Rage Within the Machine:
Political Organization of Policing and Police Agent Deference

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how variation in the political organization of policing impacts police agents' deference to their policing regimes in democratic contexts. After a review of past comparative politics scholarship on police behavior and attitudes, I propose three new measurements to capture variation in the degree of political centralization of policing systems: *financial relationships*, *multi-level coordination*, and *overlapping jurisdictions*. I then propose a cross-national regression design using my measures and a common act of police misconduct: bribery. Using an existing measure of police (de)centralization and civilian-reported police bribery data, I find no significant relationship between incidence of police bribery and variation in the political centralization of policing. Finally, I propose a second research design exploiting subnational variation in police system organization in the United States and direct surveying of police agents to understand how police perceive of who and what they "protect and serve."

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Introduction

Police are the ubiquitous armed bureaucrats of the democratic world. Their makeup, capacity, and duties vary greatly from country to country, as well as the political arrangements under which they operate (Bowling et al. 2019). Research in the comparative politics of policing seeks to develop theories, typologies, and empirical testing to sort, classify, and explain patterns in policing and the political factors that explain such patterns (Roché and Fleming 2022, Lowatcharin and Stallmann 2017). One outstanding group of questions focuses on the relationship between the political organization of policing and the behaviors and attitudes of police, in particular acts such as misconduct or disobedience. For this thesis, I am interested in studying the relationship between the *political organization of police* and *police deference to democratic policing regimes*, which I define as obedience and abidance to the laws, norms, and institutions by which police are delegated their duties to in a democratic setting.

I advance a theory applying to policing in democratic settings, arguing that the political centralization of policing minimizes police misconduct and abuse of power against their incumbent democratic regimes through two key mechanisms—oversight and norms. After elucidating my theory, I present a research design to test this theorized relationship. I first build off several existing measures, and construct several new measures, of the *political centralization of policing*. I focus on both the formal, de jure centralization of the political powers to police, or in other words, the formal distribution of policing power (Roché and Fleming 2022) as well as the de facto political organization of police that affects how police of different jurisdictions work and interact. I propose to evaluate the relationship between police centralization and a common act of police misconduct that also gives indications as to the strength of the policing regime—bribery—at the country level, and then present the beginnings of a secondary research design

exploiting subnational variation in police centralization in the United States. I also run a preliminary regression using available data on police organization and police bribery, finding no significant relationship between the two.

To start, I clarify my research scope and definitions of some key terms and variables, before moving on to evaluating current, relevant literature. First, I confine my scope to policing in democracies. I choose to utilize countries that fall under the dichotomous definition of democracy as employed by Boix et al. (2013). The authors coded a regime's country-year as a democracy if it a) had contestation for the legislature (and executive branch, if applicable) through popular, free, and fair elections, and b) if the majority of adult men had the right to vote (Boix et al. 2013, 25). The author's data on country-years goes back to the year 1800 and does not apply too stringent of conditions on still-democratizing countries. With regard to policing, my hope is that this definition of democracy will encompass all countries in which there exists some democratic accountability mechanism between the country's system of policing and its government and people—that is, the political power to police is not autonomous from the democratic process. *Accountability* is the defining feature that makes a country's policing system democratic, and that there must exist several channels through which citizens control their police in democratic settings (Stone and Ward 2010). To my knowledge, there does not exist a specific measure of the degree of democratization of a country's policing system, so Boix et al.'s (2013) measure serves as a substitute. Policing institutions in authoritarian settings often do not have any degree of accountability with any sort of citizen mandate or are even beholden to the legislative branch, if it exists (Greitens 2017). The checks, balances, and institutional oversight of policing in autocracies versus democracies may operate very differently, meaning the variation in behaviors that may constitute a violation of deference to the regime would be extremely

difficult to generalize under one unified theory. Police in both democracies and autocracies can of course engage in repression or physical abuse without technically violating rules, laws or norms (e.g., suppression of protests or killing of unarmed demonstrators may not technically qualify as a violation of a law), but my concern is that the mechanisms which I propose would apply under democracies (oversight and norms) would fail to apply under autocracies, hence their exclusion.

The term *police*, following with comparative politics literature (Bayley 1985, Bayley 1992; Lowatcharin and Stallmann 2017), is used in this context to denote what previous authors call "general-purpose" police, which I define using Bayley's definition: government agents "with full powers of access, arrest, and investigation for any criminal offense throughout the territory of the authorizing government unit" (Bayley 1992, 517). Following this definition, I do not claim that my theory would cover agents in a standalone, specialized unit because there may be no equivalent agency in function at other levels of government or in other countries whose agents could serve as a counterfactual, and in turn cross-country comparisons would be impossible. For this thesis, I use the term *police agent* to describe the individuals who engage in general-purpose policing, so as to not confuse the term *officer* with someone who holds the hierarchical status of officer in military or police settings.

By *policing regime deference*, I mean police agent abidance to the policies, rules, norms, and institutions by which police are delegated power. In this principal-agent relationship, police act as agents to a democratic policing regime which has vested in individual police the authority to act in the interest of domestic security and maintenance of law. My is to understand the construction, maintenance and constraining of democratic policing regimes. What explains variation in the strength of policing regimes? What enables some police agents to stray from

abidance to law and policy, while others stay in line? What acts of political organization or structure can constrain police to behave in accordance to the rules by which they are delegated policing power? Acts that might violate regime deference might range from unobservable inactions, such as small acts of dereliction of duty or disobedience in enforcement, to overt and egregious actions such as engaging in mutinies against the regime. While in the future I hope to specifically study politically motivated acts of defiance against the regime by police, for now this paper will be agnostic as to the specific motivations for violating regime deference, instead focusing primarily on the mere propensity to do so.

Literature Review

Roché and Fleming (2022) emphasize the need for more cross-national police studies in comparative politics. The authors argue that the first task for comparative political scientists is to establish generalizable concepts and a common vocabulary for the politics of policing. The concepts of police *oversight* and *accountability* are not universal, meaning studying policing comparatively will require more conceptual standardization (Roché and Fleming 2022, 1). The authors advocate for a focus on the *political powers to police*—the division of power and responsibility of policing between levels of government (Roché and Fleming 2022, 10). To that end, Lowatcharin and Stallman (2017; 2019; 2020) have done extensive work in understanding and the distribution of policing power. Their first article created a Police Decentralization Index (PDI), a ratio which compares a country's government hierarchy to the number of levels of government that politically control police, which they define as having administration and lines of accountability over "general-purpose" police. The authors developed two papers out of their measure. Lowatcharin and Stallman (2019) found that increased centralization has no significant effect on police trust, but found that when stratified by Human Development Index (HDI),

countries with high HDI and high decentralization exhibit high citizen trust, but the inverse in low HDI countries. Lowatcharin and Stallman (2021) found a similar relationship with police intensity (measured by number of police)—high HDI and highly decentralized countries have lower intensity, while low HDI countries with high decentralization have high intensity.

These authors have attempted to classify and typologize policing systems despite the warnings of Bayley (1985, 1992) who wrote the seminal works on police systems. “Talk about centralization and decentralization is generally meaningless,” he writes (Bayley 1992, p. 521). The problem, according to Bayley, is that “centralization” gets applied both in a horizontal and vertical fashion—both the number of different forces within a country at each level of government, and the distribution of command of police at the same level of government. In order to reconcile this issue, Bayley (1985) creates a two-by-two typology that separates the multiplicity of police forces from the centralization or decentralization of their command. Under his typology, countries may have single or multiple coordinated/uncoordinated police forces, while having centralized or decentralized command.

Some research exists on the recent nationalization of policing in Scotland and the Netherlands, focusing mainly on its effects on citizens and citizen-police accountability (Fyfe 2019; Henry et al. 2019; Terpstra and Fyfe 2019). Loveday and Reid (2003) compare the U.K.’s centralized policing model to the Netherlands, France, and the U.S. to argue that decentralized, localized policing in the political control of locally elected representatives is the best model of policing in terms of accountability. Subnational comparative research on U.S. policing has found that citizens in small, independent communities approve of police more than citizens in adjacent urban neighborhoods with a large city-level police force (Ostrom and Whitaker 1973). Loveday (2014) takes a historical look at Western policing, arguing that differences in countrywide police

structure largely came out of a drive to protect the state (centralized policing) versus protect the community (decentralized policing).

But cross-national research on the political powers to police seems to lack a focus on police behavior or attitudes—most of the dependent variables from the above literature focus on citizen perceptions, opinions, or policing "efficiency." Police agents themselves are rarely the unit of observation, with few exceptions. Research that *does* make a connection between policing powers and the attitudes or behaviors of police is largely in the American politics subfield, where more time has been spent on how the structure of American federalism or different institutional reforms affect police attitudes and behavior. Farris and Holman (2017) focus on the conflict between the federal government and elected county sheriffs in enforcing immigration reform, finding that county sheriffs' personal attitudes about immigrants affect whether they implement immigration checks that go beyond the requirements set by ICE. Direct surveying of sheriffs has found that sheriffs with right-wing extremist attitudes are more likely to refuse to enforce mask mandates in states that required them (Farris and Holman 2023). In a survey of Texas police chiefs, authors find that chiefs were not influenced by the presence of federal and state law enforcement in how they maintained law and order or maintained relationships with constituents, but that a higher-level police presence did influence the tactics and technologies police chiefs utilized (Matusiak et al. 2017). Constitutionalist sheriffs (a growing movement of Western U.S. sheriffs that largely rejects a federal authority to police in its entirety) have been found condone civilian violence against federal employees abutting to their jurisdictions, resulting in higher rates of political violence against them (Nemerever 2021).

Meanwhile, cross-national research on politics and police behavior is still in its infancy. Fekete (2022) and Parreira (2023) offer comparative overviews of police political extremism in

Europe, documenting how many European countries have seen a surge of police abusing political power during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, coinciding with the growth of underground far-right networks, intra-agency gangs and cliques, and relationships with far-right paramilitary groups. Hirschfield (2020) compares the policing system of the U.S. to that of Western Europe from a sociological perspective, arguing that the high degree of autonomy given to local police departments in the U.S. results in two key differences compared to Europe: decentralized policing power allows for police to use higher lethality, and that decentralization leads to insulated police cultures and ideologies more resistant to control and permissive to misconduct. While Hirshfield engages only in qualitative work and has the U.S. stand alone in comparing it to a small sample of Western European countries, I find his work most important to building my own theory resting on the mechanisms of oversight and culture, which map on to his two stated qualitative observations. With a cross-national focus on corruption, Williams (2002) argues that two of the primary causes of police agent corruption are organizational cultures and lack of accountability mechanisms. The author notes other important variables such as institutional history, lack of rule of law, a permissive overall culture even outside of police agencies themselves, and lack of resources. Speaking more broadly on bureaucracy, Fukuyama (2013) argues that current measures of comparative bureaucratic autonomy have found an inverted u-shaped curve in the relationship between autonomy and performance—bureaucrats need just enough, but not too much, autonomy to most efficiently function and deliver services.

Given such paucity in research done connecting the political organization of policing to police behavior, more broad theories of bureaucratic behavior may open more doors. Perhaps best suited for doing so has been the explosive growth of street-level bureaucracy theory (SLB) from its roots in studying American urban cities and their administrative ills to a theory on the

behavior of bureaucrats in both the Global North and South. Coined by Lipsky (1969), street-level bureaucrats have three qualities: "1) are constantly called upon to interact with citizens in the regular course of their jobs; 2) have significant independence in job decision-making; and 3) potentially have extensive impact on the lives of their clients" (Lipsky 1969, 1). Furthermore, Lipsky lays out the three main conditions under which street-level bureaucrats work: inadequate resources; physical and psychological threats and challenges to the bureaucrat's authority; and contradictory or unattainable expectations about job performance (Lipsky 1969, 4). As a result of these job conditions, Lipsky argues, much of citizen antagonism towards street-level bureaucrats such as police comes from the structural conditions imposed upon bureaucrats, while street-level bureaucrats themselves make sweeping judgements of the whole community based on the non-random segments they work with. Street-level bureaucrats are socially expected to be advocates for their clients; on the other hand, the structure of the bureaucracy makes it difficult to perform this task.

Many further extensions of SLB have taken it from its original specific contexts outwards into a fully comparative theory. Peeters and Campos (2023) review SLB in the Global South and identify administrative factors (formal rules, state capacity), political factors (electoral interests, clientelism), social factors (client attitudes, competing social institutions), and professional factors (norms and terms of employment) as the four major institutional dimensions affecting street-level bureaucrats' behavior and output. In turn, they identify three major behavioral patterns: informal privatization, policy improvisation, and low motivation, as a result of weak state institutions. Other authors suggest recontextualization of SLB for the developing or decolonial world, advocating for the incorporation of considerations such as high social inequality, state reproduction of inequities, political cultures, and resource gaps (Lotta et al.

2021; Eiró and Lotta 2023). SLB has also been extended to applications such as customs and immigration procedures, given similar working conditions for such agents (Borelli 2019). While Zacka (2017) argues that SLB is not adept at explaining variation in behavior such as bureaucratic discretion, I rebut that a broader incorporation of state capacity and institutional measures, such as the aforementioned literature, may fill some of the gaps left in SLB, and I include my own research in trying to fill that hole.

Theory

Lack of regime deference by police agents *can* mean more egregious and outwardly defiant acts by police, such as police rebellions, mutinies and revolts: examples in the second half of the 20th century and first quarter of the 21st century include events in Argentina, the Philippines, Senegal, Nigeria, and Ecuador (Olasupo 2011; de la Torre 2011). Less overtly, police can simply refuse to enforce the laws, formal directives, or mandates of their authorizing government, protesting the regime through inaction rather than pro-action (Nemerever 2021). This research agenda asks how the distribution of the power to police, as well as on-the-ground police organization, might create the conditions necessary for such anti-regime attitudes or behavior. If we take the examples of Argentina, the Philippines, Senegal, Nigeria, and Ecuador, it is hard to tell if there is any association between police structure and these revolts—using the typology of Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017), Argentina, Ecuador, Senegal and Nigeria would have high levels of police centralization, while the Philippines has high decentralization.

By *policing regime*, I am referring to the rules, procedures, norms, and institutions that by which policing is structured, the mechanisms by which the government has control over the police, and the structuring of interactions between police, government, and citizens. To say that a police officer is deferent to their regime is to say that they generally agree and adhere to the

formalized law and institutions that have structured the duties of their job and their relationship with the government, whatever it may be. To say that a police officer is not deferent to the regime means that they express some form of disregard for the law and governing relationships of the regime, possibly engaging in actions such as shirking job responsibilities or sabotage during the course of their work, or even engaging in combative collective action. I am interested in how the political organization of policing might relate to deference to the regime, and also the existence of a coherent policing regime in the first place. As I conducted my research, I realized that I might be engaging with two separate parts—I have been considering how to understand the development and fostering of anti-regime attitudes versus the ability and willingness to act on such attitudes. Holland (2016) coined the term *forbearance* to mean intentional noneforcement of law, and likewise notes the difficulty in differentiating between constraints versus unwillingness of politicians to enforce distributive policies. Since there appears to be no extant data on police rebellions, mutinies, and revolts in democracies, making inferences about the causes blatant anti-regime actions by police is difficult. Given such, my research designs focus more on shirking and sabotage (Brehm and Gates, 1997)—small, individual actions police might take to express discontent with the incumbent policing regime and rule of law.

I see two theoretical mechanisms by which the political organization of police might affect police attitudes and behavior, thereby affecting the strength of the policing regime and deference to it. The first revolves around *police norms and culture.* Police agencies are highly institutionalized, with tight-knit culture (Williams 2002; Worden and Mclean 2017; Crank and Langworthy 1992). Several factors can affect police norms and culture, including police leadership (Cockcroft 2019) and the danger or isolation of the environments they work in (Crank 2004). While some research has been done in intra-departmental structure (Paoline 2003), very

little empirical research has sought to understand the relationship between nationwide police organization and police culture (Hirschfield 2020). From a comparative perspective, it is clear that police culture influences police *behavior* (Demirkol and Nalla 2020; Ingram et al. 2018; Nickels and Verma 2007), but the connection to norms or culture, behavior and the type of political organization of police is underdeveloped.

I would expect that nationalized organization of police, holding all else constant, would create policing norms and cultures that are not localized, but centralized and all-encompassing, therefore making it difficult for police to express through concrete action discontent or disregard to the rule of law, governing institutions, or policy. Police culture is full of norms and commonly held beliefs that often emphasize hypermasculinity, social dominance, isolation, an us-versus-them mentality, and the creation of self-legitimacy (Debbaut and de Kimpe 2023; Brough et al. 2016; Loftus 2009; Reiner 2010). I suspect then that more politically decentralized policing systems will be more adept at harboring police cultures that, due to their localized nature, will not have a system of norms in place recognizing a strong, coherent policing regime with democratic principles, such as adherence to the law, regard for the rights of citizens, and supremacy of governing institutions. Instead, I would expect police cultures in politically decentralized policing regimes to be more deferent only to local power-brokers, not those who may make policies at the national level. In turn, I would expect acts like localized corruption to be more prevalent given the plausibly more insular cultures these policing agencies may harbor.

Secondly, a politically centralized or nationalized police force may provide more *oversight* over police, meaning that police are unable to act upon, spread or vocalize anti-regime sentiment. They would be less likely to shirk from their responsibilities in protest out of fear of reprisal from a centralized oversight system in which all police agents participate in and are

subjected to. A theory of centralized oversight, however, must be differentiated from greater state capacity for oversight. It would be entirely possible for a country to have a decentralized, independent police system at each level of government but still retain strong national-level capacity for oversight. Even in the United States, the national-level FBI and Department of Justice still do have some capacity to oversee local police, despite being limited in constitutional authority (Vasilogambros 2021).

Some European countries in recent years have centralized their policing system under what is essentially an implicit assumption that doing so would increase accountability, oversight and efficiency, while arguably holding state capacity constant (Fyfe 2019; Henry et al. 2019; Terpstra and Fyfe 2019). In Scotland, the entire policing system was nationalized in 2012, while in Netherlands the same year, the political power to police remained local, but the political administration of police resources was nationalized. While both governments had multiple reasons for their versions of centralization, Terpstra and Fyfe (2019) note, "In the Netherlands, the government's wish for a national police force was also motivated by a shift in policy frame: whereas in the past decentralization was generally perceived to be a 'good thing', now it was often framed as a main cause of powerlessness, irresolution and delay in making the police more effective" (103). One can debate on normative grounds whether decentralization or centralization of any agency type or bureaucracy is "better," as the motivation towards reforms for one extreme depends on the goals of the reformist government (Altamimi et al. 2022). But I suspect that Scotland and the Netherlands are heading in the right direction if oversight and efficiency are top priorities: political centralization of policing might produce more streamlined, centralized oversight of the police, inhibiting individual or collective bad actors among the forces. Therefore, I theorize that more politically centralized policing systems will on average have

more robust oversight mechanisms to protect against police agent misconduct, leading to more deference to the policing regime.

Measuring the Political Centralization of Police

Given Bayley's (1985, 1992) criticisms on measuring police centralization, the primary contribution of this paper is an argument for the development of specific measures of police centralization, with a focus on measures that would be relevant to police behavior with respect to deference to a democratic policing regime. I start with an overview of Lowatcharin and Stallmann's (2017) Police Decentralization Index, a solid starting point that I agree should be utilized as a measure of the political organization of policing in at the country-level. Then, I make note of some of its shortcomings, and argue for three additional measures that describe both the political organization of policing in two dimensions: both in *de jure*, on-paper organization of policing, as well as *de facto*, on-the-ground interactions and coordination of police agencies at multiple levels of government. Those three measures include:

1. *Financial relationships* between different levels of government and their respective policing agencies, such as earmarked or conditional funding.
2. *Multi-level coordination* between policing agencies at different levels of government, which may vary in their degrees of formalization or frequency (such as regular versus emergency-only coordination).
3. *Overlapping jurisdictions*, which may or may not coincide with formal coordination, possibly creating differing types of interactions between individual agents and agencies across levels of government.

I conclude the discussion of each these measurements in turn by making suggestions as to how one might collect this data and create a measurement, as well as provide examples, based on the research I have done so far, of how different countries match up in these measurements.

Some countries, such as the United States, exhibit high degrees of police decentralization with different law enforcement agencies at every level of government—from the FBI to state police, to country sheriffs, to municipal police—who largely remain politically autonomous from each other in terms of oversight and accountability. Municipalities set most of the rules and policies that local police must follow and enforce, not the federal government. In the case of the U.S., the federal government has minimal power to monitor police outside of its own national-level police agencies such as the FBI, and attempts to do so are often met with constitutional challenges regarding the devolution of powers to local authorities (German 2020, Vasilogambros 2021). But other democracies have a history of more centralized policing—while specialized, national-level law enforcement agencies may exist, law enforcement at the local level is in the political and administrative control of a higher level of government (e.g., Norway and its Norwegian Police Service, the only general-purpose law enforcement agency in the country).

Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) attempt to create a single score, a Police Decentralization Index (PDI), to find where "an individual country fit[s] based on its structural arrangements of policing" (3). The authors find three components essential to their measure. First is vertical government structure (38), which they code as the number of tiers of government. For their research, and for mine as well, they establish the criterium of the tier of government having some degree of policy- and decision-making power that cannot be overruled by other levels of government except where stipulated by courts, constitutions, or other legal mechanisms. Secondly, the authors factor in administrative and political control (41), which measures whether

a level of government is "responsible for the administration, supervision, and/or evaluation of the police; or responsible for recruiting and/or appointing police executives and/or officers." This includes instances where multiple levels of government control police jointly but does not include instances of multi-level coordination of separate police agencies, which I include as a new measure. Finally, the authors begin to incorporate an element of fiscal control, however they ultimately exclude this factor because of a) a high degree of correlation with the second element of political/administrative control, and b) the authors were not able to find data on the distribution of policing revenues for the more than 70 countries they study, an understandably arduous task given the often nebulous sources of funding for policing services.

Additional Measure 1: Financial relationships

Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) state that the inclusion of fiscal control and financial relationships based on the fact that the data is both difficult to collect and highly correlated with their data on political and administrative control. I argue that the inclusion of financial relationships within policing systems *should* be included if one wants to fully understand the relationship police agents have with their government. There may exist more variation in fiscal control than Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) state: the authors make no attempt to understand the *proportion* of funding for policing services coming from or going to different levels of government, only acknowledging that in general, if multiple levels of government share political and administrative control of policing, they are assumed to share fiscal control as well. If Country Z has two levels of government, Level A and Level B, and those two levels of government joint share political, fiscal, and administrative control over a single nationwide police agency, there is currently no measurement to differentiate between an 50/50 split between Level A and Level B in funding versus an 80/20 split in funding.

In addition, there is no current way to measure whether collected revenue stays earmarked for the same unit of government. If funding is collected at the municipal level for a national-level police agency, does the municipality receive a proportional amount of policing resources back, or do some municipalities put more in than they get out? Two countries may match in their PDI score but have vastly different setups when it comes to the revenue collected for the financing of policing. Essentially, this is all a question of a concept called *balance of payment*: the difference between what a level of government (whether it be national or subnational) receives from other levels of government, minus the amount of funds it distributes outwards (Rockefeller Institute 2023). Below are some possible measures for fiscal centralization:

1. A proportional measure, ranging from 0 to 1, for a country's government unit-average amount of policing funding generated from *other levels of government*, divided by the same denominator used by Lowacharin and Stallmann (2017)—the total number of levels of government. This captures both upwards and downwards payments—a provincial level of government might receive funding for policing agencies from the national level and at the municipal level, in addition to its own raised funding. Say country *K* has three levels of government: *N, R,* and *M* (national, regional, and municipal). We can assume there exists only one government unit at level *N* for each country (one national-level government unit). The total number of government units at levels *R* and *M* will vary based on the country. One strategy would be to find the mean proportion of external funding for each government unit at all levels of government, and then average that across the total number of levels of government.

   For Country K with three total levels of government,

$$P_K = \frac{P_N + P_R + P_M}{3}$$

$$P_R = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} P_{Ri}}{n}$$

$$P_M = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} P_{Mj}}{n}$$

The above system of equations lays out a way to calculate the mean amount of external policing funding across all levels and types of government. P_K is the proportion of external policing funding averaged across all government units in country *K.* At regional government level *R*, the proportion of external funding for a governmental unit *i* is P_{Ri}, which is then averaged across however many *n* subnational units are at level *R*. The same is done for all subnational units at level *M,* such that average proportions, P_R and P_M, can be calculated, added to P_N, and averaged across the total number of levels of government (in this case, 3).

The score measures the mean amount of funding that a government unit–national or subnational—receives from a level of government different than its own. Note that the measure is not weighted to give one level of government influence over the score, but one could weight higher or lower levels of government heavier if one wanted to let it have more influence over the score. This measure could also be flipped to measure a government unit's spending on policing outside its own, rather than revenue collected from units at other levels of government. An alternative measure for this would be to add up the total number of government units at all levels of government with no regard for what level of government they sit at, calculate the proportion of funding coming from other levels of government for each individual government unit, and divide by the total number of government units.

It would also be possible to disaggregate this measure to focus more specifically on where funding comes from, whether it be a higher or lower level of government. Instead of measuring

how much funding comes from all other levels of government, it would be possible to use the same data to compare cross-nationally how much the national government provides in funding to subnational policing systems, or vice versa. This would become harder to compare for purely unitary countries, which would have no variation in this measure because there would exist no other levels of government with the policy- or decision-making ability from which a higher level of government could extract revenue from.

The obvious problem with such a measurement strategy is that this measure would require the calculation of policing budget for every single national and subnation unit of government for every country studied. This would be an extremely time-intensive task and would only be worthwhile for a small-N comparison of countries' policing revenue generation. For larger, more federalized countries such as India or the United States, this would be nearly impossible, with thousands of subnational government units with varying degrees of ease of access to fiscal data. Therefore, a second measure of financial relationships might disregard the *amount* of funding from other levels of government, but instead measure the existence of *formalized financial relationships*:

2. Disregard the exact proportions of crisscrossing police spending across government levels and instead research the existence of *formalized agreements* for fiscal contributions to policing at other levels of government. Does the national government have an official policy on how much it spends on policing for subnational governments? Or vice versa, do subnational governments have policies in the books dictating how they spend money for policing organized by other levels of government?

Regardless of the two options, one useful resource might be to obtain the yearly budgets of national and subnational levels of government in my desired sample. This data would give

information not only on the existence of earmarked funding for policing at other levels of government, but at a more basic level state whether this fiscal arrangement exists at all. I would propose the second alternative measure to start—understand whether policing agencies at each level of government are completely on their own for raising funds, or whether it is common for other levels of government to contribute funding for policing it may not directly politically control. Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) primarily used world encyclopedias of policing and therefore claimed that these data were not available to them. While more labor intensive, I do not believe the challenge of collecting fiscal data and fiscal policies, especially in my sample of mostly developed democracies, would be an impossible task.

Why do fiscal arrangements matter? I argue that it would be plausible that differences in fiscal control from country to country could mean differences in how police officers perceive their relationship with other levels of government and policing in their country as a whole. If individual police agents are aware of their funding sources and feel beholden, dependent, or controlled by other levels of government based on the necessity of their funding, that may make an impact on their perceived obligations to a even wider set of rules and institutions. At the same time, being fiscally dependent on other levels of government could make police resentful of the perceived lack of control over their own resources, especially if other levels of government attempt to more strictly audit or control how their funding is spent. In this way, I could see variations in fiscal centralization affect police attitudes and behavior in both a norms and culture fashion as well as an oversight fashion. For this reason, I propose to move forward with studying on-the-books policies on police spending between different levels of government for a smaller sample of countries—such as a set of countries with otherwise similar setups in how policing is

politically organized—to determine how variation in fiscal organization and policies affects how police agents perceive their obligations and responsibilities.

Additional measure 2: Multi-agency coordination

Authors of previous measures such as Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) and Bayley (1985, 1992) make note of politically shared policing agencies between multiple levels of government, but there exists a related yet overlooked gap in such a measurement. While it is not uncommon for two different levels of government to jointly organize a policing agency and therefore both have political authority over it, previous literature does not make note of organization of coordinated policing *between different agencies* at different levels of government. This may take several forms: routine, jointly coordinated policing of areas under shared jurisdiction, emergency clauses, or activation for special events. Importantly, these can be formally documented and institutionalized, meaning that there may exist more political centralization of policing in countries with these arrangements than those without.

One case of such a type of organization is the United Kingdom's National Police Collaboration Agreement, in relation to the creation of a National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC). The agreement is between the police commissions of all of the United Kingdom's regions and the National Crime Agency, College of Policing, and the Royal Military Police. The agreement includes enabling "operationally independent and locally accountable Chief Officers to co-ordinate national operations on behalf of the Chief Officers in order to protect the public" as well as operating as "a separate and independent national unit which shall be managed on a day to day basis by the Head of NPoCC" but as "a non legal entity and shall be a collaboration

between Chief Officers."[1] Stated functions include the coordination of national operations and supplementing the National Crime Agency, a national-level police agency, when appropriate; and conversely sending police agents from national forces to the local level when needed. It is also recognized that each signatory party will be at times required to send policing agents to supplement other agencies in times of need, temporarily recusing those agents to the jurisdiction of a centralized leadership. The Agreement specifically notes that these agents "will continue to be employed by the same employer and will not become an employee of the Host Force," meaning that the agencies remain politically separated in terms of their control over their own forces, instead voluntarily sending agents in accordance to their signing onto the Agreement[2]. According to a press release by the National Police Chief's Council, this Agreement was responsible for the coordinated deployment of more than 5,000 police agents during the ceremonies of the funeral of Queen Elizabeth, with more than 2,600 agents present in London during the ceremonies (National Police Chiefs' Council 2022).

This sort of multi-level, multi-agency coordination is common even in countries known for their highly decentralized policing systems. Germany, a hallmark of federalized governance and decentralized policing powers, nonetheless has a Federal Police (*Bundespolizei*) that may formally coordinate with state-level policing agencies at the request of the states for special needs such as protest suppression or regional emergencies (OCSE POLIS, "Germany," n.d.). In the Philippines, policing is a shared endeavor headed by the Philippine National Police (PNP), but with municipal mayors and district executives having extensive executive political authority over the PNP district commands within their towns or cities. Under Lowatcharin and Stallmann's

[1] "National Police Collaboration Agreement- in relation to the National Police Coordination Centre ("NPoCC")," Eversheds LLP, November 4, 2016, 7.
[2] "National Police Collaboration Agreement- in relation to the National Police Coordination Centre ("NPoCC")," Eversheds LLP, November 4, 2016, 33.

(2017) measure, the Philippines hold the maximum degree of decentralization possible given its governmental structure. However, the Philippine Constitution includes a clause for the full nationalization of local police forces before and after elections, meaning there are times when local police change the purview of their command, creating a temporarily more centralized policing system that exists under a formal institutional arrangement.[3]

These three examples are all written contracts in the form of passed laws, policies, or formal "mutual aid" agreements. They carry varying degrees of obligatory weight, and they require the temporary exchange, transfer, and coordination of police agents between various police agencies at multiple levels of government. While not included in previous measures of police centralization, I argue that if one wants to study police behavior with respect to regime deference, one must look at the degree of on-the-ground interaction officers get with policing agencies at other levels of government. In the case of the United Kingdom's NPoCC or the Philippine National Police, these institutionalized contracts for special policing circumstances temporarily put police officers from local and regional department under the direction of members of other, often higher levels of government, giving exposure to the machinations of a more centralized policing system. With this may come new forms of oversight and new norms or culture.

I propose two forms of measurement for multi-agency coordination. As shown, many countries have such interactions formalized as a policy or formal document, meaning one measurement strategy would be a dichotomous variable indicating whether a given country has some sort of coordination policy between multiple levels of government (most likely between a

[3] Republic Act No. 6975 1990, Senate Bill No. 1361 2004.

national-level policing agency and regional or municipal agencies). While variation inevitably exists within countries (some subnational regions of certain countries might have their own coordination policies, while other regions may not be signatories), a good initial strategy might be to look for countries with national-level laws governing multi-agency coordination, and mark those as "yes," such as the case of Germany. If one wanted to measure with more nuance and greater variation, it might be possible to, conditioning on the existence of the preceding dichotomous indicator of multi-agency coordination, measure the frequency with which such potential coordination is activated on a yearly basis. Some countries may have more routine, standing multi-agency forces, while others may only use this arrangement in rare emergencies. Assuming there is a searchable name for this type of formalized communication, it would be possible for most countries to use existing online news archives to search for histories of activation, or possibly from government websites and databases themselves (such as FOIA data).

Measure 3: Overlapping jurisdictions

Bayley (1985, 1992) included a measure known as *coordination*, which indicated whether countries as a whole coordinated their policing system so as to allow or prevent jurisdictional overlap between agencies. *Coordinated* policing systems, contrary to what the name might indicate, are systems in which there exists no jurisdictional overlap between police agencies at different levels of government. If there exist policing agencies at multiple levels of government, a coordinated policing system, using Bayley's typology, would mean that each police agency only operates in territory directly controlled by its respective empowering level of government. *Uncoordinated* countries, on the other hand, make no effort to avoid jurisdictional overlap, allowing policing agencies from multiple levels of government to operate simultaneously within the same territory.

While Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) make mention of this typology and attempt to incorporate it into their own Police Decentralization Index, I argue that a measurement for overlapping jurisdictions, regardless of formal coordination or shared policing power, is important in its own right. Minimal research on the effects of policing jurisdictional overlap has been performed, and to my knowledge only in the context of American policing (Nemerever 2021, Matusiak et al. 2017). These authors' findings show mixed results on the effects such interactions with police agencies at other levels of government have on the behavior of police agents with respect to behavior such as choice in tactics or condonation of political violence. I argue that based on my theoretical mechanism of police culture and research on police norms, this type of informal but regular exposure with police agencies at other levels might create a broader sense of a policing community, where regime deference is more strongly upheld and violation of policing norms is less tolerated.

I would propose a binary measure for jurisdictional overlap based on researching each country's overall policing system. While there may exist with-in country variation, I have no priors on how different types of jurisdictional overlap might influence police behavior (e.g., whether overlap between national and provincial police would change behavior in a different way compared to overlap between provincial and municipal police). In addition, should my theory and expectations hold, I would expect that a country with *any* amount of jurisdictional overlap, all else constant, to exhibit different police behavior that a country that has no overlap at all. Should that expectation be true, it might then be worth investigating different types of jurisdictional overlap and their effect on police behavior.

Summary of Proposed Measurements

1. *Financial Relationships*: Do national and subnational government units within a country receive funding for their policing agencies from other levels of government?
    a. Measure 1: Mean proportion of policing funds coming from other levels of government across all national and subnational units of government (0 to 1).
    b. Measure 2: Binary indicator (0 for no, 1 for yes) of whether in general, there exist formal fiscal policies authorizing the transfer of funds between different levels of government for policing, regardless of the political power each level of government has over police agencies.
2. *Multi-agency Coordination*: Do policing agencies at different levels of government have formal policies or agreements in place to coordinate policing between police agencies at different levels of government, regardless of the degree of shared political power over policing?
    a. Measure 1: Binary indicator (0 for no, 1 for yes) of whether there exists an on-paper agreement stipulating the coordinated interaction of policing agencies at different levels of government, regardless of frequency or purpose.
        i. Conditional Measure 1: If yes, an integer measure of how many times such an agreement was "activated" (such as for an emergency or special event) in the most recent completed calendar year.
3. *Jurisdictional Overlap*: Do the jurisdictions for policing agencies at different levels of government overlap, such that police agents at different levels of government work within the same territory?

a. Measure 1: Binary indicator (0 for no, 1 for yes) on whether, in general, policing agencies in multiple levels of government normally work within the same territory.

All three measures are constructed such that a larger value indicates a more interactive, centralized degree of policing within a given country: more overlap in finances, formalized coordination, or informal interactions with policing across different levels of government. To give an example of how a country would be coded, I provide the reasoning and coding process for Germany. Lowatcharin and Stallmann code Germany as effectively having four tiers of government with policy- and decision-making abilities, three of which have political and administrative control over the police (Lowatcharin and Stallman 2017, 45). Therefore, the PDI score for Germany is **0.75** on a scale of 0 (most centralized) to 1 (most decentralized). According to the OSCE POLIS database, state governments of Germany have the formal power to request assistance from the Federal Police (*Bundespolizei)* and the national criminal investigation service, the Federal Criminal Investigation Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*), serves as "the central office for co-operation between the federation and the federal states in all criminal police matters" (OSCE POLIS, "Germany," n.d.). Therefore, I would score Germany's *multi-level coordination* score as **1**.

However, Germany has a purposely devolved system of policing jurisdictions, with Federal Police only regularly patrolling areas lying within federal jurisdiction—borders, transportation infrastructure, airports, and federal government buildings. Crimes not involving cross-border activities are almost always referred to state police agencies, who independently conduct policing activities and investigations separate from federal help. Therefore, I would score Germany on *overlapping jurisdictions* as **0.** This also matches Bayley's (1985, 1992)

classification of Germany as a "coordinated" system, meaning a policing system at which policing agencies coordinate their areas of patrol.

Contrast Germany with Italy, which Lowatcharin and Stallman (2017) score on the PDI as identical to Germany. This makes sense in that there are three levels of government with control over police in a four-tiered governmental system (therefore a score of **0.75**), yet OSCE POLIS's language characterizes the Italian policing system as much more centralized, with a National Police (*Polizia di Stato*) controlled by the national government and stationed in every major town and city. The key difference between Germany and Italy is in *overlapping jurisdictions*—the National Police are stationed and patrol the same areas as provincial and municipal police, which are present but less common than in Germany (OSCE POLIS, "Italy," n.d.). Therefore, I would score Italy as **1** for *overlapping jurisdictions*, representing a difference in policing systems that Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) do not capture.

Predictably, finding out *financial relationships* between the German federal government and state governments in police funding has been a tougher process so far, but the nearly 3,000-page 2017 federal parliamentary budget does not make a single mention of "Landespolizei," which would be the default term used for any budget items mentioning state police[4]. I would consult with experts on the German policing system before making a definitive coding, but it appears that tentatively, there are no significant financial relationships between the national- and state-level governments. Likewise, I could not find any information about financial relationships between German states and municipal-level police agencies, but given that I am working with English-language documents only, I would consult other sources before definitively coding as **0**.

[4] *Haushaltsplan 2017*, https://www.bundeshaushalt.de/static/daten/2017/soll/Gesamt_Haushalt_2017_mit_HG.pdf.

Hypotheses

With the elaboration of my theory and proposal of new measures, I now offer several hypotheses and lay out two specific research designs. Based on the research I have conducted so far and the theoretical mechanisms I have proposed (*oversight* and *norms*) related to the political centralization of policing, I offer the following four hypotheses:

> **H1**: *Police in more politically centralized policing systems will be less likely to commit crimes during the course of their job duties*.

This is the primary hypothesis I wish to test. I interpret on-the-job criminal acts as a police agent to be a quintessential example of a departure from regime deference. Regardless of the type of crime, police agents using their position to commit crimes is a conscious abuse of power within a democratic system of policing, therefore representing a clear act of violating the principal-agent relationship between policing regime and individual police agent.

But committing a crime as a police agent could be an extremely wide range of actions, and the ability to do so while on the job likely depends greatly on a range other variables. In addition, simply evaluating whether police in centralized regimes are less likely to commit crimes does not tell us anything about police *attitudes* toward the policing regime, only giving a marker signaling their willingness or ability to abuse their power. Therefore, I offer several more hypotheses that incorporate how police attitudes might be shaped by the political organization and structure under which they operate.

> **H2**: *Police agents in more politically centralized policing systems will be less likely to be willing to refuse to enforce laws.*

Given my theory on the effects of centralization on oversight and attitudes, I would expect that decentralized police would be more likely to engage in noncompliance with the policing regime's laws to which they are subjected. Similar to **H1**, this hypothesis is based on the theory that police agents in more politically centralized policing systems will be less likely to engage in acts that do not uphold their obligations to the regime that empowers them to police. This hypothesis is separate from **H1** because there may be a substantive difference in actively committing a crime as a police officer, which a dereliction of duty, versus failing to uphold regime deference by refusing to perform one's duty at all.

H3: *Police in centralized systems will be more likely to agree that their job responsibilities extend beyond the geographic jurisdiction in which they operate.*

Regardless of the type of political organization of police, each individual police agent is likely to be relatively restricted to a specific area in which they work. That may be a province, municipality, or even a specific neighborhood they are tasked with patrolling and engaging. This hypothesis starts that more centralized police will be more likely to see themselves as "part of something bigger," such as the nation-state or the national policing regime and its rules and laws. I make this hypothesis based on my theory of police culture in centralized systems, where I would expect to see more national-level loyalty and less exclusively localized ties. I expect to find that the loyalty of decentralized police is largely limited to the immediate area they police, while police in centralized systems, as national employees, would be more likely to view themselves as connected to the entire regime and all people living under it. Following this, **H4** states:

H4: *Police in centralized systems will be more likely to be willing to volunteer to serve at the request of the national government in an emergency concerning the national government.*

This hypothesis states that if the option to mobilize is voluntary, a country with a more politically centralized police system would be more likely to see a willingness to volunteer for a declared national emergency, representing a nationwide, stronger policing regime. This hypothesis also connects to one of my proposed measurements of multi-agency coordination: based on my research, I would expect that police agents in political systems in which ties between policing at different levels of government already exist would, in a hypothetical scenario in which the request for police aid is voluntary, be more willing to serve the country as a whole. I expect that police in a decentralized, localized system would be more apathetic, or at minimum, protection of other units of government as inherent to their responsibility to maintain law and order, representing a weaker policing regime.

In sum, **H1** and **H2** are hypotheses measuring police *behavior* as it relates to confluence of political organization of policing and regime deference. **H3** and **H4** seek to understand police *attitudes* toward the regime that empowers them, in particular, how police agents in democratic policing regimes situate themselves in terms of the scope of their duties and obligations to who and what they protect and serve. My expectation is that policing regimes in decentralized policing systems will have less power over police agents—regardless of the rules in place, police will have less motivation to follow them, due to the lack of a unifying system of norms or culture and no centralized form of oversight to guard against police agent misconduct.

Research Designs

In this section, I set forth two research designs to better understand the effects different types of political organizations of policing might have on the police agents who serve under them. The first design utilizes cross-national survey data from civilian populations who have self-reported witnessing or being subjected to criminal behavior by police agents. This research design is created with an intent on testing **H1** on a global scale. It also would use the measures I have proposed as independent variables intended to measure variation in the types of political centralization I consider to be vital to answering my research question. The second research design exploits subnational variation in the United States combined with directly surveying police agents, and is focused on testing **H2**, **H3**, and **H4**, as I anticipate that these three hypotheses likely require some form of direct reporting of police agent attitudes. Finally, I conclude this section with a brief discussion of two additional potential avenues of data collection that I intend to research further to see if they hold potential.

Research Design 1*: Cross-national police bribery data*

The most apparent problem with collecting data on police misconduct, violence, or criminal activity is that the perpetrators of those acts hold large amounts of power in the bodily well-being of private citizens (Magaloni and Rodriguez 2020, Jackson et al. 2018). This may create problems in data collection either directly reported by police or by the citizens subjected to their power. Police *inaction*, rather than bad actions, is likewise especially hard to measure unless there exists counterfactual knowledge of crimes or violations police *should* be acting upon, but choose not to. Finally, data on police misconduct may be highly correlated with some state or agency capacity to conduct oversight tasks, such as the infrastructure to perform audits or internal investigations (Cook and Fortunado 2023).

I sought out civilian-reported data on police activity and found a promising lead in Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB). The 2017 GCB (the most recently completed cross-national iteration) interviewed roughly 162,000 adults from 119 countries between 2014 and 2017. National random sampling was utilized to determine households selected, and random sampling was again applied once contact was made with a household to determine the individual respondent. Researchers sampled either 1,000 or 1,500 people per country and employed survey weighting to create large, nationally representative samples (Pring 2017, 11). Most importantly, the survey asked respondents both about perceptions of government employee corruption, but also asked about actual experiences of bribery disaggregated by type of government employee.[5]

Why bribery as a measure? I argue that using civilian-reported bribery rates solves several problems previously mentioned. Policing regimes may differ wildly in the rules and policies they are supposed to enforce and follow. But the illegality of bribery, at least on paper, is universal—190 member states of the United Nations have signed on to the Convention against Corruption, which requires signatories to criminalize the acceptance of bribes by public officials, of which police fall under, given the UN definition.[6] When police take bribes, I argue that they are disregarding their duties to the regime they have sworn to complete, instead abusing their position of power for personal gain. While taking a bribe may not be a politically motivated act, it is reflective of the ability and willingness for police to engage in the type of misconduct my research focuses on. In addition, bribery is relatively common (based on the data provided by Transparency International, the rate was above 0 for 105 out of 109 countries that recorded data)

[5] Thank you to Sylvia Fiebig at the Secretariat of Transparency International for providing disaggregated data for police bribery experiences from the 2017 Global Corruption Barometer.
[6] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Convention Against Corruption, 2004, https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026_E.pdf.

and the anonymous nature of the survey and specific phrasing of the question likely minimized concerns of retribution. Finally, this data gives insight on the actions of police from a source less likely to be biased than an agency such as an internal investigations bureau—civilians themselves.

Dependent Variable

The proposed dependent variable comes from a question on the 2017 GCB (and multiple previous iterations): "*How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for a police officer in order to get the assistance you needed, or to avoid a problem like passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest?"* (Transparency International 2017, 2). This question was asked subsequent to a question asking if the respondent had made contact with a police officer in the past year, allowing for conditioning on police officer contact. Respondents could answer "never," "once or twice," "a few times," "often," or "don't know." Dropping "don't know" responses, I would propose constructing a binary dependent variable where any answer in the affirmative to the question of experiencing bribery is coded as 1, and no experience with bribery is coded 0. Given access to survey weights, I can create a weighted average bribery rate and utilize an OLS regression model with country-years as data points, given that not every country's survey (and therefore accompanying controls) are from the same year. The question was open-ended in its wording so that if respondents had bribe interactions with any type of national, provincial, or local police, they could answer in the affirmative.

While combing through the data on the 2017 Global Corruption barometer, I realized that the actual rates of police contact were low enough (roughly 22%) to bring up the concern that, conditional on contact with police, the disaggregated samples for each country are too small to utilize. However, the Global Corruption Barometer has been running since 2003, and multiple

rounds of the global survey have included an identical or near-identical version of the bribery question. Given that Lowatcharin and Stallman's (2017) PDI for their sample of countries is nearly perfectly time-invariant for the 21st century, it might be possible to use additional survey data from previous years, factoring time-variation into the regression model.

Independent variables

I would propose to utilize four main independent variables, as previously mentioned:

- *PDI score* (ranging from 0 to 1, least to most decentralized)
- *Financial relationships* (coded 0 if national and subnational levels of government independently fund their policing, 1 if finances are shared)
- *Multi-agency coordination* (coded 0 if all police at all levels of government operate completely separately, 1 if there exists formal coordination mechanisms or agreements)
- *Overlapping jurisdictions* (coded 0 if policing jurisdictions do not overlap, 1 if they do)

While Lowatcharin and Stallmann's (2017) PDI score gives a general sense of the political organization of policing (whether the country as a whole has a centralized or decentralized system), I argue the other three measures constructed capture variation in elements of the political organization of policing that the PDI score might miss. These four measures cover both *de jure* and *de facto* political organization of police—whether there exist formal coordination agreements or financial sharing agreements, or if police across different levels of government are likely to interact with each other on the ground. Complete structural reorganization of policing is rare (Terpstra and Fyfe 2019), therefore Lowatcharin and Stallmann's (2017) PDI measure, constructed in 2012 and using data going back to 2001, is likely to hold for countries in the 21st century. Countries will be double checked to ensure no large-scale changes, like those in

Scotland or the Netherlands, have been made within that small timeframe, but fortunately Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) give extensive description of the construction of their measure and it can be adjusted with ease.[7] The other three independent variable measures will be constructed based on country-year of the survey responses.

Control variables

The greatest concern for confounding variables in my model is a factor that may simultaneously have influenced the present-day political organization of policing in a country *and* the propensity for police agents to bribe their citizens. Below are several controls for which I plan to collect observations for each country-year in my model, and how I plan to collect this data.

Post-colonial statehood. The most obvious potential confounder is institutional history. Post-colonial states might import their policing structure from the former colonial overseers (Mishra 2022, Eck 2018), which may have passed on other institutional characteristics that plausibly affect the prevalence of economic conditions favorable to bribery (Acemoglu et al. 2001). I therefore find it a possible concern that modern democratic regimes which have had their policing systems imposed upon them by former colonial overseers might then have similar relationships with police bribery. For collecting data on former colonies, I plan to use COLDAT (Becker 2020) which offers the complete history of colonialization for eight former colonial powers (Belgium, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, France, Great Britain, and Italy), including the duration of their colonization. COLDAT marks a country as a former colony if at

[7] I also personally corresponded with co-author Grichawat Lowatcharin (Khon Kaen University), who confirmed that countrywide policing restructuring is a rare phenomenon. Regardless, I plan to re-check all countries in the sample before analysis to ensure that all countries have retained the same PDI value.

least 10% of its present-day territory was formally colonized by one of the eight colonial powers (Becker 2020, “read me” file). COLDAT’s coding system is convenient in that it would allow me to utilize multiple alternative measures of colonial history, such as a binary variable for each of the eight powers (and one present-day country could be coded as a former colony of more than one power), a continuous measure of the total years colonized, or a date-based measure of most recent independence from colonization.

State capacity. Some measure of state capacity must be included to differentiate it from political structure. Some measure of state capacity are not interchangeable and may present issues to causal inference if not carefully selected (Vaccaro 2022). This is particularly true for my research, as some measures of state capacity, such as VDem’s *Rigorous and Impartial Public Administration* measure, factor in bribery, which is my dependent variable. I would prefer to use Lee and Zhang’s (2017) legibility-based state capacity score and lag it for each country-year observation, as it does not have any plausible endogeneity concerns with police-specific public administration. However, their dataset is relatively undeveloped, so an alternative measure could be a lagged measure of income tax as percentage of total tax revenue, which is likely to have a wider availability of data for any needed country year (International Monetary Fund and World Bank Open Data 2017). I am considering lagging this variable because while it would seem implausible that present-day state capacity could impact present-day policing structure, *past state capacity* could possibly influence both present-day policing structure and bribery rates, given the slow pace of institutional change.

Human Development Index. Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2019) found differential effects between police decentralization and police intensity (meaning per-capita rates of police agents) based on human development index. Given a plausible relationship between HDI and bribery

rates, I would like to incorporate it into my model. HDI scores for all country-years in my data set are readily available from the United Nations (UNDR Human Development Reports, 2022).

Urbanization rates. Urbanization may plausibly impact policing structure and functions (Ostrom et al. 1973). Given that the response for the dependent variable is conditional on police contact to begin with, I want to ensure that there is no systematic difference between police behavior as it relates to both police organization and the urbanization of a country. For now, I utilize the World Bank and UN Population Division's (2018) data on urbanization (percentage of total population that is urban). However, urbanization rates are country-specific, based on each country's definition of what constitutes an urban settlement. Given that there is no universal definition of urbanization (Ritchie et al. 2018), a simpler measure might be population density.

Geopolitical regional effects. I anticipate that policing strategies and technology might spill over from neighboring countries or allied countries to another (Deflem 2002, Mailhot et al. 2022) and that countries within the same geopolitical region might therefore have trends in police behavior at least partially caused by the sharing of policing strategies and technologies as opposed to how their policing system is politically organized. To achieve an appropriate blend of regional neighbors and geopolitical allies, I utilize the United Nation's regional groups of Member States, which includes several relevant alliance-based departures from pure geography, such as including the U.S., Israel, Canada, Turkiye, Australia, and New Zealand in the "Western European and other States" grouping, which itself is separate from the Eastern European States group (UN Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, n.d.).

Next Steps

To begin to explore the relationship between police centralization and police bribery, I ran a preliminary OLS regression using available data. Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017) coded PDI scores for 71 countries. From the 2017 and 2013 GCB, I obtained average police bribery rates, conditional on police contact.[8] (Hardoon and Heinrich, 2013). Of those 62 countries, 51 were democracies based on their country-year, according to the Boix et al. (2013) dichotomous coding. HDI and Urbanization rates were also based on country-year and came from the United Nations and World Bank datasets. I included a binary variable for colonial histories from each of the colonial powers included in the COLDAT data set, which was available for all 51 democracies.

Table 1. Summary Statistics

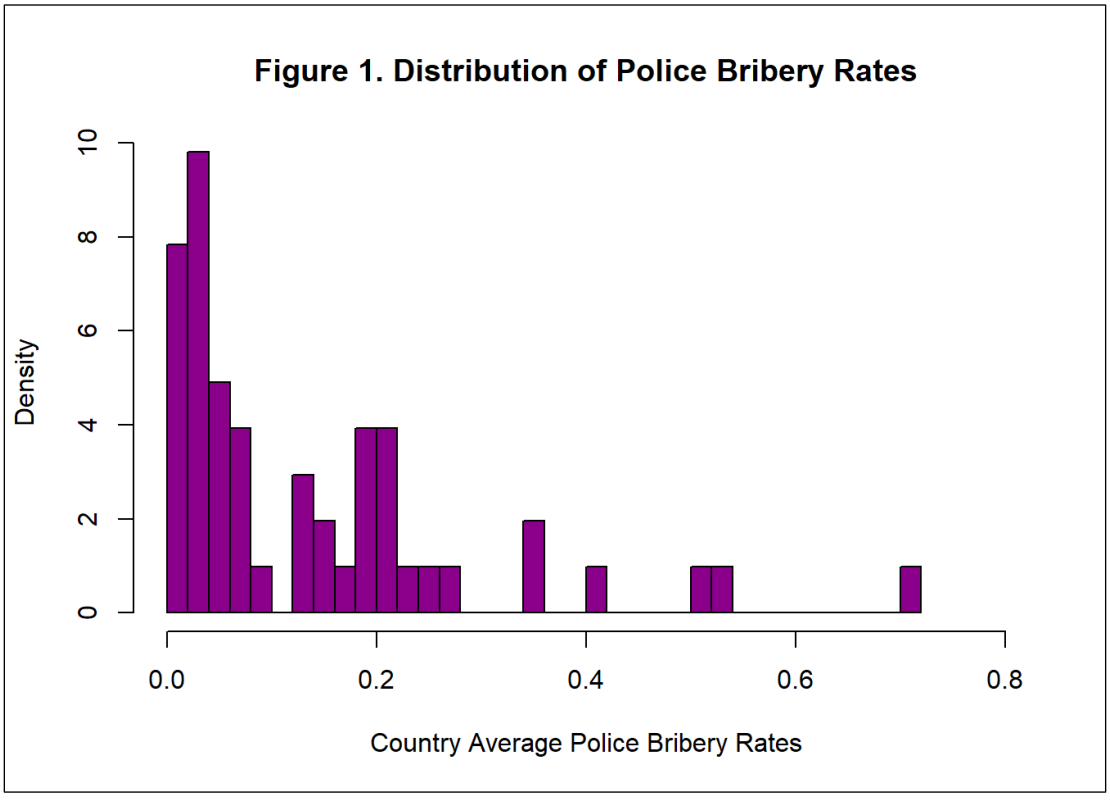
Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Pctl. 25	Pctl. 75	Max
Police Bribery Rate	51	0.1393	0.1534	0.003247	0.03	0.2001	0.72
Police Decentralization Index	51	0.5857	0.256	0.25	0.33	0.75	1
% Tax Revenue of GDP	49	0.1709	0.05555	0.08962	0.1274	0.2094	0.3382
Human Development Index	51	0.7968	0.09593	0.515	0.7485	0.8755	0.955
Urbanization Rate	51	0.6977	0.1695	0.2656	0.5881	0.8124	0.9779

Note: Police bribery rates come from country-year averages compiled from the 2013 and 2017 Global Corruption Barometer. Police Decentralization Index comes from Lowatcharin and Stallmann (2017), HDI, % tax revenue of GDP, and urbanization rates come from UN/World Bank Open Data.

For state capacity, I opted for this initial regression to use a state capacity measure for the "current" year (matching the DV country-year), acknowledging that I would prefer to do more research into an appropriate length to lag the variable. I used an alternative measure of state capacity, country-year tax revenue as a percentage of GDP (International Monetary Fund and

[8] I was not able to obtain individual-level data for the 2013 GCB, only the country averages found in the GCB's summary report (Hardoon and Heinrich 2013).

World Bank Open Data, 2022), as Lee and Zhang (2017)'s data was incomplete for the already-smaller set of countries I had remaining. **Table 1** shows descriptive statistics for the 51 countries that had PDI scores, bribery rates, and controls. COLDAT data, which include only dichotomous measures of colonial history, are left off the table. The mean bribery rate was 0.1393, which is low compared to the total 22% bribery rate when autocracies in the original 2017 GCB data set are included. Countries in the sample tend to have high HDI (mean=0.7968, sd=0.096) and urbanization rates (mean=69.77, sd=16.95). The Police Decentralization Index had a mean of 0.5857 on a 0 to 1 scale with a standard deviation of 0.256. **Figure 1** shows a histogram of country-year police bribery averages, indicating a clear skew towards low police bribery rates.



The available data is clearly limited in scope—despite including 51 democracies, the variation in the dependent variable is likely smaller, and the mean lower, than if a wider set of police bribery observations could be included from more democracies and more country-years. Acknowledging

these limitations and that I would prefer to use a lagged state capacity score in the future, these data are useful for testing for a preliminary association between PDI and police bribery rates, separate from colonial history, human development indices, urbanization, and a state's ability to collect tax revenue. In a second model, I included geopolitical region dummies from the UN's Regional Groups to capture possible unobservable confounders based on geopolitical region.

In **Table 2**, Model 1 presents estimates from linear regressions of the following form:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PDI_{it} + \beta_2 HDI_{it} + \beta_3 txrev_{it} + \beta_4 urban_{it} + \boldsymbol{\delta}'_i + \epsilon_{it},$$

where Y_{it} is *average reported bribery rate*, β_{PDI} is Lowatcharin and Stallman's (2017) *Police Decentralization Index*, *HDI* is country-year human development index, *txrev* is tax revenue as percent of GDP, $\boldsymbol{\delta}$ is a vector of colonial history dummies, and ϵ_{it} is the error term. Model 2 incorporates geopolitical fixed effects in the form of dummies. For the sake of these two models, I assume temporal independence given that I do not include multiple years for each country and the time gap between the 39 countries with data reported in 2017 and 12 countries with data from 2013 is sufficiently small. Should I later include multiple years for each country, I would add appropriate controls for temporal heterogeneity.

Table 2. Relationship Between Police Decentralization and Mean Police Bribery Rates

	Dependent variable:	
	Avg Police Bribery Rate	
	Model 1	Model 2 (Regional Effects)
	(1)	(2)
Police Decentralization Index	-0.034	-0.049
	(0.049)	(0.054)
HDI	-1.189***	-1.248***
	(0.189)	(0.210)
Urbanization	-0.102	-0.043
	(0.102)	(0.135)
Tax Revenue % GDP	-0.660**	-0.755***
	(0.251)	(0.273)
French Colony	-0.187***	-0.179**
	(0.067)	(0.075)
Dutch Colony	-0.097	-0.082
	(0.091)	(0.098)
Portuguese Colony	-0.043	-0.024
	(0.065)	(0.074)
Spanish Colony	-0.070**	-0.027
	(0.033)	(0.060)
British Colony	0.055	0.082**
	(0.033)	(0.039)
Observations	49	49
R^2	0.764	0.782
Adjusted R^2	0.710	0.701
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	
	Model 2 incorporates geopolitical regional dummy variables based on UN Regional Groups. Tax revenue data unavailable for Bolivia and Japan, some countries use closest available tax revenue data (within past five years). The Police Decentralization Index comes from Lowatcharin and Stallman's (2017) 0 to 1 measure of police decentralization, with 1 being the most decentralized. HDI, Urbanization, and Tax Revenue as percent GDP come from World Bank/United Nations data and are coded country-year. Colonial history dummies come from Becker's (2020) COLDAT set.	

From **Table 2**, the coefficient for Police Decentralization Index in Model 2 (including UN region dummies) is small in magnitude (-0.049) and does not come close to approaching

conventional levels of significance (p=0.37). In Model 1, the coefficient is -0.034 (sd=0.049), and likewise insignificant at any conventional levels. In both models, a higher score in a country's Human Development Index and a higher percentage of tax revenues of GDP both are significantly associated with a lower average bribery rate (Model 1, $p<0.01$; Model 2, $p<0.05$). Being a former French colony is significantly associated with a lower average bribery rate ($p<0.05$) in both models. British colonialism is significantly associated with a higher average bribery rate ($p<0.05$) in Model 2, while Spanish colonial history is significantly associated with a lower average bribery rate in Model 1 ($p<0.05$).[9]

While the results indicate a lack of relationship between police centralization and bribery as measured by PDI scores and GCB data, it is important to note that the pool of countries was heavily restricted to a small set of mostly European and Latin American nations, most of which were much more developed (according to their HDI), had much greater tax revenue collecting ability, and had varied but still relatively low rates of police bribery. Democracies with higher bribery rates according to Transparency International data are largely in countries not included in this dataset, such as in Africa and South/Southeast Asia. A full regression model would include those countries and in multiple years of GCB surveys, which would require attempting to code both with my proposed independent variable measurements as well as previous authors' measurements.

Research Design 2: *A subnational case study*

Could subnational variation in the centralization of policing help determine how police act in deference to or against their policing regime? I sought a single-country case in which there

[9] Note that several colonial dummies were not included in the regression due to applying to no observations.

is a stark contrast between how policing is politically organized on either side of a subnational border. On one side of the border, policing would be highly centralized—ideally, controlled by the national government. On the other side of the line, policing would be highly decentralized—ideally, at the lowest possible level of government. To my knowledge, there are very few instances of this case. While one could look across a national border at two countries, one with decentralized police and one with centralized police, a cross-national comparison would have to take into account country-level effects and other confounding variables related to the political structures and cultures of each country outside of policing that may nevertheless influence police agents' ability to commit acts of misconduct. A subnational case in which culture and social norms flow continuously, but political structure does not, might be an easier case to make causal inferences. I believe one such subnational case may fit the bill—that of Washington, D.C. compared to the Virginia and Maryland municipalities that are immediately adjacent to it.

The Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department has, as of 2022, 3,389 sworn members of its department, policing 671,803 residents of the District of Columbia (MPD 2023). For all intents and purposes, the Washington D.C. Metro Police is the most "general purpose" police agency in the district—it is not a highly specialized agency specifically designed for protection of the nation's capital to the same degree as the Capitol Police, Park Police, or U.S. Marshals Service, which also hold jurisdiction in the area. The Metro Police are the first-level community police of the district, with the primary responsibility to police residents, as opposed to protecting politicians or federal government buildings. Given the nature of the District, the Metropolitan Police does sometimes supplement higher-level law enforcement (MPD 2023). The Metropolitan Police, as well as the entire District government, exist under a special arrangement with the federal government known as the Home Rule Act, in which U.S. Congress has the

ability to directly pass legislation, repeal any District-created legislation, and retains the sole right to appoint judges to the District.[10] Therefore, the District operates essentially as an urban U.S. city under a politically centralized arrangement with the federal government. Cities such as Alexandria, Virginia or College Park, Maryland, on the other hand, are immediately or almost immediately adjacent to the District, but are three levels removed from the federal government. Their police therefore operate under one of the most highly decentralized arrangements possible, given that those municipalities have political authority over their own police.

I propose a research design that would exploit such a stark difference in political control of police across a border. Using subnational variation in police centralization around a specific boundary eliminates concern of country-level unobservables or confounders. There are several unobservable factors and unique qualities of working as a police officer in Washington D.C. versus Maryland or Virginia that may make an officer think differently about their job that are unrelated to department structure, creating concerns of a bundled treatment effect given that the border still exists—but the close geographic proximity of all respondents in the sample pool would ideally minimize any large differences. Given concern for a bundled treatment, I propose a two-part research design, a geographic regression discontinuity and matching, to assure robustness.

Dependent Variable

My goal would be to ask a battery of questions that help get at responses that would provide insight on **H2, H3** and **H4.** I have come up with three sample survey questions to test for

[10] D.C. Home Rule Act, Title VI, https://www.abfa.com/ogc/tit6.html.

H3	*Think about the concept of "protecting and serving" your community. How far do you believe your responsibility to "protect and serve" as a police officer extends?* a. Only to my specific division or precinct b. Only within my agency's jurisdiction c. Only to the places I frequent, like in and around where I work and live d. To my entire country e. Anywhere in the world I may be
H4	*Imagine that the Capitol Police has issued a voluntary mutual aid request to your department to protect federal buildings during a surge of unrest in the District. The request is strictly voluntary—it's been made clear it's up to each individual to decide whether to help out. How willing would you be to volunteer to protect federal institutions during a time of crisis?* a. Very unwilling b. Somewhat unwilling c. Unsure d. Somewhat willing e. Very willing
H2	*How acceptable to you would it be for an officer to refuse to enforce a law or make an arrest based on the officer's political beliefs?* a. Very unwilling b. Somewhat unwilling c. Unsure d. Somewhat willing e. Very willing

The first question tests **H3,** in what might be considered a police agent's *perceived extent of obligation*—whether local, regional or national. I would anticipate that all else equal, Metropolitan Officers (more centralized) would feel a closer connection to being responsible for policing the entire United States, given a much closer political relationship with the national government. The second question tests **H4,** or a police agent's *willingness to help the national government.* I anticipate that again, Metropolitan Police will feel more obligated than their non-federal neighbors to extend a helping hand, given their incorporation into the national government. The third question tests **H2,** or *forbearance*—willingness to disregard enforcement for political reasons. I anticipate Metropolitan officers will be less likely to do so, given federal oversight and political control of their department.

These are just three sample questions, and I would like to incorporate more into the final survey. In particular, I would be interested in asking further questions differentiating the national government from the nation, as police may feel one way towards governing institutions, but differently on a score of national affinity or nationalism. Given that I am interested in policing regime deference including and extending beyond the bounds of a local-level police agent's jurisdiction, for now my question testing **H4** makes specific mention of federal government institutions.

There may be some concern that the bluntness of these questions may impede police from answering honestly, but scholars like Farris and Holman (2023) have proven to be able to get an adequate sample size from such direct questioning on personal politics and job performance. However, I do express two concerns. One is the logistics in fielding such a survey—Farris and Holman had access to a directory of country sheriffs, while my strategy would rely on FOIA requests to gather contact information for lower-level police officers at dozens of different police departments. These normally take months and up to thousands of dollars of fees to process. As a test, I was able to fairly quickly obtain a directory of the Alexandria, VA police department, but this only yielded a pool of 200-300 sworn officers. I expect that a FOIA request for all contact information for the entire Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department would take months and be significantly more expensive. Secondly, I have doubt that rank-and-file would be so willing as Farris and Holman's police chiefs to answer surveys—in my experience as a journalist, I have found that the rank-and-file are hesitant to respond to requests for comment or information about their work. Hopefully, an assurance that the survey is anonymous and for academic research would be sufficient to assuage concerns.

Independent Variable/Controls

Given that this is a comparison between centralized and decentralized police, the independent variable is the degree of political centralization. The Metropolitan Police are highly centralized with respect to their relationship with the national government—they *are* employees of the national government—while municipal police in the surrounding area have no political connection to the national government, are not beholden to most of its directives and policies, and answer to municipal leaders and citizens. The following are control variables to be considered for the subnational research design, as they could plausibly impede proper evaluation between political centralization and officer survey responses:

Individual factors: Age, race, tenure, rank, partisanship, educational attainment, gender, place of residence

Work environment factors: Population density, median income, racial composition, crime rate, police per capita ratio

In addition, I would ask survey respondents to complete the Englehardt et al. (2021) exogenous authoritarianism scale, as well as the Ho et al. (2015) SDO_7 social dominance orientation scale. Both are scales designed with exogeneity from political confounders in mind. While I expect police to be higher on both scales than a non-police officer, I am curious as to whether the nature of DC versus suburb-policing is associated with systematic differences between groups of officers.

Regression Discontinuity Design

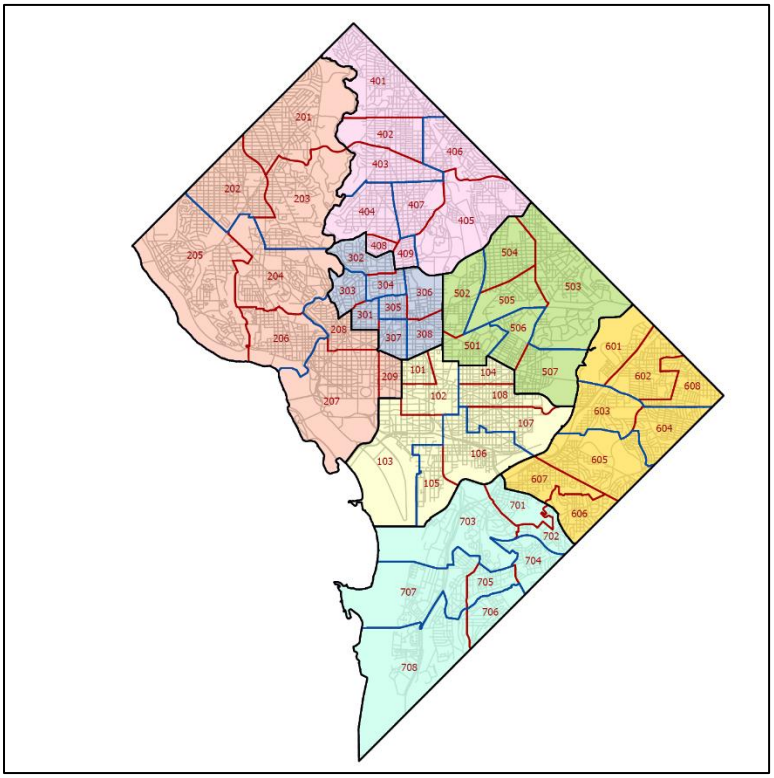


Figure 1: Map of Metro Police Public Service Areas. Source: Washington Metropolitical Police Department, 2019. (link)

The Washington Metro Police Department is divided into 7 Districts and 57 Police Service Areas. One potential research strategy would be to survey police officers organized by the PSA they work in and compare their survey responses to police officers who work for municipal police departments on the other side of the DC/MD or DC/VA border. For example, the city of Takoma Park, MD sits on the other side of the border with PSAs 401 and 406, while the city of Mount Rainier, MD sits adjacent to PSA 503. While the characteristics of the political organization of policing sharply differ on either side of the border threshold, other characteristics of the communities just inside or outside the border may be relatively continuous. If a sufficient

number of officers are surveyed, the means of survey responses could be compared as a function of distance from the DC border.

However, there exist several problems with such a design. One is that there are relatively few municipalities on the other side of the DC line due to the fact that Virginia and Maryland both have large amounts of unincorporated areas under county jurisdiction, policed by sheriff's deputies (VGIN 2023). Sheriff's deputies would be one step closer to the national government in the U.S. government hierarchy, meaning their incorporation would make the case study stray from a more pure "most similar" design. Also, assuming roughly equal distribution of Metro Police across all 57 PSAs, there are only 60-70 officers per PSA, before accounting for survey response rates. Regression discontinuity designs require a high number of observations compared to experiments (Khandker, Koowal, and Samad 2010), meaning a high degree of survey participation would be required. Finally, there exists the problem of bundled treatment effects: since the border still exists, there may be many other confounding factors that differ systematically on either side of the border. Even an officer patrolling just outside the D.C. border may experience differences in job duties or lifestyle that cannot be differentiated from the specific factor of political centralization. If the goal is to compare highly centralized to highly decentralized police to the greatest extent possible, a pure regression discontinuity without added methods may not be optimal.

Individual Police Officer Matching

A geographic regression discontinuity design may not provide a large enough sample size without straying farther away from the boundary, including county sheriff's deputies and county-level police, and having to consider bundled treatment effects. I argue that the most optimal design for a survey would be to match police officers on either side of the district line based on

their demographics and the circumstances they work under. The ideal scenario would be to match a Metropolitan Police officer's political and socioeconomic characteristics, plus the characteristics of their work environment, to that of a police officer outside the boundary of the District. If there is a systemic difference between survey responses, given that both sample pools live and work near the nation's capital and are matched on covaritates, there would be a stronger argument that the political structuring of the different departments has some relationship with the outcomes. In addition, it might be possible to match police who live in the same area but work inside vs. outside the District, as the District does not have a residency requirement to work as an officer there (MPD Help Desk, 2019). Such a matching design factoring in the residence of officers might help alleviate concerns of a bundled treatment. As previously mentioned, I would match on the following variables:

Individual factors: Age, race, tenure, rank, partisanship, educational attainment, gender, place of residence.

Work environment factors: Population density, median income, racial composition, crime rate, police per capita ratio.

Conclusion

This paper first argues that comparative politics work on policing, especially with respect to police acts of misconduct and violation of regime deference, needs to continue to work towards understanding how underlying political organization and structuring of policing affects how police behave, and with that the need for new, more nuanced measures of the political organization of policing. While preliminary analyses show no apparent relationship between an existing measure of police (de)centralization and a common violation of regime deference, this

finding only underscores the need for political scientists to collect more data on how police behave from a wider range of countries to be able to fully understand how the way we organize police, and the political machinations behind policing, may impact the potentially life-altering actions police undertake.

For my next steps, I intend to explore to feasibility of surveying police officers in the Washington D.C. metro area to gauge whether a difference in political control (federal versus municipal) impacts how police perceive their responsibilities, duties, and willingness to commit acts of misconduct. While time-, money-, and labor intensive, the relative ease with which I obtained contact information for one suburban D.C. department offers promise that a novel, direct survey of police officers is achievable. Finally, I intend to continue with my research by collecting cross-national data on political violence committed by police—to my knowledge, a new but necessary undertaking to better understand the whether political causes of such acts can be prevented.

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