

“Conflict Breeds Conflict”: Evaluating the Relationship Between Retaliatory Measures of  
State Repression and Political Dissent

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## ABSTRACT

Repression is a tool used by states not only to quell political dissent, but also to suppress and deter support for insurgents. To do so successfully, states strategically employ different forms of repressive measures to achieve their means. However, while the literature is in agreement that there is a positive relationship between dissent and repression, the mechanism behind this process remains obscured. The significance of understanding this mechanism lies in its potential contribution towards developing a more nuanced understanding of conflict and repression dynamics – specifically by addressing concerns of tactical adaptation by dissidents to evaluate the efficacy of using different methods of repressive measures to suppress dissent. The purpose of this paper is to build a theoretical explanation for this mechanism, taking an interdisciplinary approach by incorporating insights from relevant literature in political sociology and organizational theory to build upon the extant work in the conflict literature. I go on to test the soundness of my theory by identifying the specific conditions which prompts states to use repression in retaliation, and why they diversify the methods of repression they carry out. I argue that both the initial decision of the state to implement repressive measures, as well as employing a specific method of repression is a function of the level of threat that the dissidents/insurgents poses to the state, contingent on the type of goals, perpetrators, and tactics that have been used for the specific instance of conflict the regime is retaliating against. Preliminary findings from an empirical analysis using the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcome (NAVCO) v.3.0 dataset provides some evidence to support for my predictions. This theoretical framework serves to provide the foundations for future research on conflict dynamics of tactical interaction between the state’s use of repression and dissident protests.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Do retaliatory measures taken by the state against political dissent depend on the type of resistance campaigns they are faced with? What role does campaign characteristics – specifically the type of tactics, goals, and perpetrators – play in the state’s propensity to retaliate with varying degrees of repression, as opposed to making concessions or full accommodations? The increasing availability of data sources and efforts towards collecting micro-level data have led to more nuanced analyses predicated on increasingly coherent definition and measurement of repression that aims to capture variation in the lethal and nonlethal types of state repression .

Yet the literature on state repression have mostly focused on the causes and impact of state repression, such as identifying the conditions that a state would repress its citizens (Gartner and Regan 1996), what type of regimes are less repressive (Davenport 2007b; Regan and Henderson 2002), or the impact of state repression on post-conflict peace failures (Lichbach and Gurr 1981) and political participation (Zhukov and Talibova 2018). The problem lies in the treatment of every repressive event as if it were substantively equivalent, differentiated only by scope (large/small) or type (violent/nonviolent), which drastically limits how much we understand the relationship between repression and political dissent (Sullivan, Loyle, and Davenport 2012). On the phenomenon described as the "law of coercive responsiveness"<sup>1</sup>, statistical findings remain consistent and robust on the impact of dissent on repression, but does not necessarily answer the "punishment puzzle" – which reverses the causal arrow to observe the impact of repression on dissent. More specifically, it is neither clear how the process responding to behavioral threats to repression works, nor has the use of alternative mechanisms of control in the face of political conflict and the role of repression in the government’s repertoire yet been extensively examined (Davenport 2007a). Embedded in the research lies a presumption of proportionality, where it is assumed that authorities

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<sup>1</sup>This refers to the literature’s robust and consistent statistical findings of authorities always implementing some form of repressive action to counter or eliminate the behavioral threat aimed at changing the status quo.

respond to behavioral challenges with a tactic that is largely comparable to the one with which they have been confronted (Davenport and Inman 2012).

My analysis complements a resurgent interest on the behavioral impact of tactical interaction in the conflict–repression nexus. Scholars have started to (re)focus on the behavioral dynamics between the state and dissidents (Bakker, Hill, and Moore 2016; Lyall 2009) to understand the impact of repression on conflict, but have not extensively addressed the possibility of change in the type of state response to dissident tactics; extant research tends to largely ignore the variability of state retaliatory measures in face of varying dissident characteristics in adopting a static analysis towards dissident behavior. By assuming that states take on a uniform response to specific forms of dissident behavior, it largely misses the nuances that may account for the state’s use of repressive actions despite its mixed effectiveness, while also mischaracterizing the potential replacement of dissident tactics to have been a reduction of dissident behavior (Davenport 2007a). This paper is thus aimed towards addressing this gap by evaluating the different types of state response to dissident behavior contingent on its occurrence within the temporal sequences of political conflict.

I aim to explain such variance in state retaliatory measures to political dissent based on the level of threat the dissident groups pose to the state, by arguing that state perception of threat influences both the likelihood of using repression and the tactical selection of repression type. In evaluating my argument, I follow the precedent set forth in the violent conflict literature by setting my unit of analysis as campaigns, which are defined as a series of observable, continuous, purposive mass tactics or events in pursuit of a political objective (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013). Campaign-based analysis holds distinct advantage over events-based analysis, because it captures pertinent information on the details of events that may be a response to the action (or inaction) between the state and different campaigns. In addition, a myopic evaluation of information that only looks at events may obscure insights that can only be gleaned from micro-level details, such as strategic coherence and diversity in tactics for retaliation/resistance (Tarrow 2011).

To develop my theory on dissident threat to the state, I identify three specific campaign characteristics that the state would take into consideration when evaluating the degree of threat the dissidents pose – goals, perpetrator type, and tactic type – to test whether they result in different probability of the state using repression, and if so, what method of repression is chosen for retaliation. I test my arguments with data from the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) v.3.0 dataset, by running a binary logit model to evaluate whether the state’s likelihood to use repression differ, and then run an ordinal logit model to test for the different variations in the type of repression states use for retaliation. While my results reaffirm previous works in finding a high probability of states to employ repressive measures in face of political dissent, the findings also show differences in the likelihood of responding with different types of repressive measures depending on the type and characteristics of the dissenting group, providing support for the contention that a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between repression and dissent is necessary.

My study contributes to the conflict literature in both international relations and comparative politics. Most directly, it contributes to research in the study of conflict-repression nexus that presently faces a deadlock in ascertaining the impact of repression on political dissent. While the field’s renewed interest in testing interactive hypotheses have yielded insights that show prior trends in political conflict to be likely in influencing both how much dissent we observe and how repression influences ensuing dissident behavior afterwards (Sullivan, Loyle, and Davenport 2012), a gap still persists in understanding the mechanism that drives states’ selection of retaliatory measures, and explain for their variation. Addressing this gap will not only deepen our knowledge on the relationship between dissent and repression, it will also highlight the necessity to evaluate political violence and conflict through the behavioral interactions between state and non-state actors.

This paper will proceed as follows: first, I discuss the use and impact of repressive measures by the state in responding to political dissent. I then develop a theory of threat perception specifying how dissident characteristics affects the type of retaliatory measures

states employ. After explaining the data and methodological approach, I present my findings based on the results of the analysis. The conclusion will wrap up by discussing this paper's contribution to the literature and potential directions for future research.

## II. REPRESSION AND POLITICAL DISSENT

Political repression is one manifestation of political violence, where repressive actions are directed at individuals and groups based on their current or potential participation in noninstitutional efforts for social, cultural, or political change (Earl 2011). It is generally understood as a form of coercion exacting threats and intimidation to compel targets. Such coercive tactics tend to involve the actual or threatened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization, within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, to impose a cost on the target while also aiming to deter specific activities and/or beliefs which are perceived to be a challenge to government personnel, practices or institutions (Davenport 2007a; Goldstein 1978).

While easily mistaken as a form of state violence, state repression is not synonymous with state violence in that it is a conceptually broader concept that includes coercive measures that does not necessarily involve the use of violence. This is evident from the generally agreed-upon definition of the concept, which specifies state repression to be the application of state power that violates First Amendment-type rights, due process in the enforcement and adjudication of the law<sup>2</sup>, and personal integrity or security<sup>3</sup> (Davenport 2007b). This conceptual confusion stems mostly from the field's tendency to focus primarily on examining the violent forms, in part because they are more common – as we can observed from Table 1 – but also because the coercive power of violent repression are assumed to better squelch dissent and deter opposition.

However, using repressive measures to enforce obedience – especially if it is violent, mas-

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<sup>2</sup>Violations of "generally accepted standards of police action and judicial and administrative behavior related to the political beliefs of the person involved" (Goldstein 1978)

<sup>3</sup>Rights of individual survival and security, such as freedom from torture, "disappearance", imprisonment, extra-judicial execution, and mass killing

Table 1: Types of State Repression: 1991-2012

Type	Count
nonmaterial and nonphysical repression	894
material and physical repression short of killing	2182
material and physical repression intended to result in death	2821

Data Source: NAVCO v3.0

sive, and indiscriminate – usually results in inciting opposition (Rozenas and Zhukov 2019). This is because indiscriminate methods of violence targets at random, with no regards to guilt or innocence (Downes 2007), and with no credible efforts made to distinguish between the two within the population at large (Lyll 2009). Such methods serves to disperse responsibility for the violence and forces cooperation by deterring others from participating and/or joining the resistance campaigns, and coerce compliance with the state (Kalyvas 2006). Success of using indiscriminate measures of repression is difficult to pinpoint, and thus relies on conditional factors that evaluates its efficacy – such as the successful deterrence of retaliations (Lyll 2009), the defeat of insurgents in a shorter period of time (Downes 2007), and the lack of success/failure in generating concessions (Downes 2007; Pape 1996). While indiscriminate methods of repression is neither a long-term winning strategy (Arreguín-Toft 2001; Downes 2007; Merom 2003) nor a one-size-fits-all strategy, there still exists a strategic utility for its use – at the very least it remains a disruptive mechanism that impedes the accumulation of resources and prevents mobilization for political contestation (Zhukov 2014).

Yet violent methods of repression – such as killings, torture, and other brutal practices – which violates physical integrity rights are not the only effective means of inducing coercion; restrictions on civil rights to limit coordination and mobilization capacities of groups of individuals can also function as a powerful instrument that stymies dissent (Escribà-Folch 2013). Nevertheless, there still exist a preference in the discipline for studying the violent methods of repression, which stems from the field’s predominant approach to examining state repression from both a rationalist and structuralist orientation. The former is attributed to the prevailing assumption that coercive action is predicated on a cost-benefit calculus, while

the latter is due to the belief that diverse aspects of the political and economic environment may directly influence the decision-making calculus (Davenport and Inman 2012). Research that have taken such positions have yielded findings identifying factors of domestic political environment and economic development (Davenport 1995, 2007a; Gartner and Regan 1996; Regan and Henderson 2002) as strong determinants of both the state's decision to respond with repression, and the degree of repressive measure that is employed.

One area of consensus that comes out from this branch of work is regarding the state's decision to use repressive measures; scholars contend that authorities use repressive measures to retaliate against threats to maintaining their authority and position of power (Besley and Persson 2009; Escribà-Folch 2013; Ritter 2014). These findings are corroborated by the social movement literature; arguments relying on the "action-reaction" model of political mediation contend that movements<sup>4</sup> that are dramatic, disruptive and threatening to elites prompts a rapid response that typically are either concessions and/or repression (Amenta et al. 2010; Andrews 2001; Earl 2011; Vann.Jr 2018). Coined as the "Law of Coercive Responsiveness", this approach to understanding repression finds that authorities generally employ some form of repressive action to counter or eliminate the behavioral threat that poses challenges to the status quo (Davenport 2007a). Here, behavioral threats are understood as collective acts of political contestation which increases the visibility of the dissent and the strength of its support (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). Although many threats are treated as posing a uniform threat to authorities, findings from the "threat perception" literature identify conditions under which state perception of threat varies, posing a challenge to the uniformity assumption of threat (Earl 2011); studies that observe variations in the level of threat finds that they may be a function of the mobilization potential of the opposition and/or the size of the ruling elite's support coalition (Hendrix and Salehyan 2019), or based on shifts – from minor to extreme – in the nature of the threat posed by an opposition group (Gartner and Regan 1996).

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<sup>4</sup>Under the premise that mobilization has the momentary potential to leverage change through its impact on political elites, electoral coalitions, or public opinion.



However, there seems to be a gap in the literature when it comes to explaining how the different levels of threat perceived by the state influences variations in the type of government response; not only are they focused on the likelihood of states using repression, but it also does not consider the broad spectrum of responses the government considers in responding to the differing levels of threat. Repression includes both violent forms of repression involving violations of personal integrity as well as the less violent/nonviolent forms that consist of restriction of individuals' civil liberties – where the less violent/nonviolent forms attempt to deter collective action by limiting the coordination and mobilization capacity of actors and individuals, while the violent forms are aimed towards eliminating those individuals or groups the regime suspects of having surpassed those limits or being likely to do so (Escribà-Folch 2013). But it also includes conciliatory responses ranging from full accommodation to making partial concessions that should also be included in the pool of possible responses the state may take in responding to threats. State response to political contestation should therefore consider the full breadth of options that the ruling elite considers in determining the impetus for repressive action by the government as a response to behavioral challenges.

### **III. IDENTIFYING THREAT TRIGGERS**

If states use repression as a tool for combating threat, then the assumption would be that they would respond to different levels of threat with different forms of repression – both in terms of type, scope, and severity. But what type of actions or events do states perceive to be a threat, and what are the different thresholds of threat perception that pushes states to respond with different types of repression? Based on findings from the extant literature, I argue that three specific characteristics – goals, perpetrators, and tactics – of the opponents are salient in producing different levels of threat, and therefore observe different types of repression as a retaliatory response by the state. Given that repression is not a dichotomous choice – where a government either does or does not engage a repressive strategy – but rather is understood as a continuous outcome (Gartner and Regan 1996; Lichbach and Gurr 1981),

I follow the literature's rationalist orientation in utilizing a decision-theoretic framework of rational choice to evaluate the role of threat in determining state response to dissident action.

The logic of how the role of threat precipitates political repression is taken from the work done by Regan and Henderson 2002. Their work focuses on the demands place on the ruling coalition by opposition groups; steep demands leads to a preference on both sides for some level of violence to either the status quo or government accommodation of the opposition's demands, whereas when there are no demands perceived to be worth fighting over, the political process is expected to accommodate those demands made by the opposition. However, their measurement of internal threat – which is the average magnitude of rebellion for a given year<sup>5</sup> – is objectionable because the underlying assumption being made is that the level of threat posed will always be proportional to the observed magnitude of a rebellion. But because I am interested in analyzing the tactical dynamics between the state and dissidents within the context of strategic behavior, I rely on works from the existing literature to select indicators that allude to the potential level of threat dissidents may project upon the government.

The first characteristic I identify is the stated goals of the resisting opponent. Sanín and Wood 2014 argue in their work that ideology matters in observing variations in armed group behavior. This is because of its instrumental value in socializing combatants with heterogeneous motivations into a coherent group, dampening principal-agent problems, prioritizing competing goals, and coordinating external actors including civilians. Ideologies – or goals in this context – that are deemed to be strong threats are those that are maximalist in nature, i.e. those that demand a radical reshaping of the existing political order (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013). Resistance groups or insurgent organizations with maximalist goals pose a significantly higher threat than those with reformist goals because it poses a significantly high level of threat to the sitting regime(Davenport 1995).

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<sup>5</sup>This is the annual average of three indicators: the number of fatalities, the number opposition troops, and the area under control of opposition forces. This data is taken from the State Failure Project (by Ted Robert Gurr, 1999), which is now known as Political Instability Task Force (PITF) State Failure Problem Set, which can be found here.

Table 2: Number of Events by Campaign Characteristics: 1991-2012

Campaign Goals	Count	Perpetrators	Count	Tactics	Count
Maximalist	14262	Opposition	7261	Violent	16728
Reformist	19720	Rebels	12890	Mixed	806

Taken from a sample of 26 countries with major nonviolent and violent campaigns (Data: NAVCO 3.0.)

This is evident when we reference the literature on rebel governance; rebel groups with maximalist goals (in this case, territorial secession) provides goods and services regardless of their support base to compete with the state by attempting to establish legitimacy and recognition of statehood (Stewart 2017). Similarly, states are more concerned with the demands they face from the political opposition, and as such, increases or decreases the level of repression correspondingly to the level of threat they face (Regan and Henderson 2002). Taken together, this implies a clear relationship between the goals of organized political dissidents and the likelihood and type of repression states will respond with:

**Hypothesis 1.** *The government is more likely to respond by using repression when facing campaigns with maximalist goals than reformist goals.*

**Hypothesis 1.a.** *The government is more likely to respond with violent methods of repression on campaigns with maximalist goals than reformist goals.*

States also take into consideration *who* their opponent is when considering the use and method of repression. If there were no serious challenges to the status quo, it would be most probable that states would use non-violent methods of silencing the opposition; because repression is highly costly, states would only decide to use it when there is a credible challenge (Gartner and Regan 1996). It would be wrong to consider all non-state armed groups to be strategically identical, and thus seen to pose the same level of threat to the state, because there are systematic differences that distinguishes one non-state armed group from another (Sanín 2008). Nonetheless, nonstate violent actors offer elites the benefits of retaining power while reducing the costs of international criticism and voter dissatisfaction incurred by state

repression (Kleinfeld and Barham 2018). Taken together, the relationship between the type of perpetrator and regime response can be stated as:

**Hypothesis 2.** *The government is more likely to respond by using repression when perpetrators are rebels than political opposition*

**Hypothesis 2.a.** *The government is more likely to respond with violent methods of repression on rebel perpetrators than the political opposition.*

While any type of mass behavior directed against the state, its policies, and its practices are perceived as a threat to the state, threat perceptions arguably differ based on frequency, presence, strategies, and culturally acceptable levels of dissent (Davenport 1995). The use of violent tactics, especially in the case when terrorist tactics are repeatedly used, is a strong indicator of threat due to the competition of public support it generates. Using terrorist tactics is a costly signaling strategy of attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling, and outbidding (Bloom 2004; Findley and Young 2012; Kydd and Walter 2006) – the intent to which the goal is to undermine the regime. As such, it is only logical to assume that repressive measures would be a response to violent campaigns. Yet when it comes to dissent that uses both nonviolent and violent tactics, it becomes difficult to assume. In order to test whether there is any difference in the state response when faced with violent tactics against mixed tactics, I hypothesize that there will be a difference both in the likelihood of states responding with repression and the type of repression they employ:

**Hypothesis 3.** *The government is more likely to respond by using repression when violent tactics are used than mixed tactics.*

**Hypothesis 3.a.** *The state is more likely to respond with violent methods of repression against campaigns that use violent tactics than mixed tactics.*

## IV. DATA AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To evaluate the relationship between campaign characteristics and state responses, I use available data from the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) 3.0 dataset (Chenoweth, Pinckney, and Lewis 2017, 2018). It is a compilation of country-day event data on tactical selection in a sample of 26 countries<sup>6</sup> with major nonviolent and violent campaigns from 1991-2012. The unit of analysis is by ‘campaign’, where campaigns are defined as "a series of observable, continuous, purposive mass tactics or events in pursuit of a political objective"<sup>7</sup> (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013). NAVCO v3.0 is the first event-based dataset concentrated on the tactics and dynamics of oppositional methods categorized by theorized effects, which contains actions by both nonviolent and violent antigovernment campaigns, as well as responses by governments, domestic non-aligned parties, and international actors. Because nonviolent methods are categorized according to whether it is an act of commission or omission, or whether it is spatially concentrated or dispersed, it allows scholars to evaluate the distinct and cumulative effects of different types of violent and nonviolent tactics (Chenoweth, Pinckney, and Lewis 2018).

NAVCO 3.0 has several advantages over comparable datasets for my research purposes; it is first of its kind to systematically explore the sequencing of tactics and their effects on the strategic outcomes of the campaigns. Variables include focus on: (1) the number of groups or movements associated with the campaigns; (2) growth and demise of movement membership or participation; (3) types of tactics used, identifying several hundred possible tactics as diverse as protests, sit-ins, massive noncooperation, and internet-blog postings in opposition to the regime; (4) the sequencing of tactics used, and the outcome of sequencing

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<sup>6</sup>The countries are: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Estonia, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Yemen. Partial data is also available for China (1991-1992, 2010-2012), India (2011-2012), Iraq (1999-2000, 2009-2012), South Korea (1991-1996, 2012), and the United States (2007-2011).

<sup>7</sup>They are observable, in that the tactics used are overt and documented, and are also continuous, lasting anywhere from days to years, which distinguishes it from one-off events or revolts. They are also purposive, in consciously acting with a specific objective in mind, with discernible leadership and often with organizational and operational names, distinguishing them from random riots or spontaneous mass acts.

on the evolution of the campaign; and (5) the full spectrum of possible regime responses, from no response to massive repression, which makes it apt for my empirical analysis. While the limited scope of its coverage (both by year and country) may be a drawback, the 3.0 version is unique from its previous versions in that it contains information on the type, sequence, and outcomes of different tactics employed by unarmed civilians and armed insurgents. Such data makes it possible to analyze the interactions between campaigns, their allies, and their opponents, and how these interactions affect the strategic outcomes of the campaigns.

*Dependent Variable* 'State posture' is a categorical variable that notes the degree of conciliation or repression embedded in the regime's actions in reaction to campaign activity. The NAVCO 3.0 data codes the different types of state response as the following: (1) full accommodation, (2) material concessions, (3) non-material concessions, (4) neutral, (5) non-material and non-physical repression, (6) material and/or physical repression short of killing, and (7) material and/or physical repression intended to result in death. I maintained the coding scheme for this variable – which has been coded as an ordinal categorical variable – following the NAVCO 3.0 coding structure to denote the degree of strength in the regime's response to campaign events. But in order to evaluate hypotheses 1,2, and 3, I recoded this variable as a binary variable, where I collapsed full accommodation, material concessions, and non-material concessions as CONCESSION (0), and non-material and non-physical repression, material and/or physical repression short of killing, and material and/or physical repression intended to result in death as REPRESSION (1).

What is unique about the original coding scheme for this variable is that it is coded as a *response* for each event-day in the dataset – meaning that it is coded based on the regime's actions *in reaction* to the corresponding campaign activity that is coded as observations in the data. This seven-level ordinal variable is coded following Dugan & Chenoweth's seven-point guide for the conciliatory–repression scale (Dugan and Chenoweth 2012), and because it is coded in the data as a response to specific events for political dissent, immediate concerns to the potential endogenous relationship between state response and my independent variables

(specifically with the goals and tactics of dissidents) can be alleviated.

*Independent Variables* The three primary variables of interest in capturing threat considerations by the state are campaign goals, perpetrator type, and tactic type of dissident campaigns. The variable for campaign goals is a categorical variable that is coded as (0) regime change, (1) significant institutional reform, (2) policy change, (3) territorial secession, (4) greater autonomy, (5) anti-occupation, and (6) unknown. To evaluate hypothesis 1 and 1.a, I have recoded this variable as a binary variable, by collapsing significant institutional reform, policy change, and greater autonomy as REFORMIST (0) and regime change, territorial secession, and anti-occupation as MAXIMALIST (1) type of goals. The former refers to campaign goals that, while require significant policy change and/or concession, does not demand a radical reshaping of the existing political order, which the latter type of goal does (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013).

The coding for perpetrator type has a 3-digit coding structure that specifies the individuals or groups perpetrating the event. It is coded for the police, government, judiciary, military, political opposition, rebels, regime loyalists, activists, nonaligned third party, state intelligence, unidentified armed forces, and unidentified unarmed civilians. For the purpose of my analysis, I collapsed police and military as POLICE/MILITARY; and government, judiciary, and state intelligence as GOVERNMENT, with no changes for the remaining perpetrators, to showcase the predicted probabilities of state repression by perpetrator type.

Tactic type is an unordered categorical variable that designates whether a campaign event is primarily violent or nonviolent, coded as (0) primarily violent event, (1) primarily nonviolent event, and (2) mixed nonviolent and violent activity. To observe the variations in regime response to different types of tactics, the coding structure for the three different types of tactics coded by NAVCO 3.0 was preserved in the analysis. The percentage of events categorized as non-violent comprise 60.5% of the data while violent actions consist of 37.7%, with only 1.8% of the observations are classified as 'mixed'.

To account for potential confounds with campaign characteristics and regime response,

I also include control variables with hold constant relevant campaign and regime attributes that may skew my empirical analysis. Many scholars in the state repression literature argues that regime type matters in whether the state uses repression to quell dissent (Davenport 2007b; Escribà-Folch 2013; Ritter 2014). To control for this, I include the Polity 2 regime score of the country in which the campaign is undertaken, ranging from -10 (autocratic) to 10 (democratic)(Marshall and Jaggers 2002).

Target characteristics – taken from NAVCO 3.0 – are also included as controls to account for the possibility that state response may vary depending on the type of targets the perpetrators go after. In the case of violent tactics used by dissidents and rebels, the targets of the violence may not be the same as the target audience, but instead is used as a “pre-meditated use, or threat of use, of violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through intimidation of a target audience, beyond that of the immediate victims" (Arce and Sandler 2007; Hinkkainen and Pickering 2013). Because we are more interested in how the state reacts to different forms of resistance, and less interested whether their response varies depending on the targets that are affected, I included the target characteristics to control for potential confounds that may occur.

I also use data available from the Correlates of War (COW) project (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972) to include the following controls: military expenditure (logged) and military personnel (logged) to address the possibility that the defensive capabilities of countries with a stronger military might impact the frequency and strength of state repression; a country’s iron and steel production and primary energy consumption (logged) to control for the impact of societal wealth and the propensity for civil unrest; and lastly, total population (logged) and urban population to control for the potential impact of number of population and urban centers may have on the different types of campaigns and the type of state response the government chooses.



Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
CowCode	112,381	606.489	155.231	2	770
Year	108,656	2,005.481	6.519	1,990	2,012
Geoscope	112,381	1.921	1.258	0	4
Actor ID	112,381	1.914	0.800	1	5
Campaign Goals	44,330	2.461	2.216	0	6
Tactical Choice	44,584	0.641	0.516	0	2
State Posture	10,207	5.298	1.486	0	7
Military Expenditure (Logged)	97,107	6.362	0.806	4.000	8.841
Military Personnel (Logged)	111,506	2.266	0.625	0.477	3.505
Iron and Steel Production	112,381	24,317.600	106,549.500	0	731,040
Primary Energy Consumption (Logged)	111,784	4.671	0.717	3.148	6.727
Total Population (Logged)	112,381	4.605	0.582	2.746	6.139
Urban Population	112,381	33,171.310	73,852.650	0	440,254
Polity2	98,677	0.545	5.598	-10	10

## MODEL SPECIFICATION

I test my predictions by running a binary and ordinal logistic regression analysis through generalized linear models (GLMs). The binary regression analysis is to ascertain the likelihood of state repression as the method of retaliation over responding by making accommodations/concessions while the ordinal regression analysis is to examine variations in the state's method of response. The utility of using GLMs is in its capacity to go beyond the traditional framework of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression by modeling binary or ordinal dependent variables<sup>8</sup>. Such flexibility is attributed to modeling uncertainty with probabilities instead of representing it as model error  $\epsilon$ . The remainder of this section will explain the specifics of the model construct for the two regressions.

*Binary Logistic Regression Model* To construct my binary logit model, I start out by first building my GLM, which comprise of the model specification necessary for processing different types of dependent variables. Equation 1 is the complete version of the GLM which

<sup>8</sup>GLMs can also model dependent variables that are: unordered categorical, counts, bounded continuous, hybrids (such as part-binary, part-count), and very non-normal continuous.

has been built to model binary outcomes.

$$f(y_i|y_i^*) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-y_i^*}} y_i \left( 1 - \frac{1}{1 + e^{-y_i^*}} \right)^{1-y_i} \quad (1)$$

$$y_i^* = \alpha + \beta_1 x_{i1} + \dots + \beta_k x_{ik}$$

Here, the missing error term  $\epsilon$  in the linear model  $y_i^*$  seems to be the only thing that distinguishes it from a linear regression model; both types of models have the same interpretation for coefficients, moderation (interaction/curvilinearity), mediation (control), and logged variables. But it is also significantly distinct from linear regression, where the transformative process of  $y_i^*$  to substitute for the model parameter makes  $y_i^*$  latent and not observable. Additionally, coefficients are not necessarily treated as equivalent to the results of the model – unlike the coefficients of linear regressions – but are instead used to calculate the results of the model.

To briefly explain how the GLM model was constructed, the first consideration was the binary nature of my dependent variable – non-repression coded as (0) and repression as (1) – making it necessary to set the parameter of the linear model as  $p_i \in [0, 1]$ <sup>9</sup> with the Bernoulli distribution function  $f(y_i|p_i = p_i^{y_i}(1 - p_i)^{1-y_i})$  before incorporating the linear model  $y_i^*$  into this distribution. This is done by setting  $p_i = g(y_i^*) = \frac{1}{1+e^{-y_i^*}}$ , so that any values of  $y_i^*$  are transformed into values that range between  $[0, 1]$ .

The next step involves the construction of the regression model, which starts by taking the GLMs for each observation and multiplying them together to create a likelihood function<sup>10</sup>. The highest point of this function is the maximum likelihood estimate (MLE) of the parameter – the most likely value of the parameter given the data – which can be found by taking the derivative of the function. To make the derivatives less complex, the natural

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<sup>9</sup>The probability of a particular outcome being a 1

<sup>10</sup>Given that  $y_i$  satisfies the the independent and identically distributed (IID) assumption.

logarithm of a likelihood function (log-likelihood function) is differentiated instead.

$$l(\alpha, \beta_1, \dots, \beta_k) = \sum_{i=1}^N [-y_i^*(1 - y_i) - \ln(1 + e^{-y_i^*})] \quad (2)$$

Taking the derivative and simplifying the log-likelihood function results in the binary logit model that will be used to run my empirical analysis. Based on the model result, I then use the following equation to extract the predicted probabilities from my model, which is to better illustrate the results of hypotheses tests as well as the model output.

$$P(y_i = 1) = \pi_i = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\hat{\alpha} + \hat{\beta}_1 x_{i1} + \hat{\beta}_2 x_{i2} + \dots + \hat{\beta}_k x_{ik})}} \quad (3)$$

*Ordinal Logistic Regression Model* Constructing the ordinal logit model starts off from a similar procedural path with the binary model identification; the parameters are set by the categorical distribution function, which is an extension of the Bernoulli distribution function that models outcomes to take on one of  $K$  possible categories.

$$f(y_i) = p_{i1}^{I_{i1}} p_{i2}^{I_{i2}} \dots p_{iK-1}^{I_{iK-1}} p_{iK}^{I_{iK}} \quad (4)$$

$$y_i^* = \alpha + \beta_1 x_{i1} + \dots + \beta_k x_{ik}$$

Here,  $I_{i1}, I_{i1}, \dots, I_{iK-1}, I_{iK}$  indicates dummy variables for each category  $K$ . Much like the binary GLM, the ordinal GLM uses the same linear model  $y_i^*$  to set the parameter range as  $p_{i1}, p_{i2}, \dots, p_{iK-1}, p_{iK} \in [0, 1]$ . What is difference from the binary GLM is that because the probability of each category is separately defined – cutpoint values  $C_1, C_2, \dots, C_{K-1}$  need to be used to identify a function that ensures  $y_i^*$  to be always greater than the last cutpoint. The following function serves to do just that, in addition to transforming values of  $y_i^*$  to fall between the range set by the parameter  $[0, 1]$ .

$$p_{ij} = g(y_i^*) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(C_j - y_i^*)}} - \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(C_{j-1} - y_i^*)}} \quad (5)$$

With the ordinal GLM now defined, I use it to solve for the first derivative of the log-likelihood function, which yield the ordinal logistic regression model that will be used to explore variations in the state's response to dissent.

$$l(\alpha, \beta_1, \dots, \beta_k | y_i, x_i) = \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{k=1}^K I_{ik} \ln \left( \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(C_k - y_i^*)}} - \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(C_{k-1} - y_i^*)}} \right) \quad (6)$$

To better illustrate the model results, I will be using the following function to extract the predicted probability values for each category of my outcome variable. The model results and the predicted probabilities will be used to run statistical simulations that generates results that conform to my predictions.

$$p_{iK} = g(y^*) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(C_k - \alpha - \beta_1 x_{i1} - \dots - \beta_k x_{ik})}} - \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(C_{k-1} - \alpha - \beta_1 x_{i1} - \dots - \beta_k x_{ik})}} \quad (7)$$

## V. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The results of the empirical analyses conducted for this study are displayed in Table 4 and Table 5. Table 4 presents the coefficients for my independent variables on the likelihood of states responding with repressive measures, while Table 5 on the other hand, displays the coefficients for my independent variables on each option states can choose in responding to dissent. These results were then used to calculate and plot their predicted probabilities and confidence intervals, to better illustrate the results and test my hypotheses. I will present my findings by first discussing the likelihood of states using repressive measures to retaliate against dissidents, then go into my findings on the probability of states responding to contestation that not only accounts for nuances in different methods of repression, but also include the likelihood of states making concessions or full accommodations.

Table 4: Model Output for Binary Logit

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Government Response binary logit
Perp: Police/Military	-0.930 (0.808)
Perp: Govt.	-1.725** (0.794)
Perp: Loyalists	-4.235*** (0.917)
Perp: Nonaligned	-1.199** (0.545)
Perp: Opposition	0.344** (0.159)
Perp: Rebels	-1.419*** (0.283)
Perp: UAF	-0.705 (0.571)
Perp: UNS	-0.728 (0.501)
Target: Police/Military	-0.079 (1.086)
Target: Govt	-1.070 (1.060)
Target: Loyalists	11.485 (252.349)
Target: Nonaligned	-2.831*** (1.098)
Target: Opposition	-0.247 (1.290)
Target: Rebels	-2.250* (1.216)
Target: UAF	-0.435 (1.278)
Target: UNS	-0.700 (1.137)
Goals: Inst. Reform	-0.319 (0.218)
Goals: Policy Change	-0.967*** (0.191)
Goals: Territorial Secession	0.540 (0.381)
Goals: Greater Autonomy	-1.516*** (0.260)
Goals: Anti-Occupation	13.666 (979.802)
Goals: Unknown	0.098 (0.315)
Tactics: Non-Violent	-3.880*** (0.339)
Tactics: Mixed	-1.609*** (0.412)
Military Exp. (Logged)	1.756*** (0.188)
Military Personnel (Logged)	-0.581** (0.256)
Iron and Steel Production	0.00001*** (0.00000)
Primary Energy Consumption (Logged)	-0.578*** (0.203)
Total Population (Logged)	0.550** (0.242)
Urban Population	-0.00002*** (0.00000)
Polity2	-0.079*** (0.012)
Constant	-2.489 (1.702)
Observations	5,422
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,403.766

*Note:*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Table 5: Model Output for Ordered Logit

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	Government Response ordered logit
Perp: Police/Military	-0.386 (0.416)
Perp: Govt.	-0.747* (0.429)
Perp: Loyalists	-1.146** (0.508)
Perp: Nonaligned	-0.216 (0.185)
Perp: Opposition	0.196*** (0.073)
Perp: Rebels	1.209*** (0.098)
Perp: UAF	0.270** (0.121)
Perp: UNS	-0.229 (0.214)
Target: Police/Military	1.543*** (0.222)
Target: Govt	0.214 (0.215)
Target: Loyalists	0.107 (0.299)
Target: Nonaligned	-0.934*** (0.243)
Target: Opposition	-0.338 (0.317)
Target: Rebels	-0.166 (0.295)
Target: UAF	0.665** (0.285)
Target: UNS	-0.197 (0.236)
Goals: Inst. Reform	0.357*** (0.090)
Goals: Policy Change	-0.018 (0.078)
Goals: Territorial Secession	-0.279*** (0.095)
Goals: Greater Autonomy	-0.183* (0.107)
Goals: Anti-Occupation	-0.380 (0.575)
Goals: Unknown	0.191** (0.097)
Tactics: Non-Violent	-2.274*** (0.089)
Tactics: Mixed	-0.196* (0.108)
Military Exp. (Logged)	0.835*** (0.073)
Military Personnel (Logged)	-0.480*** (0.090)
Primary Energy Consumption (Logged)	-0.727*** (0.078)
Total Population (Logged)	0.227*** (0.079)
Polity2	-0.026*** (0.004)
full accomodation material concess.	-3.999*** (0.391)
material concess. non-material concess.	-3.038*** (0.384)
non-material concess. neutral	-2.211*** (0.382)
neutral nonmaterial/nonphysical repress.	0.557 (0.381)
nonmaterial/nonphysical repress. material/physical repress.	1.228*** (0.380)
material/physical repress. repress. for death	3.336*** (0.382)
Observations	8,209

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## LIKELIHOOD OF REPRESSION

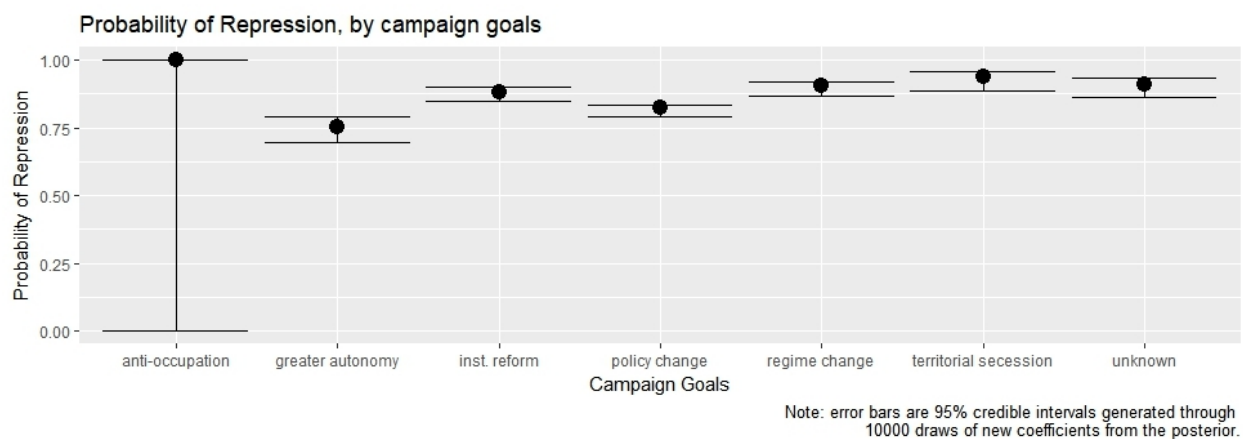


Figure 1: Likelihood of Retaliatory State Repression, by Goals

Figure 1 shows the probability of state responding to a campaign with repressive measures depending on the different campaign goals – ranging from anti-occupation to unknown – the regime is face with. Excluding the case of when the campaign goal is for anti-occupation<sup>11</sup> and when campaign goals are unknown, we can see that the probability of repression for the different types of campaign goals are higher for campaigns with regime change and territorial secession as goals, while the probability is slightly lower for campaigns with goals such as greater autonomy, institutional reform, and policy change.

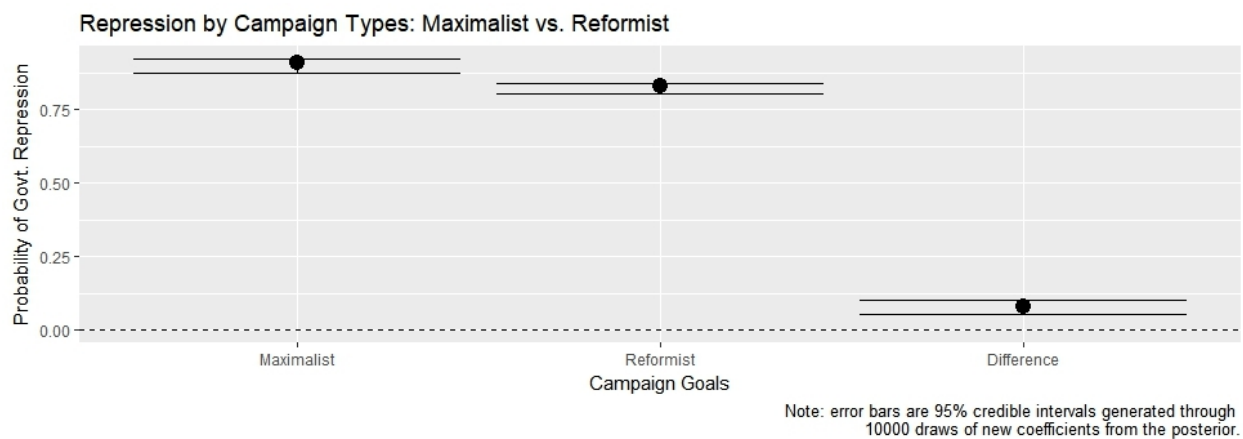


Figure 2: Differences in Probability, by Campaign Goals

<sup>11</sup>The error bars show a lack of confidence in the results.

The likelihood of states using repressive measures when faced with maximalist<sup>12</sup> or reformist<sup>13</sup> goals are illustrated in Figure 2. Confirming expectations of hypothesis 1, we can see that it is more likely that regimes will respond with repression when faced with campaigns with maximalist goals than reformist goals. While there seems to be a significant difference in the probability of states responding with repression when faced with the two different types of campaign goals, we can still observe that both types of goals have a very high probability of being faced with repressive measures from the state as a response to their activities.

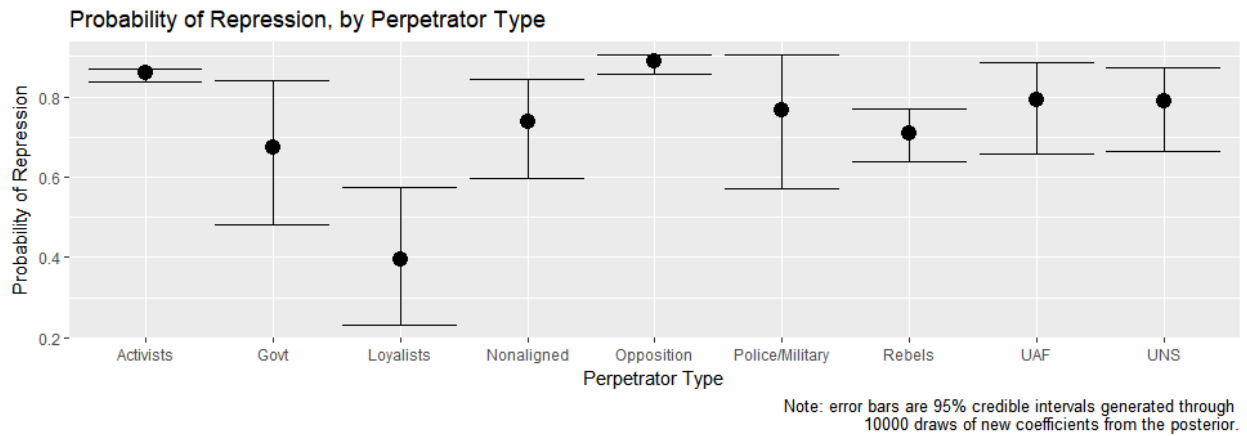


Figure 3: Likelihood of Retaliatory State Repression, by Perpetrators

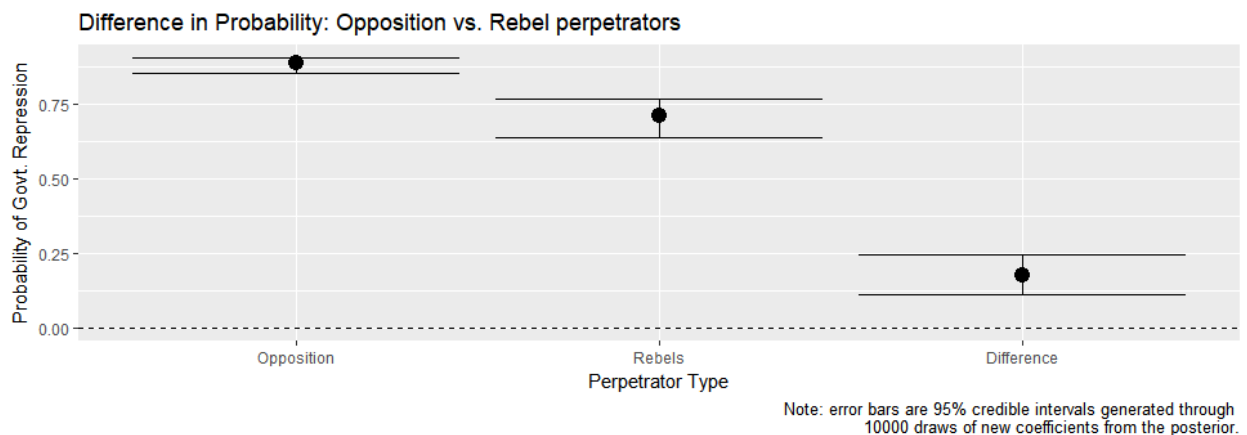


Figure 4: Differences in Probability, by Perpetrator Type

<sup>12</sup>Regime change, territorial secession, and anti-occupation

<sup>13</sup>Institutional reform, policy change, and greater autonomy



The probability of state responding to collective action by dissidents with repressive measures according to perpetrator type are presented in Figure 3. Conforming to expectation, we can see that the probability of repression as the state’s response differs on who the perpetrators are. What is surprising is that, contrary to hypothesis 2, there is a higher probability that the regime will respond with repression when the perpetrators are political opposition than rebels. The difference becomes more visible when we look at Figure 4, which shows that the state has a higher probability of responding to political opposition with repression than with rebels.

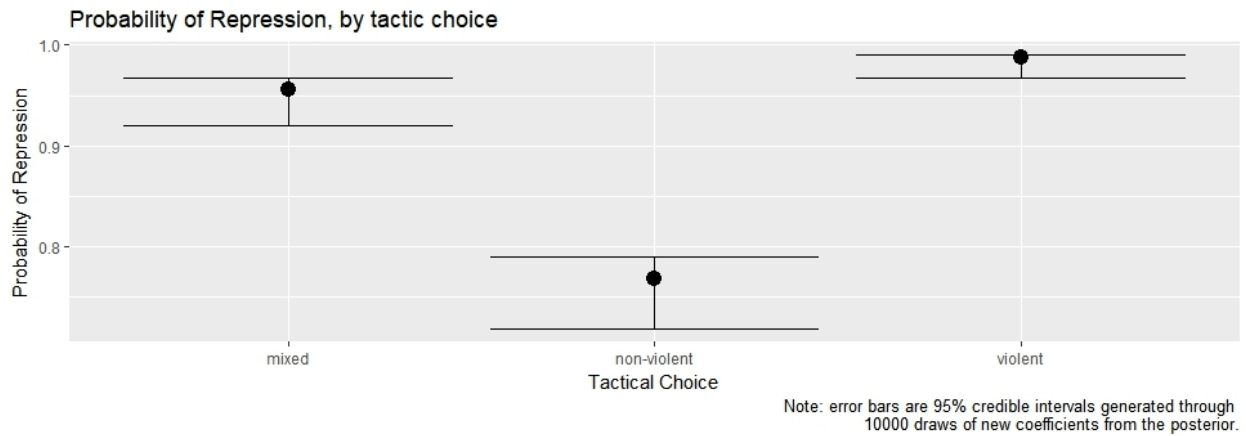


Figure 5: Likelihood of Retaliatory State Repression, by Tactics

Figure 5 plots the probability of state repression when faced with different tactics, which is used to evaluate hypothesis 3. The results are unsurprising in that campaigns that use violent tactics are almost always faced with the probability of repression. What is surprising is that states respond to campaigns with non-violent tactics almost 80% of the time; lower than when tactics are mixed (both violent and non-violent) and violent, but still a high probability than expected. In addition, while violent tactics do seem to generate a higher probability than mixed tactics in inciting state repression, the difference in probability seems to be barely significant, which does provide evidence for hypothesis 3, but with not enough difference to show a meaningful difference in how the state responds to different tactics.

## VARIATIONS IN STATE RESPONSE

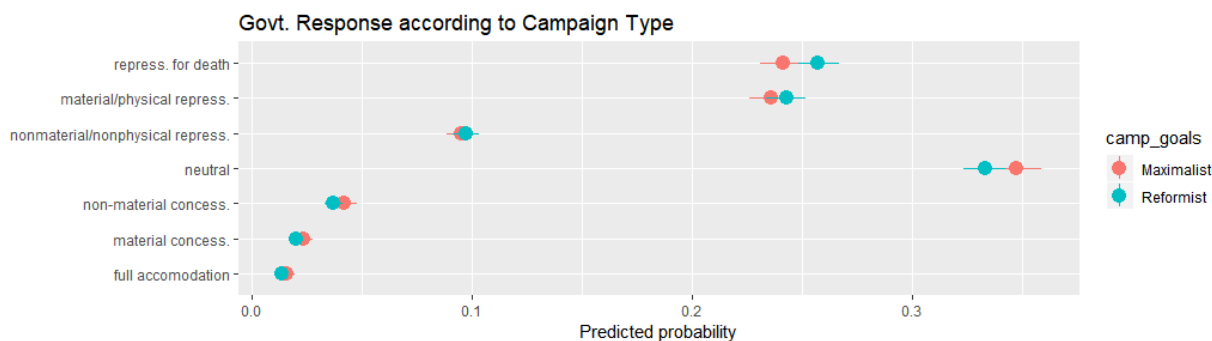


Figure 6: Likelihood of Different Responses by the State, by Goals (1)

Figure 6 shows the predicted probability of different responses the state may use to retaliate against collective action by dissidents, depending on whether their goals are maximalist or reformist types. Contrary to expectations made for hypothesis 1.a, the regime is more likely to be punitive towards dissidents with reformist goals than maximalist goals, indicated by the use of repressive measures intended to result in death being the most likely response, with material/physical repression coming in a very close second<sup>14</sup>. Additionally, concessions/accommodations are more likely to be made to dissidents with maximalist goals rather than reformist goals – which is interesting given that maximalist goals require a radical reshaping of the existing political order, and thus require more effort on the part of the government to respond as such.

Overall, what we can gather from the results presented in Figure 2 and 6 about the goals of collective action by dissidents is that, while campaigns with maximalist goals are more likely to engender repression as a response from the state, campaigns with reformist goals are more likely to be faced with lethal types of repression as retaliation by the state.

<sup>14</sup>This excludes the option of states responding with neutrality.

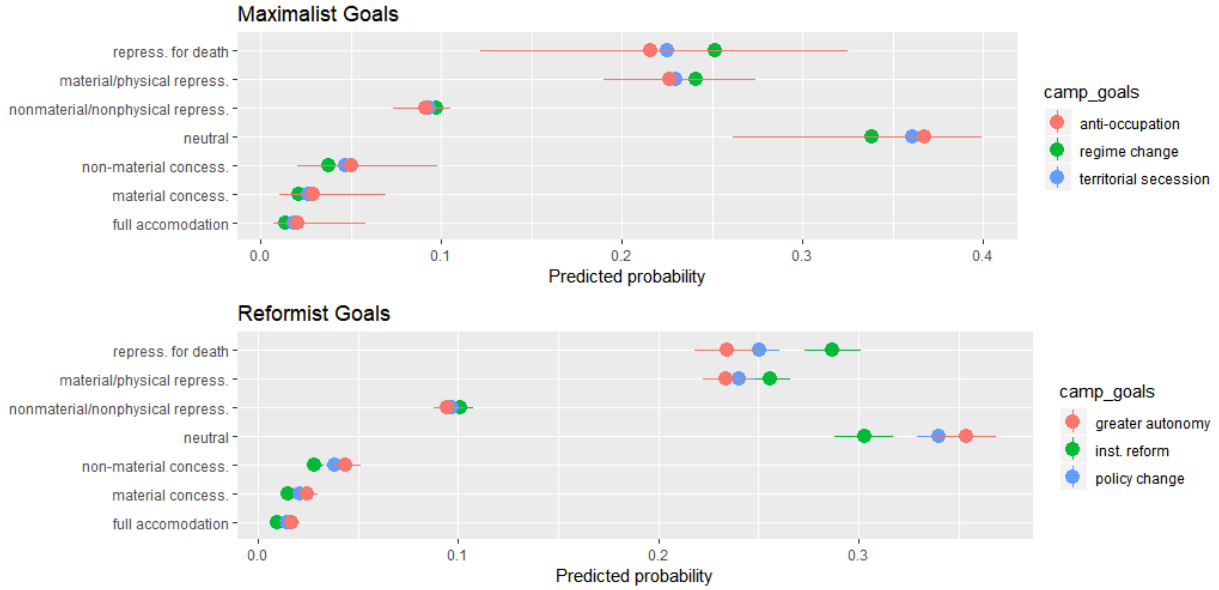


Figure 7: Likelihood of Different Responses by the State, by Goals (2)

For a more nuanced understanding of the results, I also plotted the predicted probability of different responses the state may use to retaliate against collective action by dissidents according to specific goals, grouped by whether they are maximalist or reformist types. Figure 7 presents these results. What this figure highlights is that the likelihood of repressive measures used in retaliation show variations when it comes to whether the state decides to employ material/physical repression short of death, versus repressive measures intended to result in death. There seems to be something about goal types that produce such variations in the probability of the state responding with such repressive measures that cannot be accounted for in the model.

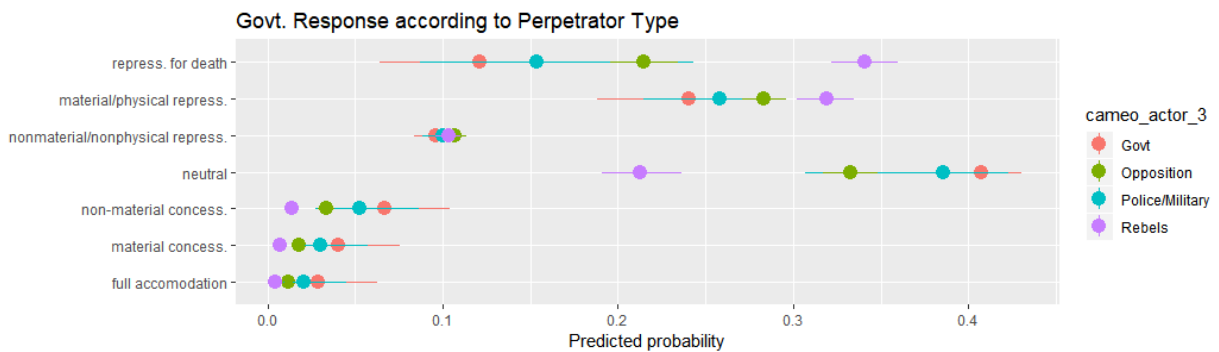


Figure 8: Likelihood of Different Responses by the State, by Perpetrators (2)

Regarding the probability of different response by the government to political contestation by the type of perpetrators they are facing, the results presented in Figure 8 yields three different findings for hypothesis 2.a. Firstly, the results show that while the state is almost equally likely to respond to campaign events perpetrated by both the political opposition and rebels with non-physical and non-material repression at a low probability of 0.1, rebels face a higher probability of both material and physical repression short of being killed and repressive measures intended to result in death, than the political opposition. Secondly, the likelihood of facing state repression intended for death is the most likely form of state response when perpetrators are rebels, while material/physical repression short of death is the most likely for perpetrators who are part of the political opposition<sup>15</sup>. Lastly, rebels will always face a higher probability of being repressed by the government through material and physical repression (both short of being killed and repression intended to result in death) than when perpetrators are political opposition; in fact, the probability of state repression that aims for death through material and physical means show a significantly higher rate when perpetrators are rebels than when they are political opposition.

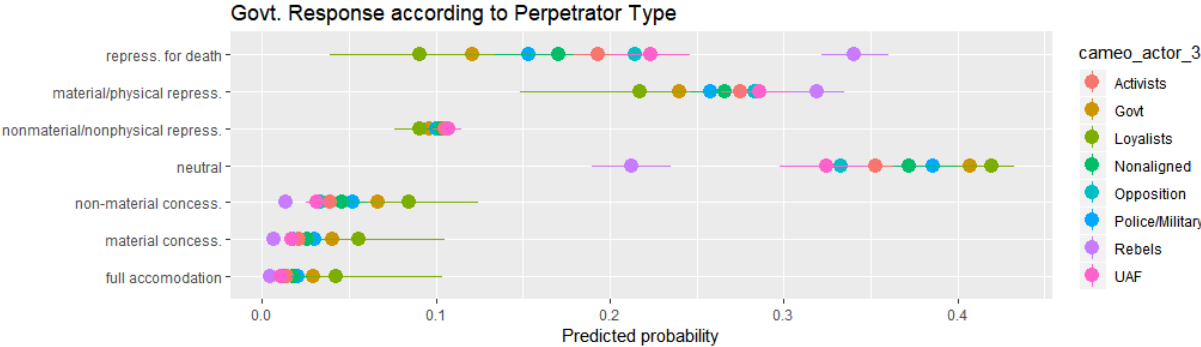


Figure 9: Likelihood of Different Responses by the State, by Perpetrators (1)

But when we take a look at Figure 9, which looks at the results with more fine-grained data for perpetrator types, the probability of governments responding to challenging behavior shows much variations depending on the type of perpetrators they are confronted with. While the likelihood of states retaliating with nonmaterial/nonphysical forms of repression are

<sup>15</sup>This excludes the option of states responding with neutrality.

nearly identical for all the perpetrators in the analysis, the likelihood of the state responding with material/physical forms of repression and repression intended to kill markedly varies depending on the different type of perpetrators they are confronted with. Much like goal types, there also seems to be some aspect of perpetrator type not included in the model that may account for these results.

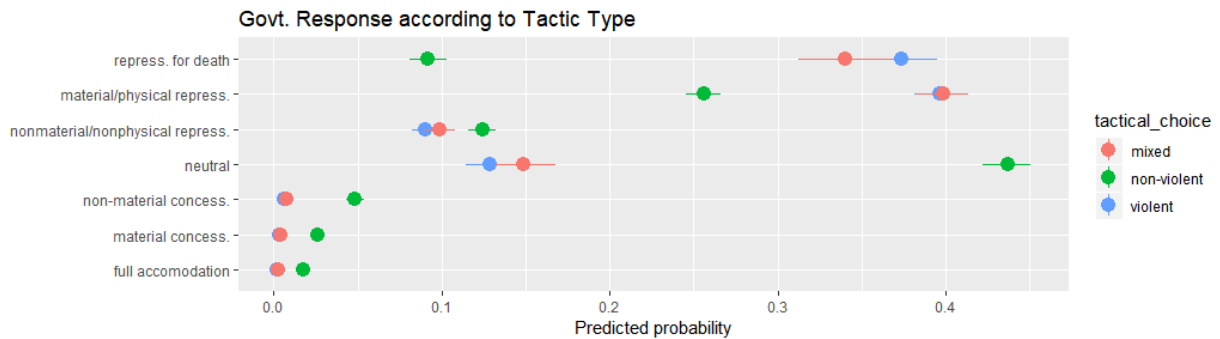


Figure 10: Likelihood of Different Responses by the State, by Tactics

As for the variations in government response by tactic type, the results in Figure 10 show almost identical likelihood of the regime in responding to collective action by dissidents using violent or mixed tactics using repressive measures *not* intended to result in death. For dissidents using either violent or mixed tactics, they are more likely to face repression intended to result in death than nonmaterial/nonphysical types of repression, but violent tactics are more likely to be penalized than those with mixed tactics with repressive measures intended to result in death, which conforms to expectations set forth in hypothesis 3.a. Also, states are most likely to retaliate with violent methods of repression (those that are both short of killing and intended to kill) when facing either violent or mixed tactics – but more so when faced with those using violent ones.

Similarly, non-violent tactics seem to also provoke material and physical repression short of death as the most likely response by the state, as opposed to the two other types of repression the regime could respond with. But contrary to dissidents using mixed or violent tactics, those who use non-violent tactics seems to fare marginally better in generating concessions/accommodations from the state as a response to their activities.

## VI. DISCUSSION

The limitations of applying an action-reaction (AR) model to the repression/dissent nexus is that it treats each actor as a black box by either increasing or decreasing its output in reaction to the other’s output – which serves to forever correlate the total aggregate level of one output (government repression) with the total aggregate level of the other output (dissident activity) (Lichbach and Gurr 1981). Because dissent and repression are causally interrelated (Ritter 2014), a unidimensional treatment of both coercion by government (Snyder 1976) and dissent by opposition groups by modeling the level of one decision variable for each actor but not modeling the strategic choices faced by both actors is identified to be a problem because it ignores the strategic interaction between both actors – where opponents choose among various tactics and that government choose among various response strategies (Lichbach and Gurr 1981). Although relevant research seems to suggest the causal arrow to point from dissent to repression, many others have also identified potentials for endogeneity, by indicating that governments and dissidents act in expectation of each other’s behavior and thus should be viewed to be endogenous<sup>16</sup> (Ritter and Conrad 2016).

To address this concern, I use data that codes the dependent variable – ‘state posture’ – in reference to a particular action, rather than to a larger set of actions by a particular campaign. This temporal sequencing of repressive measures, which is coded as a posture taken by the government in regards to the specific behavioral challenge (event) it has been identified to respond to, mitigate concerns somewhat, but still does not address subsequent endogeneity concerns of how specific methods of repressive measures influence future tactics selected by dissidents. One way to mitigate issues of endogeneity is by incorporating a temporal dimension into to analysis. There has been evidence which suggest the influence of repression may be contingent on the time point it occurs within the temporal sequence of political conflict; findings indicate that when dissent has been decreasing in the recent past, repressive action results in an increase in dissident action, but when dissent has been on

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<sup>16</sup>Anisin 2016; Sullivan and Davenport 2017, 2018.

an increasing trend, repression has the opposite effect, resulting in decreases to challenging activity (Sullivan, Loyle, and Davenport 2012). Including a temporal dimension will serve to not only manage endogeneity problems, but may also capture critical insights on the tactical use of repression which occur at specific time points irrespective of the characteristics of dissent states are retaliating against (Dragu and Przeworski 2019; Truex 2019).

Additionally, including a measure of ethnic and/or religious fractionalization may further contribute to refining how threat is operationalized. This is because research which question why governments repress certain contentious event and not others finds states to more likely use repression against challenges making ethnically and religiously based claims (Hendrix and Salehyan 2017). The logic is that the nature of entrenched clientelistic networks makes attempts to challenge the ethnic and religious constellation of power – through either greater incorporation or regional autonomy – threaten the status of incumbent regimes, thereby creating a delegation problem<sup>17</sup> leading to states with divided security forces less likely to enact repressive measures.

Another issue that plagues the literature on the conflict-repression nexus is a presumption of proportionality<sup>18</sup>, which can be found in studies that tends to focus on only one or a few government and/or dissident tactics at a time (Davenport and Inman 2012). Taking this into account, I analyze the full range of possible response types – which span from making full accommodations to using lethal methods of repressive measures – in addition to evaluating the likelihood of government decision to use repressive measures in retaliation. By doing so has led to an analysis which takes into account the possibility of tactical adaptation<sup>19</sup> by dissidents in response to the type of retaliation they are confronted with by the state. While not directly observable in the model, the findings from this study indicate a step in the right

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<sup>17</sup>Referring to cases where orders to repress may not be followed or could even cause intraregime violence and/or defections.

<sup>18</sup>This refers to the assumption that authorities will proportionately respond to behavioral challenges with tactics that also respond in kind.

<sup>19</sup>Prior work that fails to account for this likelihood tend to generate conflicting findings – in case of results that indicate repression to have successfully decreased challenging behavior, may have actually led to challengers shifting from one tactic to another, or from active public dissent to private dissident mobilization and coordination (Davenport and Inman 2012).

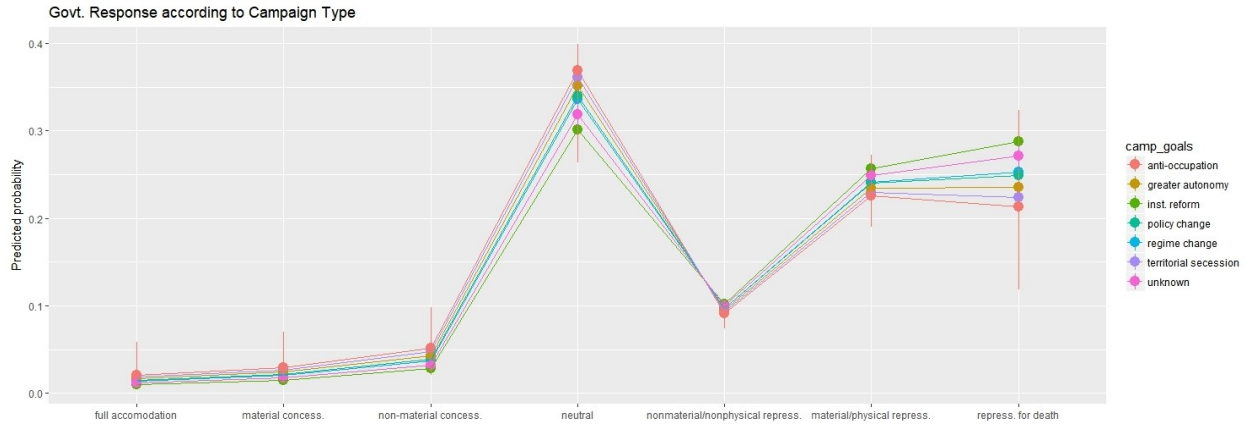


Figure 11: Trend Lines in State Response: Goal Type

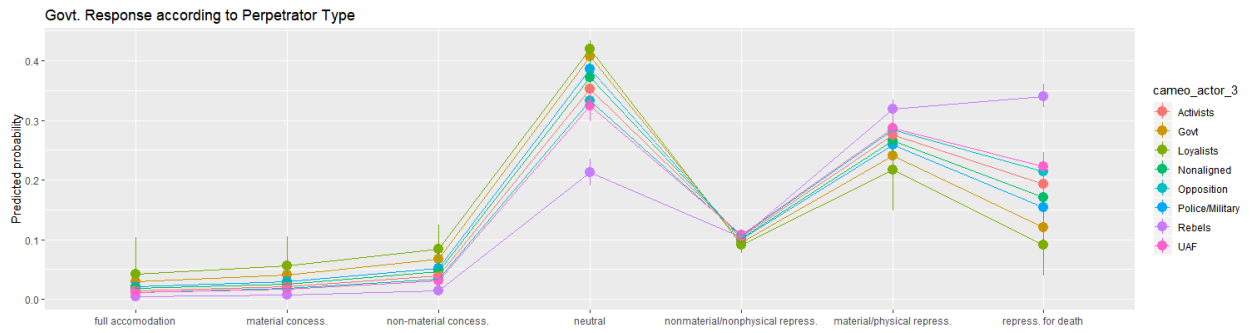


Figure 12: Trend Lines in State Response: Perpetrator Type

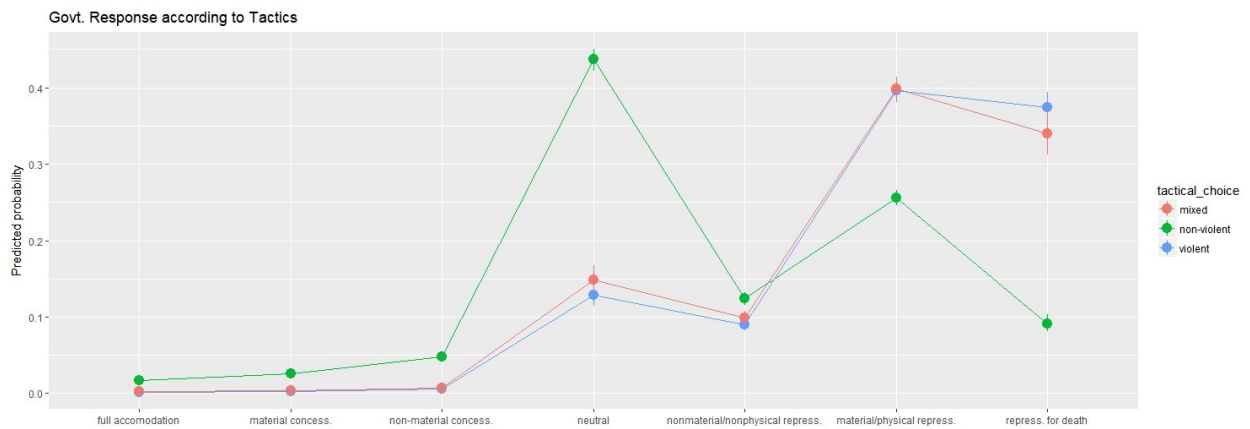


Figure 13: Trend Lines in State Response: Tactics Type



direction, particularly when we consider that the probability of states' response to collective action by dissidents produce a pattern of behavior – as shown by Figure 11, 12, and 13 – that may uncover how threats are perceived by authorities to result in such patterns.

Yet there still remains much work that must be done to refine these models to accurately analyze the strategic interaction that occurs within the repression-dissent nexus. While this paper made attempts to identify the mechanism behind the use of coercive response by authorities in the face of behavioral threats posed by political dissidents, it falls short of directly identifying how exactly the level of threat perception varies, and how that variation is incorporated into the rational calculus in determining the type of response the state chooses to enact.

To address this deficiency, future research should look into the organizational component of dissident groups to further develop a theory of threat perception and how it influences repression-conflict dynamics. Studies that examine the organizational underpinnings have highlighted the importance of organizational structure and composition in its capacity to mobilize and coordinate challenging behavior. Sullivan 2016 finds that successful methods of repression target clandestine mobilization activities<sup>20</sup> of dissident organizations, while targeting overt, collective challenges<sup>21</sup> is less successful in suppressing the likelihood of further challenges. An important takeaway from this study is to consider how it models recognition of threat perceived by authorities that leads to the decision to repress mobilization activities.

Along similar lines, research that explores the use of lethal violence as a method of political strategy by the elites can also be a point of reference that may bolster a further refinement of the threat perception theory. Mass killings tend to be utilized by political authorities in situations where they perceive existential threat to their power – a situation identified by Chenoweth 2017 to most likely occur during internal armed conflict where this perception is created by insurgent/guerrilla organizations. An examination of how this

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<sup>20</sup>Clarified as activities that are necessary to inspire and sustain dissident organizations, such as holding meetings, training participants, and campaigning for funds.

<sup>21</sup>Illustrated as cases when police respond to an ongoing demonstration, attack, or riot.

perception is created and triggered to influence the behavioral dynamics between regime-insurgent tactics may help shed light on building a stronger theory to construct models that captures the concept of threat more directly than what has been attempted in this study.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the relationship between dissent and repression by questioning whether the type of response the state chooses when confronted with behavioral challenges varies depending on the nature of the threat posed by dissidents. I contend that variations in this perception may account for an explanation to explain both the patterns of state response to political contestation as well as the variations in the likelihood of a specific method being exerted in retaliation. Using indicators identified in previous works that have been found to trigger perceptions of threat in the state, I test several hypotheses to evaluate my theory. While results from the empirical analysis confirms differences in the likelihood and type of responses political authorities employ against dissident action, it falls short of assessing whether my predictors are actually capturing differences in the level of threat that is being posed, or whether these results are due to some other aspect of the model indicators that have not yet been identified.

An important theoretical contribution this study makes is in providing evidence finding that the common practice in the literature that assumes proportionality in government response to behavioral challenges is a critical flaw that obscures our understanding of the strategic interaction that occurs between the state and dissidents. Studies that strive to understand the impact of repression on dissent, or vice versa, will need to analyze the full range of tactics available to either or both actors, to generate meaningful insights on the repression-conflict nexus. While criticism on studies that aggregates the choices of opponents and regimes is not new (as we can observe in Lichbach and Gurr 1981's assessment), barriers such as the availability of fine-grained data (Chenoweth, Perkoski, and Kang 2017), and the persistence of the presumption in the way researchers examine the topic (Davenport and In-

man 2012) have reinforced the current practice of treating every repressive event as if it were substantively equivalent, differentiated only by a binary classification of scope (large/small) or type (violent/nonviolent) (Sullivan, Loyle, and Davenport 2012).

This treatment precludes a more holistic analysis on the use of alternative mechanisms of control in the face of political conflict and the role of repression in the government's repertoire, which excludes other strategies – such as coercion, normative persuasion, material or symbolic benefits, neglect, etc. – that are available to authorities to address behavioral challenges and establish or maintain political order (Davenport 2007a). But as my findings show, the likelihood of the state's use of different tactics to respond to contentious action form similar patterns of reactionary behavior across my indicator variables – a pattern which has remained mostly unrecognized until this study.

On the other hand, an adequate explanation for this pattern remains elusive, even within the theoretical framework of this study. Likewise, an interesting aspect of this paper that becomes apparent is that the findings raises more questions than it answers – the most important being on accounting for the decision by the state to take either an adversarial, neutral, or amicable stance towards responding to behavioral challenges. Under which conditions do political authorities decide to take a particular stance over another, and by extension, the type of dimension and degree of response<sup>22</sup> that is ultimately chosen by the state in reacting to dissident action? Does the theory proposed in this study provide an adequate explanation to this question in illustrating the impact of threat perception on state response? Going forward, future research on this project should aim to build a stronger theory by specifying a more precise mechanism that this question pertains to.

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<sup>22</sup>Dimension refers to whether the response capitalizes on physical integrity rights over civil rights, while degree alludes to how conciliatory/repressive the response is.

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