative reports produced by local divisions or other specialized units). Following the signing of the peace accord and the disbanding of the national police in 1996, this warehouse and the millions of documents it contains were abandoned. After this time, the documents lingered on the outskirts of Guatemala City for approximately ten years before being discovered (Doyle 2007; Smith 2009). Following a lengthy legal struggle, the decision was made to clean and index the documents into the newly formed *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional*. The digitization and archiving process has recently been completed, and this study is one of the first to have been granted access to the Archive's full 1975-1985 collection.

Records at the AHPN were archived following the administrative structure of the National Police, with each file indexed according to the office that received that particular memo or report. The National Police had jurisdiction over the entire country and were divided into ten *cuerpos* (divisions) based on geographic location. Three

additional divisions handled administrative tasks, major criminal investigations, and joint operations with the military, respectively. The Director General oversaw the entire force.

A purposefully selected subset of the Archive's collection was coded as an events database of state and dissident actions. The subset is composed of the entire selection of records from two offices, the Director General of the Police and the Commissioner for Coordinating Joint Operations with the Military.⁹ The resulting dataset was constructed by reading all 300,000+ records sent to the two offices and preserved in the AHPN. All forms of political activity were coded as discrete events.¹⁰ In total, the project coded more than seven thousand acts of state and dissident behavior.¹¹

Because the AHPN records were constructed for bureaucratic performance rather than for public dissemination and were released without oversight by the agency responsible for producing the documents, the *Archivo* contains one of the most comprehensive and unbiased collections of information on the inner workings of the state's repressive apparatus identified to date.¹² Still, data taken from police records are not without problems, and it is important to recognize that all sources of conflict data are likely to present incomplete and potentially biased representations of political events.¹³ With data from the police, one needs to be conscious of parochial incentives that could lead to biased reporting for professional gains. For example, with reference to the

⁹ A pilot study that employed random sampling from the archive's full collection identified that more than 95% of the relevant documents were contained within these two offices. Greater detail on the pilot study and the coding protocol can be found in the Supplemental Information.

¹⁰ Inter-coder reliability checks consistently demonstrated reliability rates above 85%.

¹¹ The codebook can be found in the Supplemental Information accompanying this project.

¹² U.S. readers might want to imagine a successful Freedom of Information Act request for which the FBI was required to turn over all of its documents, unredacted, for a 10-year period.

¹³ As an example, Oliver and Maney (2000) show how, in Madison, Wisconsin, the events covered by the newspapers but not identified by police records tended to be nondisruptive and to occur in private homes. This does not appear to be true for Guatemala, where the police records contain significantly more information on nondisruptive clandestine gatherings than the newspapers.

reporting of repression, given the Carter administration's emphasis on human rights, it is clear that the regime was consciously trying to improve its international human rights reputation by concealing evidence of massacres (Doyle 1999). While the records were only accessible to those within upper levels of the police, it is still possible that they contain some bias against the reporting of atrocities. Moderating the scope of repression could bias the study against identifying a relationship between mobilization and repression.

However, with regard to the reporting of challenger behavior, the direction of bias is less clear. Organizations might develop an interest in overestimating the threat of the movement in order to increase their budget (Stanley 1996). Alternatively, they might develop an interest in downplaying movement behavior to demonstrate professional success (Reiner 2010). What is evident is that because the Guatemalan government had significantly more resources than did news organizations and because it had extensive networks designed to identify political activities, the AHPN provides better detail on a far larger spectrum of political activity than other sources of information on the Guatemala conflict.

Indeed, because they contain a more extensive list of political events, government records have been used widely to help identify the form and extent of bias in newspaper coverage (e.g., Barranco and Wisler 1999; McCarthy, et al. 2008; McCarthy, et al. 1996; Oliver and Myers 1999; Weidmann forthcoming). With regard to the present topic of study, one of the factors contributing to the empirical validation of "threat-response" theories of political repression may be that employing traditional newspaper-based data to study the topic has biased existing understandings of when political repression is

applied. While part of the difficulty in studying the repression of radical mobilization has been conceptual—scholars studying political order have focused their theories on the most overt forms of behavior—there are corresponding empirical challenges, as these overt forms of behavior are also the activities most commonly identified in events databases. If we are more aware of larger acts of challenger activity, then when it comes time to articulate where and when states repress, larger and more intense incidents of overt collective challenges will be more easily conceptualized as catalysts (e.g., Danzger 1975; Drakos and Gofas 2006; Myers and Caniglia 2004). And when newspaper data are used to evaluate theoretical claims, the omission of smaller, nonviolent events from events databases can result in spurious correlations consistent with such theories (e.g., Barranco and Wisler 1999; Davenport and Ball 2002; Earl et al. 2004; Snyder and Kelly 1977). At the same time, description biases in newspaper coverage of contentious politics can lead to the assumption that governments respond to “public disturbances” only in self-defense (e.g., Davenport 2010; Smith et al. 2001).

To empirically evaluate how the data sources employed in the analysis of political order and conflict influence understandings of state repression, this study replicates its analysis on a separate database of political activities reported in Guatemalan and international newspapers. The expectation is that the relationship between mobilization and repression will be apparent in the analysis of the AHPN data, but we are not likely to observe this relationship using data gathered from newspapers. The newspaper data for this replication were compiled from several sources. The first is a database of contentious events reported in the Guatemalan press, which was generated by Brocket (2005) for a

study on repression and dissent in Central America.¹⁴ Brocket's data collection effort involved hand coding the largest local and national daily newspapers in Guatemala using a system for measuring government and dissident behavior that is consistent with the protocol used at the AHPN. I then supplemented Brocket's data with my own coding of political activity in Guatemala reported in the *New York Times* as well as three Guatemalan newspapers, *Prensa Libre*, *El Diario*, and *La Hora*, using the same coding system as applied at the AHPN. When combined, the newspaper dataset identifies more than two thousand incidents of political activity.¹⁵

Repression and Dissent in Guatemala, 1975-1985

The period under investigation was an extremely turbulent time in Guatemalan history. Conflict occurred between a variety of Leftist social movement organizations (including unions, peasant cooperatives, land rights groups Catholic activists, students, urban revolutionaries, and Marxist insurgents) and a fractured military government aligned with the landowning and capitalist classes (Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999; Ball et al. 1999; Brocket 2005; Carmack 1992; Garrard-Burnett 2011; Manz 2004; Schirmer 1998; Stoll 1993).

Guatemala's security forces were both highly professional and relatively unconstrained in their use of coercion (Schirmer 1998). Over the course of the 10 years under review, the Guatemalan government was responsible for killing more than 100,000 of its citizens (Ball et al. 1999). Yet at the same time, there were periods of peace, both in

¹⁴ Brocket coded *El Imparcial* as well as clippings from the *Inforpress Centro America* news aggregations service.

¹⁵ An extensive discussion of how media bias pertains to the case of Guatemala can be found in the Supplemental Appendix along with a more extensive comparison of the AHPN and newspaper data.

the time leading up to and away from violence and in locations unaffected by the fighting (Gulden 2002; Stoll 1993). While any single country study faces difficulties of generalizability, looking at Guatemala provides a unique laboratory for examining an extremely broad spectrum of dissident behavior and related repression, while holding relatively constant other important factors thought to influence these behaviors. Future work will be necessary to examine the dynamics of mobilization and repression in more stable contexts.

Political conflict emerged at different points in time and with varying intensity depending on where in the country one was located, and this variation is captured by the AHPN data. In some departments, such as Guatemala City or Escuintla, the AHPN records identify conflict behavior during the first few months under review. On the other end of the spectrum lie El Petén and Zacapa, two departments that appear to have been spared from the worst forms of violence. Once initiated, mobilization, overt collective challenges, and repression each ebbed and flowed in each department as challengers attempted to press claims against authorities and the government engaged in coercion to suppress such efforts (Brocket 2005; Stoll 1993).

Prior to 1977, a date often used to mark the onset of the civil war (e.g., Brocket 2005), mobilization and sporadic protests were organized by student organizations and labor unions operating in the capital. Acts of terror waged by urban revolutionaries and insurgent assassinations of large landowners have also been documented during this period (Brocket 2005; Garrard-Burnett 2011; Stoll 1993), while in the highlands, nascent insurgent organizations were engaged in their initial mobilization attempts (Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999). On the side of the government, surveillance of social activity, arrests

of suspected dissident leaders without charge, killings, disappearances and the application of torture all appear to have been common (Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999; Ball et al. 1999; Carmack 1992; CEH 1999; Falla 1994; Manz 2005; Perera 1993; Schirmer 1998).

As the violence moved into the rural highlands (beginning in the late 1970s), the available indicators document a sharp increase in repression (Ball et al. 1999; CEH 1999). Human rights organizations identify how rampant abuse occurred during this period; tens of thousands were killed and many more displaced from their homes (Archdiocese of Guatemala 1999; Ball et al. 1999; CEH 1999; Sanford 2004). The strong overlap between identified political conflict and racial segregation led to charges of acts of genocide levied against the government (CEH 1999).

As government forces reestablished control throughout the country, estimates of insurgent mobilization subsequently dropped rapidly, from a high of more than 3,000 troops in 1982 to fewer than 300 in 1984 (CIA estimates from Doyle 1999). Measures of repression similarly decreased steadily in 1983 and 1984 (Ball et al. 1999). With the imposition of constitutional rule in 1985, it appears that most of the violence had ended (Schirmer 1998).

Operationalization

For the purposes of this study, *mobilization* is operationalized as small, generally clandestine efforts to influence individuals affiliated or unaffiliated with a social movement to participate in collective action. Examples include the distribution of information, organized training programs, soliciting for funds, recruitment efforts, and organizational meetings. Mobilization is distinct from *Overt Collective Challenges*,

which are operationalized as public, outwardly focused demonstrations of organizational strength targeted at political authorities. Examples include strikes, demonstrations, marches, roadblocks, targeted killings, arson, kidnapping, and the taking of hostages.¹⁶

Mobilization was further divided into two subtypes based on the claims expressed by the organizations responsible for coordinating these activities. *Radical mobilization* is operationalized as those activities carried out in support of expressed demands for overthrowing or displacing the political system.¹⁷ Practically, this list includes all mobilization activities engaged in to support the overthrow of the government and/or division of the state's territorial integrity. Examples include radical student and labor organizations, separatist groups, and Marxist insurgent organizations.¹⁸ *Non-radical mobilization* is operationalized as those events carried out in support of demands that do not directly call for overthrowing the political system and/or a division of the state's territorial integrity. Examples of non-radical mobilization include mobilization to support ideals and demands such as community development, land rights, and freedom from persecution.

Empirically, there are nearly ten times as many acts of mobilization captured in the AHPN data (751 events) compared to data collected from the news media (88 events). Of these, roughly 80% of the mobilization events recorded in the AHPN data are categorized as pursuant of radical goals, which is slightly higher than the comparable figure for the newspaper data. This descriptive evidence is consistent with arguments that

¹⁶ Overt collective challenges were not divided based on claims because the expectation in the literature is that all forms of overt challenges spark an increase in repression (see the above discussion on the "law of coercive response").

¹⁷ More accurately, given the data, these are mobilization activities that the government associated with support for radical ideals.

¹⁸ Though the coding schema allowed for this form of activity, no examples of separatist mobilization were identified in the AHPN data.

(1) government strategies are far more concerned with mobilization attempts than is often acknowledged, and (2) governments are more likely to devote attention to mobilization when such activity pursues radical demands.

Finally, *Political Repression* is operationalized as the politically motivated use of force committed by representatives of the state against individuals under their political jurisdiction. Consistent with the articulation expressed in the theoretical arguments, this operationalization encapsulates both overt forms of repression (e.g., death threats, torture, disappearances, shootings, raids, protest policing and politically motivated arrests) as well as more covert activities (such as surveillance, wiretapping, informing other officers, initiating an investigation, and drafting security plans). The AHPN data document more than 2,500 repressive actions committed during this time period, while the news material includes reports on less than a quarter of that figure.

For the analysis, both the AHPN data and the newspaper-data event catalogs were transformed into a cross-sectional time-series of department-months. For each of Guatemala's 22 departments, the time-series identifies monthly event counts of each specific form of activity (as reported in the two datasets) between January 1975 and December 1985.¹⁹

Analysis

In line with the arguments above, it is expected that repression is related to challenger mobilization and that increased repression can be expected to follow mobilization in support of radical ideals. To evaluate these contentions, the analysis

¹⁹ Departments are the third smallest administrative units in Guatemala and are approximately the size of U.S. counties.

identifies factors related to the use of political repression using a series of econometric analyses.

The methods most commonly employed to identify the causes of political repression are cross-sectional time-series models examining correlations between lagged measures of dissent and subsequent levels of repressive activity (e.g., Davenport 1995; 2007; Poe and Tate 1994). A similar method is employed here. The functional form is specified as negative binomial due to the nature of the dependent variables, which are count data that display over dispersion (Winkelman 2008).

As designed, the empirical analysis first investigates the relationship between all forms of mobilization and political repression before examining how the repression of mobilization might be conditional on the radical or non-radical ideals around which groups are mobilizing. The aim here is to identify whether mobilization is having an independent effect on decisions to engage in political repression, while controlling for the ebb and flow of overt collective challenges. The models also include a number of additional controls out of concern that they might influence both mobilization and ensuing repression. These controls can be divided roughly into two categories. The first includes structural characteristics that are conceptualized as relatively static or slow moving conditions that influence the underlying expectations for mobilization and repression. Included in this category are a department's *Literacy Rate*, *Indigenous Population Rate*, *Population Size*, and *Population Density*, all calculated using census measures from 1973. Also included in this category are measures of *Democracy*, measured annually using the Coppedge et al. (2008) standardized inclusion metric.²⁰

²⁰ When compared to many alternative democracy metrics, the inclusion measure is both (a) less likely to capture civil liberties restrictions (see Coppedge et al. 2008) and (b) less sensitive to biases resulting from

Literacy Rates are taken as an indicator of the capacity of the state in a given territory, which is likely to influence both decisions to mobilize against the government and the government's use of repression (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003). *Indigenous Population Rates* are included to control for the strong ethnic divisions that categorized the Guatemalan conflict (e.g., Perera 1993). *Population Size* is included as this variable can be expected to influence the scale of dissident and government activities (e.g., Raleigh and Hegre 2009).²¹ *Population Density* is provided as an indicator of the degree of urbanization in a territory, and thus proxies the department's relative level of economic development (e.g., Collier and Hoeffer 2002).²² Finally, *Democracy* provides an indicator of the underlying regime structure, which can provide an indicator for national-level political opportunities as well as constraints on repressive behavior (e.g., Davenport 2007). This variable is measured annually and does not vary across departments.

A second category of controls is included to capture important behavioral factors likely to impact decisions to mobilize against the government or commit repression. The first is a measure of *Prior Repression*, which is recorded as the number of repressive actions occurring in a department during the previous month. The second behavioral control is a *Spatial Lag of Repression*, which is measured as the number of repressive actions occurring in adjacent departments (weighted by the number of adjacent departments). This measure is also lagged one period and is included to control for the spatial clustering of repressive behavior (e.g., Danneman and Ritter 2014). An additional

conflict and missing data (see Vreeland 2008). Within the sample, the variable ranges from a minimum of -2.23 to a maximum of 0.89.

²¹ Measures of *Population Density* and *Population Size* are logged to normalize their values.

²² The analyses were also replicated using ex-post measures of "Chronic Undernutrition Rates" taken from the UN's (2010) World Food Program Report. The two measures were correlated at the .01 level, and replication with the UN data produced substantively identical results.

measures is included to capture variation in the overall intensity of violence in the department. The variable, *Department Violence*, is a dummy variable measuring whether 10 or more individuals were killed by any force (or combination of forces) in a department during the previous month.²³ Finally, the models include a control for *Campaign Activity*, which provides a more disaggregated measure of democratic participation. *Campaign Activity* is measured as an event count of public actions taken by representatives of political parties. It is lagged one month for each department.

In selecting the control variables, effort was made to identify observable confounding factors that could theoretically bias the analysis. It is also important to control for those confounding factors that are potentially unobservable. The approach adopted to account for such factors is to replicate the analyses using a series of unconditional Fixed Effects (FE) models (Allison and Waterman 2002; Angrist and Pischke 2009). One set of these models includes departmental FE dummy variables to account for any unobserved department-specific factors that could influence observations of both mobilization and repression. A second set of models includes monthly FE dummies to account for any temporal trends common both to repression and dissent.

The results of the first set of analyses are displayed in Table I. Models 1-3 present the results of analyses estimating the effects of all forms of mobilization on repression. Models 4-6 replicate this analysis, except that they divide mobilization activities into radical and non-radical subtypes as specified above. To aid in interpretation, the table presents the incident rate ratio (IRR) for each coefficient along with the standard error and level of statistical significance. An IRR above one represents a percentage increase in

²³ The results proved robust to a variety of different cut points as well as to the use of casualty counts.

predicted counts of repression, while an IRR below one indicates a percentage decline in repression.

Table I About Here

Looking at the control variables' IRRs and levels of statistical significance, the results are largely consistent with existing work. Most notably, overt collective challenges are strongly and positively associated with increased repression. The analysis thus supports the conventional argument that governments respond to ongoing challenges by increasing repression. Also consistent with existing work, repression is strongly and positively associated with prior repressive behavior, and negatively and significantly related to the existence of democratic institutions.

What is uniquely revealed through the analysis is the relationship between mobilization and repression. Results disclose that government forces systematically increase repression as a function of the covert mobilization activities that inspire and sustain overt behavior. This evidence does not contradict the conventional wisdom that overt behavioral threats prompt repression, but it reveals that the conventional understanding of the topic only captures part of the story, missing the less-overt aspects of contention. A single mobilizing activity is predicted in Model 1 to increase the amount of repression in the department during the next month by around 15%. And a standard deviation increase in mobilization is predicted to result in an average of approximately 1.5 additional acts of repression. This effect is comparable to the substantive impact of overt collective challenges, in which a standard deviation increase in challenges increases

the expected number of repressive actions by just over 1.5 events. This suggests that governments do not simply respond to overt collective challenges, but that they also attempt to anticipate and undermine challengers by identifying and repressing the mobilization activities that inspire and sustain overt behavior.

But not all forms of mobilization are robustly related to repression. As expected, mobilization supporting radical redistributions of political power is related to positive and statistically significant increases in repressive activity. A single radical mobilization event is predicted to increase repression by 16% in Model 4. The estimated effect is substantial when one considers that, in sites radical mobilization occurred, an average of three radical mobilization events were observed. And where a department experienced three instances of radical mobilization in a month, it is predicted to be associated with, on average, one additional act of repression.²⁴

Non-radical mobilization, by contrast, is not significantly related to repression in any of the specifications. In other words, government forces do not always respond to mobilization with repression. Instead, increases in repression are specifically related to the ideals around which organizers are mobilizing. This suggests that government forces aim to anticipate and/or suppress the most costly challenges by increasing repression where mobilization supports of radical transformations in political power.

Robustness Checks

An extensive set of robustness checks can be found in the Supplementary Appendix.

²⁴ The Supplemental Appendix provides additional details on these and other estimates of the substantive effects of radical mobilization.

- A set of robustness checks analyzes the relationship between mobilization and subcategories of overt and covert forms of political repression. Additional tests also probe the sensitivity of the analysis to a division of overt collective challenges into radical and non-radical subcategories.
- Another set of checks delves into the temporal dynamics at operating within the analysis. First, contemporaneous overt collective challenges are included as a control along with lagged overt collective challenges. Second, the main results are replicated while excluding all department-months jointly experiencing mobilization and overt collective challenges. Finally, the analysis is limited to “pre-conflict” periods preceding the first instance of overt collective challenges observed in each department.
- Another set of tests investigates alternative strategies for estimating conditional and hybrid fixed-effects specifications within a negative binomial framework.
- A fourth set of robustness checks utilizes a series of Instrumental Variables models to examine the effect of exogenous variation in mobilization on repression. These analyses exploit the time series dynamics operating within the data to instrument seemingly exogenous variation in different forms of mobilization.
- Finally, the analysis checks the robustness of the findings to a model in which governments are forward looking in their application of repression. This replication employs a set of dynamic time-series vector-error corrected (VEC) models.

Across all of the specifications, radical mobilization proves significantly and positively related to increased repression. Combined, the results of these tests provide strong evidence affirming the relationship between increased repression and mobilization supporting radical ideals.

Replication with Newspaper Data

In addition to the theoretical limits recognized in the literature, there are issues related to the data employed in the empirical analysis of the topic that may have contributed to the dominance of “threat-response” theories of political repression within previous work. To explore this idea, Table II replicates the analysis from Table I using data taken from local and international newspapers.

Table II About Here

In the analyses, overt collective challenges remain related to increases in the subsequent application of repression, while dissident mobilizing activities are either not significant or predict decreased repression. A single additional act of overt collective challenges is associated with around a 17% increase the predicted rate of subsequent repression, a slightly lower figure than the estimate generated using the AHPN data. P values remain at or near conventional standards of statistical significance. At the same time, the newspaper data do not show any significant relationships between repression and aggregate measures of mobilization or the subset of radical mobilization activities. Non-radical mobilization is negatively related to subsequent levels of

repression. This effect is highly significant and is expected to reduce repression substantially. However, care needs to be taken when interpreting the impact of this coefficient as the newspapers combined record only 13 acts of non-radical mobilization.

When combined with the earlier results, this replication analysis shines light on significant limitations in analyses of repression and dissent conducted using newspaper data. When news sources are used in the analysis, the robust correlations between radical mobilization and repression disappear. Analyzed in this fashion, the results would thus fail to identify efforts by government forces to repress dissidents before they can engage in overt collective challenges.

Conclusion

This study has argued that the range of repressive activity employed to protect political order is significantly broader than the conceptualization found in much of the literature on political conflict. While it is often suggested that dissidents' fear of repression deters them from challenging the state, existing research commonly portrays the government as committing repression only in response to some ongoing challenge. Instead, the study argues that in addition to responding to ongoing challenges, governments aim to anticipate challenger development and direct repression against those mobilizing in support of radical redistributions of political power. Analysis of unique data on the behavior of the Guatemalan security apparatus confirms these expectations and reveals how government forces anticipate and attempt to undermine overt collective challenges by repressing radical mobilization.

Future research will need to examine these relationships in more democratic or less violent contexts than those examined in this study. The key to doing this successfully will be to collect new and better data on the behavior of government forces and on those who would hope to challenge them. The relationship between mobilization and political repression was obscured when the analysis was replicated using newspaper data, which suggests that the news media incorrectly portray governments as disinclined to commit “preemptive” acts of repression. Though it is rare to find data that are comparable in scope and quality to the documents employed in this study, recent efforts to collect conflict data from unconventional sources have the potential to open up new avenues for studying repression and mobilization (e.g., Davenport forthcoming; King et al. 2013).

If the relationship between mobilization and repression does hold, research will need to more thoroughly examine the empirical effects of this type of coercion. Combined with the results of this study, evidence that repression targeting mobilization effectively limits subsequent dissent should inspire major implications for theories of political order and conflict. Dominant models of repression will need to incorporate signals about future contestation into government decision calculi, while social movement theories will have to be amended to consider how organizers attempt to outpace government efforts to suppress mobilization. Finally, by advancing understandings of early contestation between governments and nascent challengers, it could be possible to develop more dynamic models of repression and mobilization that can push beyond the existing structural understandings of civil conflict to improve forecasts for when such encounters are likely to escalate to widespread violence.

Table I: Evidence of the Causes of Repressive Action: Negative-Binomial Regression Models using the AHPN Data

	All Mobilization			Radical and Non-Radical Mobilization		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mobilization _{t-1}	1.150 [0.041] (0.001)	1.088 [0.026] (0.001)	1.080 [0.035] (0.016)			
Radical Mobilization _{t-1}				1.156 [0.054] (0.002)	1.099 [0.034] (0.002)	1.064 [0.030] (0.030)
Non-Radical Mobilization _{t-1}				1.115 [0.200] (0.542)	1.009 [0.106] (0.927)	1.134 [0.134] (0.284)
Overt Collective Challenges _{t-1}	1.272 [0.055] (0.001)	1.147 [0.031] (0.001)	1.118 [0.034] (0.001)	1.272 [0.055] (0.001)	1.146 [0.031] (0.001)	1.083 [0.021] (0.002)
Prior Repression _{t-1}	1.069 [0.029] (0.015)	1.030 [0.017] (0.077)	1.069 [0.024] (0.004)	1.070 [0.029] (0.015)	1.030 [0.018] (0.083)	1.069 [0.021] (0.001)
Spatial Lag of Repression _{t-1}	1.126 [0.022] (0.001)	1.186 [0.027] (0.001)	1.019 [0.020] (0.331)	1.126 [0.023] (0.001)	1.185 [0.027] (0.001)	1.053 [0.020] (0.007)
Campaign Activity _{t-1}	1.380 [0.183] (0.015)	1.323 [0.165] (0.025)	1.039 [0.118] (0.735)	1.384 [0.188] (0.017)	1.331 [0.168] (0.023)	1.040 [0.112] (0.713)
Population	765.361 [801.221] (0.001)		6531.28 [6371.94] (0.001)	775.919 [818.151] (0.001)		929.458 [876.158] (0.001)
Population Density	1.009 [0.061] (0.871)		1.041 [0.061] (0.489)	1.010 [0.062] (0.866)		1.992 [0.185] (0.001)
Literacy Rate	76.739 [61.375] (0.001)		317.033 [222.690] (0.001)	76.991 [61.677] (0.001)		3470.26 [2658.04] (0.001)
Indigenous Population Rate	7.159 [2.229] (0.001)		8.474 [2.134] (0.001)	7.153 [2.228] (0.001)		18.896 [4.909] (0.001)

Department Violence _{t-1}	2.998 [1.306] (0.011)	2.611 [0.846] (0.025)	2.887 [0.509] (0.001)	2.999 [1.302] (0.011)	2.605 [0.845] (0.003)	3.808 [0.726] (0.001)
Democracy	0.799 [0.035] (0.001)	0.792 [0.034] (0.001)		0.799 [0.035] (0.001)	0.791 [0.034] (0.001)	
Constant	0.000 [0.000] (0.001)			0.000 [0.000] (0.001)		
Department FE		Y			Y	
Month FE			Y			Y
N	2420	2420	2420	2420	2420	2420

Incident Rate Ratio, [Huber-White Standard Error], and (*Two-tailed P-Value*) reported. The Incident Rate Ratio is calculated as the rate of predicted counts of repressive actions when a variable is increased one unit over the rate of predicted counts when that variable is held at zero. All other variables are held at their means. Fixed Effects omitted from presentation.

Table II: Replication: Negative-Binomial Regression Models using Newspaper Data

	All Mobilization			Radical and Non-Radical Mobilization		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mobilization t_{-1}	1.281 [0.467] (0.498)	0.926 [0.319] (0.824)	1.339 [0.544] (0.472)			
Radical Mobilization t_{-1}				1.416 [0.519] (0.343)	1.017 [0.351] (0.959)	1.541 [0.653] (0.307)
Non-Radical Mobilization t_{-1}				0.000 [0.000] (0.001)	0.000 [0.000] (0.001)	0.000 [0.000] (0.001)
Overt Collective Challenges t_{-1}	1.171 [0.063] (0.003)	1.055 [0.036] (0.114)	1.247 [0.123] (0.025)	1.169 [0.063] (0.004)	1.052 [0.037] (0.145)	1.242 [0.124] (0.031)
Prior Repression t_{-1}	1.570 [0.356] (0.047)	1.120 [0.151] (0.400)	1.277 [0.291] (0.284)	1.559 [0.360] (0.055)	1.107 [0.148] (0.450)	1.277 [0.293] (0.289)
Spatial Lag of Repression t_{-1}	1.425 [0.712] (0.478)	1.771 [0.889] (0.255)	1.331 [0.710] (0.593)	1.420 [0.708] (0.482)	1.765 [0.884] (0.257)	1.319 [0.708] (0.606)
Campaign Activity t_{-1}	1.207 [0.386] (0.557)	0.908 [0.325] (0.790)	0.854 [0.344] (0.696)	1.186 [0.383] (0.596)	0.884 [0.313] (0.729)	0.828 [0.338] (0.645)
Population	699305 [1871161] (0.001)		2179671 [5795930] (0.001)	730862 [1958924] (0.001)		2605597 [6965757] (0.001)
Population Density	0.765 [0.109] (0.060)		0.760 [0.106] (0.050)	0.765 [0.109] (0.060)		0.760 [0.106] (0.049)
Literacy Rate	605.105 [1307.46] (0.003)		768.053 [1551.782] (0.001)	625.355 [1353.67] (0.003)		865.463 [1757.78] (0.001)
Indigenous Population Rate	12.442 [11.829] (0.008)		13.832 [11.781] (0.002)	12.561 [11.923] (0.003)		14.220 [12.111] (0.002)
Department Violence t_{-1}	5.687 [2.768] (0.001)	2.439 [1.144] (0.057)	5.454 [2.227] (0.001)	5.670 [2.774] (0.003)	2.413 [1.130] (0.060)	5.582 [2.302] (0.001)

Democracy	0.712 [0.070] (0.001)	0.740 [0.074] (0.003)	0.712 [0.070] (0.001)	0.739 [0.074] (0.003)
Constant	0.000 [0.000] (0.001)		0.000 [0.000] (0.001)	
Department FE		Y		Y
Month FE			Y	
N	2420	2420	2420	2420
				Y
				2420

Incident Rate Ratio, [Huber-White Standard Error], and (*Two-tailed P-Value*) reported. The Incident Rate Ratio is calculated as the rate of predicted counts of repressive actions when a variable is increased one unit over the rate of predicted counts when that variable is held at zero. All other variables are held at their means. Fixed Effects omitted from presentation.

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