

# Targeting the Motivated? Ethnicity and the Pre-emptive Use of Government Repression

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**Abstract:** *Research on government repression often focuses on the comparison between states over time and provides little insight about the targets of repression within a state. This article unpacks government repression against different ethnic groups. It argues that non-democratic governments use pre-emptive and targeted repression against ethnic groups that are discriminated, strong, or have a history of protest or rebellion in order to prevent future ethnic rebellions. For democratic governments, on the other hand, the cost of pre-emptive repression is too high. The article tests this argument in a quantitative analysis of government-group dyads. It finds at least partial support for some implications of the argument: Autocratic governments use more repression than democracies against discriminated groups, but only when they are also weak, and against groups with a history of protest. There is little evidence that regimes of either type respond to previous violent mobilization or group strength with repression.*

KEYWORDS: Comparative Politics, Democracy, Ethnicity, Human rights

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In ethnically diverse states, different ethnic groups can experience vastly different amounts of government repression. This is not surprising if governments use repression as a strategy to prevent conflict (for example Danneman and Ritter 2014) as many domestic conflicts evolve around specific ethnic groups. For example, repression was targeted at specific ethnic groups in Chad under Hissène Habré between 1982 and 1990. Here, “[u]sing collective arrests and mass murders, Habré persecuted different ethnic groups whose leaders he perceived as posing a threat to his regime” (Human Rights Watch 2005: 4). “Hissène Habré considered Chadian Arabs to be the “family” of his Libyan enemies. Arabs were constantly arrested and executed throughout Habré’s regime, with a noticeable increase from 1982 to 1984 during the armed conflicts in northern Chad” (Human Rights Watch 2005: 14). A similar fate fell upon two other ethnic groups, the Hadjarai and the Zaghawa, a few years later (Human Rights Watch 2005).

This article analyzes two understudied aspects of government repression. Firstly, it analyzes whether and why repression is targeted at some ethnic groups in a state more than others. To date, the majority of empirical studies on government repression is

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conducted on the state-level and does not provide insight into the targets of government repression. This paper unpacks repression with respect to its targets using quantitative data on government repression of specific ethnic groups in 112 countries. Secondly, the paper analyzes the use of repression as a strategy to *prevent* instead of react to collective action. Governments have been argued and found to use repression as a pre-emptive strategy (Danneman and Ritter 2014; Dragu and Przeworski 2019; Nordås and Davenport 2013; Sullivan 2016b), but we still know little about what types of governments use repression pre-emptively and in response to what kinds of potential threats. Many studies find that democratic states use less repression than other types of states (for an overview see Davenport 2007). However, these studies do not unpack whether democracies are less likely to use repression in general or whether they only refrain from using repression pre-emptively against non-mobilized parts of the population as some have argued (Brathwaite 2014; Ritter and Conrad 2016). This paper analyzes whether democracies differ from autocracies in their use of pre-emptive repression targeting ethnic groups.

The article argues that non-democratic governments use repression to prevent ethnic groups from engaging in collective violence, while for democracies the cost of using pre-emptive repression is too high. Non-democratic governments are expected to use repression against ethnic groups that are discriminated, strong compared to the state or that have a history of protest or rebellion, as they believe those groups to have high incentives for rebellion in the future. The article tests this argument in a quantitative analysis of targeted repression against 264 ethnic groups in 112 countries. It finds that non-democratic governments use more repression than democratic governments against a subset of ethnically discriminated groups that is also weak and against groups that have previously mobilized in protests. On the other hand, there is little evidence that regimes of either type respond to previous violent mobilization or group strength with pre-emptive repression.

## Literature

To date repression literature offers little systematic insight on the targets of government repression. The majority of empirical studies on government repression is conducted on the country level and does not directly investigate the targets of repression. As a result, we know little about the ethnic targeting of repression. In a study on the US, Davenport et al. (2011) analyze repression in response to protest events depending on whether protesters are African-American. However, there is no comprehensive study on the repression of ethnic groups in different countries. Recent literature has shown how important ethnic groups and group-specific grievances and opportunities are for understanding armed conflict. Ethnic groups that face group-specific grievances (for example Cederman et al. 2011) and represent larger numbers (Cederman et al. 2010) have been found to be more likely to rebel against the state. It is likely that governments are aware of this and target ethnic groups perceived as threats (see Buhaug et al. 2008). This paper exploits data on targeted government repression against civilian members of ethnic groups and explores which characteristics of ethnic groups incentivize different types of governments to use this specific type of repression.

A large part of the literature on repression has analyzed whether repression is used to respond to dissent and has found this to be the case (Davenport 1995; Regan and Henderson 2002). Davenport (2007: 7) terms this relationship the “law of coercive responsiveness”. Studies on the interaction between governments and the domestic opposition (for example Carey 2006; Moore 2000; Shellman 2006) confirm that repression

occurs in reaction to actions of the opposition. Pre-emptive repression is a more controversial concept as some have argued that in cases where governments are free to use repression, repression will not be observed empirically, either as the prospect of repression is deterring in and of itself (for example Regan and Henderson 2002) or because governments that can use repression will win violent conflicts which in turn will serve as a deterrent for potential challengers (Pierskalla 2010). More recent literature, on the other hand, argues that especially autocratic governments use repression to prevent any form of mobilization (Dragu and Przeworski 2019; Sullivan 2016b,a).

Some recent empirical studies have found repression to be a pre-emptive strategy, for example to prevent conflict spillovers from close-by states (Danneman and Ritter 2014) or when there is a youth bulge in a state (Nordås and Davenport 2013). However, these studies have been conducted on the country level and do not provide insight into whether governments actually target perceived high threat groups. Other studies provide in-depth analysis of pre-emptive rebellion, but do not focus on ethnic identities. In a study on Guatemala from 1975 to 1985, Sullivan (2016b) finds that the government used repression in response to mobilization efforts by opposition with radical goals.<sup>2</sup> Herreros and Criado (2009) argue that after civil wars governments have an incentive to use pre-emptive repression against potential political entrepreneurs on the losing side in order to stifle dissent and new uprisings. They test this argument in post-civil-war Spain and find support. The only paper focusing explicitly on pre-emptive repression against ethnic groups is Brathwaite (2014): The author argues that governments repress groups when ethnic kin in neighboring states engages in violence in order to prevent conflict from spreading, especially when states are not democratic or poor. She tests her argument in a case study on Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey and finds support. Using data on 264 ethnic groups in 112 countries, this paper investigates the use of repression as a pre-emptive strategy against ethnic groups in a large-n study.

The paper also unpacks whether the regime type matters for states acting on the incentive to use preventive and ethnically targeted repression. Theoretical models argue that states with a high cost of repression are less likely to use repression in response to a group's initial mobilization and that democracies are examples of states with such a high cost (Pierskalla 2010; Shadmehr 2014, drawing on earlier literature). Moreover, Ritter and Conrad (2016) argue and find that democracies are more likely to react to dissent with repression because they cannot use pre-emptive repression. Similarly, Dragu and Przeworski (2019) argue that pre-emptive repression is a strategy employed by autocratic governments to preserve their position of power. However, whether democracies are actually less likely to use repression pre-emptively than autocracies has not been subject to empirical scrutiny (with the exception of some discussion in Brathwaite (2014)'s case study).

## Theory

This paper argues that some governments have an incentive to use targeted repression to prevent domestic ethnic groups from mobilizing to challenge the government. In this section I introduce a stylized theoretical model to illustrate how and why governments use repression as a pre-emptive tool.

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<sup>2</sup> Sullivan (2016a) in turn finds that pre-emptive repression targeting mobilization activities was successful at preventing subsequent overt challenges in Guatemala at this time.

### *Stylized Model*

The interaction between a government and a domestic ethnic group can be formulated as a simple game where the government,  $G$ , chooses the level of physical repression to use against the group,  $D$ , from a continuous range and the group decides whether or not to mobilize against the government. The interaction between the government and the group is a bargaining situation similar to the one described in Rubinstein (1982) as the government ‘offers’ some amount of repression and the group decides on whether to reject the offer by protesting or fighting. The argument and data focus on physical repression and exclude the infringement of other civil liberties such as freedom of expression.

The interaction is illustrated in Figure 1. The government moves first and decides on the overall level of physical repression to apply against the group,  $r \geq 0$ . Subsequently, the group  $D$  decides whether to challenge the government or not. Even though the following discussion focuses on violent challenges, the logic of the argument also extends to governments’ incentives to use pre-emptive repression to curb nonviolent mobilization along ethnic lines.<sup>3</sup>

### *Payoffs*

The payoff structure is a direct extension of Fearon (1995)’s seminal model.<sup>4</sup>

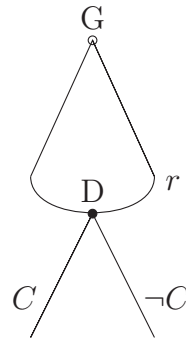
If the ethnic group  $D$  does not challenge the government, it receives a utility of value  $-b_D$ .  $-b_D$  is the degree to which the group is politically discriminated against by the government. Ethnic discrimination reflects the intentional exclusion of a group’s representatives from positions of power in the state (Cederman et al. 2010). In ethnically divided states, access to state power translates directly into access to state goods such as jobs in the public sector or other types of goods (Cederman et al. 2010; Franck and Rainer 2012; Hodler and Raschky 2014; Wimmer 2002). Members of excluded groups thus forego access to such resources. In addition, discrimination requires intentional actions by the government to sustain and cement a group’s exclusion from power.  $-b_D$  thus represents both the negative consequences stemming from a lack of access to power and grievances as a result of the group’s treatment by the government that is intentionally discriminatory. If the ethnic group  $D$  challenges the government it wins with probability  $p$ . Upon winning,  $D$  gains access to state power and thus no longer misses out on spoils of the state or faces grievances due to unfair treatment. Thus, the new status quo is valued with 0. On the other hand,  $D$  loses with probability  $1-p$  in which case the status quo, valued at  $-b_D$ , prevails as the group continues to face government discrimination.

If the group challenges the government, it has to endure a cost. The cost of a challenge is the sum of the direct cost of a conflict  $c_D > 0$  and the level of physical repression  $r$  the government subjects it to. The former is just a generic factor that represents direct costs arising from the struggle, as is common in formal literature (for example Fearon 1995; Pierskalla 2010). In the context of armed conflicts, this cost represents negative externalities directly resulting from the fight such as battlefield losses, civilians being caught in crossfire or direct attacks on civilians. Similar costs also arise from nonviolent

<sup>3</sup> Even though mass protests are another form of mobilization that threaten government survival, these types of protests likely span larger parts of the population and are not constrained to the mobilization of specific domestic ethnic groups. While governments may well use pre-emptive repression to prevent the emergence of nonviolent mass movements, it is unlikely that governments would target this repression ethnically. Thus, the model does not concern itself with the potential of nonviolent mass movements.

<sup>4</sup> Fearon in turn draws on earlier work such as Bueno de Mesquita (1981).

Figure 1: The Game in Period t



$$U_D(r, C) = (1 - p)(-b_D) - c_D - r,$$

$$U_G(r, C) = p(-b_G) - c_G - \beta_1 r - \beta_2 r$$

$$U_D(r, \neg C) = -b_D,$$

$$U_G(r, \neg C) = -\beta_1 r - \beta_2 r$$

mobilization. The latter factor, on the other hand, is a crucial part of the argument introduced here. I argue that government repression increases the cost of *mobilization* (Sullivan 2016b; Tilly 1978, for example). Firstly, group members trying to mobilize may get caught and punished harshly (also see Hasenclever and Rittberger 1999). Repression deters group members from joining violent movements which in turn makes raising an army more costly as potential rebels need to be compensated more extensively than in non-repressive environments. For the same reason repression makes it harder for rebels to extract resources from group civilians who are more fearful to provide support than in less repressive environments.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, a repressive environment discourages group members to engage in or support peaceful protest.

Repression increasing the cost of mobilization is the prerequisite for repression serving as a strategy to prevent rebellion altogether. This argument is different from the common argument that repression will be used to punish rebellion and thus can serve as a deterrent for collective action as for example in Pierskalla (2010), albeit the threat of even harsher repression during conflicts may also have this effect and is captured in  $c_D$ . Of course, in addition to making mobilization more costly, repression also has a general negative effect on group members, independent of whether the group fights or not. However, this effect of repression is not included in the theoretical model as it is a constant that does not depend on the group’s actual course of action and thus won’t have an impact on the group’s decision.

Similarly, payoffs arising from all outcomes can also be formulated for the government. If there is a fight, the government  $G$  has to incur a cost of fighting,  $c_G > 0$ , as well. Additionally, the government loses with probability  $p$  in which case it can expect to be degraded to position  $-b_G$ . Additionally, the government wins with probability  $1-p$  in which case it gains nothing as the status quo is valued at 0 but still incurs the direct cost of the fight.

Moreover, and following Pierskalla (2010) and others in the assumption that repression is costly, I assume that the government incurs a cost proportional to the magnitude of repression it subjects the group to. After all, the more state forces are occupied with

<sup>5</sup> For an overview over earlier work discussing the effect of repression on the mobilization of resources for collective action see for example Rasler (1996).

repressing  $D$ , the higher the opportunity cost. I add parameter  $\beta_1 > 0$  to the level of repression faced by the group to express the government's opportunity cost associated with using a specific amount of repression against a group. Moreover, governments may face additional costs for the use of repression that do not stem from the opportunity cost of using force but rather from negative reactions of other citizens to using repression against unarmed civilians in the first place. Citizens may be opposed to seeing governments repress civilians, especially if they are targeted due to their ethnicity and in some types of regimes the disapproval of citizens can pose a direct threat to regime survival. This additional cost of repression is denoted by  $\beta_2 \geq 0$  and will be referred to here as audience costs.<sup>6</sup>

I assume that  $c_G > \beta_1 r$  for all  $r \geq 0$ . Thus, I assume that fighting in a military conflict against an ethnic group  $D$  carries a higher cost than repressing the civilian population of the group. This seems sensible as even if repression and conflict incurred similar opportunity costs, in an armed conflict the group  $D$  inflicts additional costs on the government while in the repression case it is passive. In addition, the government can expect the direct cost of conflict to be higher than the opportunity cost of pre-emptive repression as group leaders have little incentive to stop fighting or protesting before achieving some concessions once they have mobilized members.<sup>7</sup>

### *Equilibrium Strategies*

In the following I discuss each player's equilibrium strategy using the logic of subgame perfection and employing backwards induction.

The domestic ethnic group  $D$  fights when its expected benefit of doing so outweighs the cost, that is

$$C^* = \begin{cases} C & \text{if } (1-p)(-b_D) - c_D - r > -b_D \\ -C & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

The government's choice depends initially on whether the ethnic group has an incentive to mobilize if the government does not use any repression. If  $pb_D - c_D \leq 0$ , the government faces a group that is weak, has low grievances or expects a high cost of fighting and will not challenge the government even in the absence of repressive measures. If a group has an incentive to fight, that is if  $pb_D - c_D > 0$ , the government chooses between two options. The first option is to target group members with the lowest level of repression necessary to deter them from collectively mobilizing, that is  $r = pb_D - c_D$ . As repression is costly, governments have no incentive to use a larger amount of repression than what is strictly necessary to prevent challenges from within a group. The second option for the government is to refrain from using any repression, thus minimizing costs for the use of repression, and instead face challenges from within groups. Thus, if  $pb_D - c_D > 0$ , the government compares the utilities stemming from both these options and refrains from repression if<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The term audience costs was initially coined by Fearon (1994) in the context of domestic audiences' reaction to international contestations.

<sup>7</sup> The same assumption is also made in Pierskalla (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Sullivan (2016b) also argues that governments compare the cost of pre-emptive repression and the cost of dealing with challenges.



$$-pb_G - c_G \geq -\beta_1(pb_D - c_D) - \beta_2(pb_D - c_D)$$

If  $\beta_2 = 0$ , that is if the government is only concerned with the pure opportunity cost of pre-emptive repression but not with the negative effect on other groups in society, the government always uses repression at the level necessary to prevent mobilization as we assume that the opportunity cost of fighting is larger than the opportunity cost of repression.

If  $\beta_2 \neq 0$ , it becomes harder to predict when governments will use repression to prevent ethnic groups that have incentives to fight from mobilizing instead of risking violent or nonviolent mobilization by groups as this decision depends on the trade-offs laid out in equation 2. If governments face additional costs to using repression, their decision to repress pre-emptively or risk a challenge depends on whether the combined opportunity and audience costs of the required amount of repression outweigh the cost of fighting the conflict and the risk of actually losing in the conflict. However, if we assume that in some types of states the audience costs of using repression are so high that they outweigh the costs as well as the risks associated with challenges for the government, that is that  $p(-b_G) - c_G < \beta_2 r$  for all  $r \geq 0$ , repression is no longer a useful strategy for preventing violent or nonviolent ethnic mobilization.

Thus, I argue that there are two types of governments. The first type uses repression to balance domestic ethnic groups' incentives for challenges and for accepting the status quo with the minimum level of repression necessary to prevent ethnic challenges. The second type is incapable of using pre-emptive repression as high audience costs outweigh the benefit of preventing challenges with repressive means. Thus, in equilibrium,

$$r^* = \begin{cases} pb_D - c_D & \text{if } \beta_2 = 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } \beta_2 > 0 \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

In the following section, I argue that a state's regime type is the crucial factor distinguishing these two types of governments, an assertion that I subsequently test empirically. The argument introduced here differs from previous formalizations of states' choice between concessions and repression. In Pierskalla (2010), the government's willingness to repress depends among other things on the comparison between the cost of repression and the cost of accommodation, but repression has no actual impact on the opponent's subsequent decision on whether to fight the government and is therefore not a pre-emptive strategy. In Shadmehr (2014), the cost of repressing groups at a level that prevents rebellion is fixed while the cost of concessions depends on groups' previous grievance. Therefore, repression becomes an increasingly useful strategy against groups with high grievances. In the argument developed repression serves as a pre-emptive measure whose cost depends directly on the necessary amount as well as structural factors in a state.

The theory developed here assumes that the government faces one ethnic group but its implications extend straightforwardly to a scenario where a government faces several ethnic groups at once. As long as the cost of repression is identical across groups, governments that do not fear large audience costs will use repression as a balancing strategy against all groups while governments that have to fear backlash from other segments of society will refrain from doing so. This follows as long as we assume that governments have sufficient resources to use the desired amount of repression against all domestic groups.

### *Empirical Implications*

The theory above suggests that there are two types of governments. The first type does not face audience costs for using pre-emptive repression and as a result uses targeted repression against civilian members of ethnic groups in order to prevent violent and nonviolent mobilization of the group. The second type of government faces high audience costs for using repression pre-emptively and as a result is unable to repress groups in order to deter collective action.

How can we distinguish which course of action a government is likely to follow? Autocratic regimes do not have to concern themselves with public outcry in response to the repression of civilians as they do not depend on electoral decisions (e.g. Davenport 2007; Poe and Tate 1994). These types of states use repression as a pre-emptive strategy (Dragu and Przeworski 2019). Accordingly, I argue that autocratic regimes use repression to balance ethnic groups' costs and expected benefits of taking collective action. In autocratic states we can expect the level of pre-emptive repression to be a negative function of an ethnic groups' cost of fighting (or protest) and a positive function of the product of a group's probability of winning and a group's grievance. In democracies, on the other hand, leaders have to avoid human rights violations if they do not want to lose power during the next elections (e.g. Davenport 2007; Poe and Tate 1994). Unprovoked repression is particularly costly for highly democratic states (Ritter and Conrad 2016: 92, drawing on Moore (1978)). Democracies face high audience costs when using repression pre-emptively and as a result refrain from using ethnically targeted repression to prevent ethnic mobilization altogether.

Ethnic grievances result from ethnically targeted political discrimination. The probability of winning a struggle with the government can be operationalized as the size of the state's army compared to the size of the group as the army is the group's direct adversary in a violent but also potentially in a nonviolent confrontation. Thus, we can derive the following hypotheses.

H1: In non-democratic states, governments use higher levels of repression when discrimination is high. In democratic states this is not the case.

H2: In non-democratic states, governments use higher levels of repression the smaller the army compared to the group. In democratic states this is not the case.

The formal illustration of the argument has followed formal literature that tends to assume that an improvement in an actor's position upon winning a conflict is only an incentive for starting a conflict in interaction with the probability of winning (Fearon 1995, Pierskalla 2010). Thus, the theoretical model expects a negative interaction between group discrimination and the size of the army compared to the group. On the other hand, most empirical studies argue that ethnic grievances have an effect on armed conflict that is not dependent on the actual probability of winning (for example Cederman et al. 2010, 2011).<sup>9</sup> The empirical section will consider whether in non-democratic states the probability of winning – that is the army to group ratio – moderates the effect of discrimination or whether the variables have an additive effect as hypotheses one and two imply.

The argument also suggests that in non-democratic states repression is a negative function of groups' direct cost of challenging the government. In the case of violent challenges, such costs can be battlefield losses and negative effects of the conflict on group

<sup>9</sup> Buhaug et al. (2008) are an exception.



civilians. These costs should also be affected by the strength of the state's army compared to the group. This logic may reinforce the positive effect of group strength expected under the mechanism on the probability of winning. On the other hand, as it is not expected that the effect of battlefield losses is moderated by groups' grievances, this logic may dampen a potentially moderating effect of group strength on discrimination.

Another factor that affects groups' battlefield losses is previous experience with collective action. Groups that have engaged in armed action before may be able to reduce losses. Firstly, they may have structures in place that facilitate mobilization and actual fighting; secondly, they may be able to draw on a network of known supporters of armed action and thirdly, they can draw on expertise and experience from previous armed action. As the direct cost of rebellion in the form of expected battlefield losses is expected to have a negative effect on the level of pre-emptive repression, we can derive the following hypothesis.

H3: In non-democratic states, governments use higher levels of repression when groups have previously been involved in a rebellion. In democratic states this is not the case.

If governments are also concerned with preventing nonviolent action, this logic should also extend to previous experience with nonviolent protest. In addition, supporters of previous nonviolent collective action may support violent action and logistic expertise gained organizing protests may be useful for other forms of collective mobilization as well.

H4: In non-democratic states, governments use higher levels of repression when groups have previously been involved in protests. In democratic states this is not the case.

## Data and Methods

The unit of analysis in the empirical analysis is the group-year. The sample of ethnic groups is taken from the Minorities at Risk (MAR) data Phases 3 and 4 (Minorities at Risk Project 2009). This version of MAR contains an ethnic group if it "(...) collectively suffers, or benefits from, systematic discriminatory treatment vis-a-vis other groups in a society; and/or (...) collectively mobilizes in defense or promotion of its self-defined interests" (Minorities at Risk Project N.D.: 5). Due to data availability, the analysis covers years from 1997 to 2003. In total, 264 groups in 112 countries are included.<sup>10</sup>

### *Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable measures the number of repressive measures that the government uses against the members of an ethnic group in a given year. It draws on MAR data on a number of repressive measures: group members arrested,<sup>11</sup> leaders arrested, disappeared, or detained, show trials of group members or leaders, torture used to intimidate or interrogate, members executed by authorities, leaders executed by authorities, systematic killings by paramilitaries and ethnic cleansing (Minorities at Risk Project N.D.: 91–96).

<sup>10</sup> Of those about 51% of cases are available for the entire period, while about 15% of cases are available for three years or less.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, MAR distinguishes whether few or many group members were arrested (Minorities at Risk Project N.D.: 91–92). As there is no distinction of magnitude on any of the other measures, the presence of arrests is considered.

MAR explicitly distinguishes whether a repressive measure is used against group members that engage in some form of collective action or against group members that do not carry out any action. By only including cases of repression where inactive group members are targeted, repression that is a direct reaction to instances of collective action can be excluded as the focus of this paper is on explaining pre-emptive repression.<sup>12</sup>

The *number* of repressive measures cannot capture a change in the *degree* to which each measure is used. Unfortunately, no group-level data on repression is available that would also allow evaluating the intensity of the use of different measures.

### *Independent Variables*

To test hypothesis one, a group's discrimination is operationalised using the level of political discrimination against a group from MAR. This variable contains five categories where zero stands for no discrimination and four for targeted restriction of political participation by public policy. The variable measures whether groups are excluded from political activity in a state and in how far the state is making attempts to remedy a group's under-representation or enforces it by its actions (Minorities at Risk Project N.D.: 36–37).

Conceptually, repression and discrimination are distinct. A group's level of discrimination reflects group members' situation vis-a-vis the rest of the society, that is their access to power in a state (Cederman et al. 2010). Similarly, in MAR, a group is discriminated at the highest level if “[p]ublic policies substantially restrict the group's political participation by comparison with other groups” (Minorities at Risk Project N.D.: 37). A group can be denied access to power without being actively repressed. Repression on the other hand is “(..) any action by another group which raises the contender's cost of collective action” (Tilly 1978: 100). Such actions do not necessarily change a group's access to power. For example, according to MAR the Amhara in Ethiopia did not experience any discrimination in 1999 but nevertheless, group civilians were subjected to torture, show trials and arrests.

The levels of repression and discrimination in the sample are weakly correlated with a coefficient of .22. About 9.7% of groups that see no repression are discriminated at the highest level and about 15.4% of groups that see four repressive measures used against them are not considered discriminated in the data (the maximum is six but there are few cases here). Moreover, a project representative noted in an email exchange that there is no definitional overlap between the variable on repression and discrimination in the Phase 3 and 4 data that is used here. I offer additional detail on the relationship between the two variables in the online appendix.<sup>13</sup>

Just like repression, the government also has direct control over groups' level of discrimination, that is over whether a group is excluded from power in a state. Governments may use concessions with respect to a group's access to power and resources as an alternative strategy to prevent mobilization (Sullivan 2016b). Ideally, repression and

<sup>12</sup> However, this coding led to a reduction of included cases by about 13.1% as there are cases in MAR data where it is not clear whether a repressive measure was used against group members involved in collective action or when repression was used against both active and inactive group members. Below, I discuss the robustness of results to the inclusion of those uncertain cases as cases with zero values on the respective measure.

<sup>13</sup> In addition, the robustness section discusses results from models using an alternative measure of discrimination.

concessions with respect to a group's status would be analyzed as potentially complementary government strategies to prevent ethnic challenges. However, the information on discrimination available in the data used here is not sufficiently fine-grained to capture subtle concessions that the government may employ. In order to alleviate the concern that the causal arrow runs from repression to the level of discrimination a group faces, I lag the discrimination measure by one year.

The probability of a group winning is conceptualized as the size of the army compared to a group's size. MAR contains a variable on the number of group members. As data is only available for 1995, 1998, and 2004, I interpolate missing values assuming an exponential growth rate. To measure the size of the army I use data from the World Bank (2011) on total military personnel. To test hypothesis two, I divide this measure by the number of group members and use the natural log of this proportion.<sup>14</sup> Taking the log means allocating similar weight to size differentials when groups are larger than the military as in the opposite situation. For example, a ratio of .5 creates the same absolute value on the logged measure as a ratio of 2.<sup>15</sup>

The measure on group size needs to be seen with some caution as in MAR it is not possible to identify government groups. Government groups are likely larger, albeit this problem may be alleviated as MAR only includes advantaged groups if they are no larger than 50% of the population. The presence of large unidentified government groups could prohibit observing that stronger groups are more likely to see repression as expected in hypothesis two.

I also introduce an interaction term between a group's benefit and probability of winning, that is between lagged discrimination and the log of the army to group ratio, to explore whether governments expect these group characteristics to only increase groups' incentives for rebellion when they are both present.

I conceptualize a group's expected losses resulting from challenging the state by a group's mobilizational experience, both using previous rebellions and previous protests. Thus, to test hypotheses three and four, I introduce two dummy variables, one on whether a group was involved in violent rebellion in the past five years and one on whether groups have been engaged in protest in the past five years, both excluding the current year. Both measures draw on MAR data as well. Violent rebellion is defined as collective violence at the level of at least a local rebellion that is "[a]rmed attempts to seize power in a locale" (Minorities at Risk Project N.D.: 90). Protest is defined as at least "[a] few demonstrations, rallies, strikes, and/or riots, total participation of less than 10,000" (Minorities at Risk Project N.D.: 89). Excluding the current year from these variables is necessary to avoid the possibility that repression in a given year triggers dissent instead of vice versa.

All hypotheses are conditional on the cost of repression and democracies have been identified as regimes with a higher cost of repression. I identify democracies using the binary measure by Cheibub et al. (2010). Here, "[d]emocracies are regimes in which governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections" (Cheibub et al. 2010: 69). I extract this measure from the Quality of Governance data (Teorell et al.

<sup>14</sup> There are some apparent errors in the measure of group population in MAR. These cases have been excluded or – if possible – corrected. However, the results are also robust to excluding all those cases (see online appendix).

<sup>15</sup> In total, the logged ratio ranges from –6.47 to 4.41, thus not returning excessively small values.

2013). The advantage of this definition is that it does not make explicit reference to government repression as the Polity IV index does (Marshall et al. 2016).<sup>16</sup> As the hypotheses expect that grievances – potentially moderated by a group’s probability of winning – and costs only affect repression in autocratic regimes, I interact all variables of interest with a state’s regime type. More specifically, the variables on a group’s history of protest and history of rebellion with a dummy variable on whether a state is democratic. Moreover, I interact discrimination and the military to group ratio with the democracy dummy in a triple interaction.

### *Control Variables*

I control for dummy variables on whether a group was engaged in rebellion or in a protest in the previous year using MAR data and the definitions introduced above to make sure that the variables on mobilizational history do not only capture governments’ reaction to very recent collective action. These two variables are also interacted with the dummy variable on whether a state is democratic in order to gauge whether different types of regimes also differ in their reaction to recent unrest.

I also include a variable on the number of rebellions fought by other groups in the same country. I add the same measure on other groups’ protest. This is important as domestic unrest may lead to general pre-emptive repression as well as have an effect on groups’ status if resources are redistributed. I construct these variables from MAR data and add additional violent conflicts that are considered as non-ethnic from the Ethnic Power Relations dataset Version 1.1 to the conflict variable (Cederman et al. 2010; Cunningham et al. 2009; Gleditsch et al. 2002; Wucherpfennig et al. 2012).<sup>17</sup>

I also include a measure on a group’s proportional size to make sure that the measure on a group’s strength compared to the military does not reflect the effect of a group’s proportion to the population more generally. For this, I divide the number of group members from MAR by the total population from Gleditsch 2002) (also from the Quality of Governance data). It is also possible that this measure reflects aspects of the cost of fighting and including the measure allows assessing this question empirically. Moreover, it could also be argued that group size measures a group’s probability of winning (see for example Cederman et al. 2010) better than the comparison between the military and the number of group members. The robustness section discusses a model that uses interactions between discrimination, democracy and both these (potential) measures of the probability of winning alongside each other.

In order to model the path dependency of repression, I also include the repression level of the previous year. However, as there is a concern that the repression level in  $t - 1$  may occur after the treatments on past rebellion or protest, I show below that results are also robust to the exclusion of the lagged repression measure.

In addition, I introduce dummy variables for five of six world regions: Western democracies and Japan, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The categorization and variables are from Minorities at Risk as well.

<sup>16</sup> However, in the robustness section I also discuss the robustness of results when using Vreeland (2008)’s XPolity measure instead.

<sup>17</sup> On the compatibility of MAR and EPR data see the online appendix. As can be seen below, results are robust to the exclusion of EPR data.

### *Estimation*

The dependent variable ranges from zero to six and measures the number of repressive measures the government uses against a group. I analyze this variable with a linear regression model with country-clustered standard errors.

### *Ethnically Targeted Repression and Country-level Repression Measures*

Unlike the analyses below, most quantitative studies on government repression use country-level measures that indicate the overall level of repression in a state. A widely used example is the Political Terror Scale by Gibney et al. (2018). This measure focuses on the violation of physical integrity rights by the state and is measured on a five point scale. Levels are distinguished by the type of violence used, its frequency and the proportion of the population targeted (Haschke 2018). Thus, while at the lowest level there are barely any violations, at the two highest levels, repression is widespread.<sup>18</sup> At the two intermediate levels, repression is less widespread and thus more selective, albeit the coding does not state how states select targets of repression.

How does this state-level repression measure relate to the concept of ethnically targeted pre-emptive repression against group members that are not engaging in collective action that is used here? 78% of country-years between 1996 and 2003 do not see this type of ethnic repression. About 23% of these country-years nevertheless see repression that is widespread according to the Political Terror Scale (PTS)<sup>19</sup> (one of the two highest levels). A further 66% of country-years without ethnically targeted repression see selective repression according to the PTS (levels two and three), while only eleven per cent of states without ethnic repression see no repression at all based on this measure. This suggests that ethnic targeting is by far not the only logic behind selective repression and that states can target large parts of the population with repression without targeting any ethnic groups in particular.

Amongst country-years with at least some ethnic repression, a much smaller proportion is coded as seeing limited repression on the PTS (level two), 19 as opposed to 37%. Instead, a much larger proportion sees widespread repression (levels 4 and 5), 49 as opposed to 23%. Thus, it seems that states that repress ethnically are much more likely to repress the population more generally. However, this is not necessarily because all ethnic groups in the state face repressive measures. Instead, in country-years with at least some ethnic repression, 77% of cases with widespread repression on the PTS (levels 4 and 5) do not see the repression of all ethnic groups.<sup>20</sup> This is interesting as it suggests that ethnic repression measured here captures a targeted strategy and is not just a by-product of governments repressing indiscriminately more generally. It may suggest that governments that target repression ethnically may also target repression at other groups in society or may use indiscriminate repression on top of their ethnic targeting strategy. Future research disentangling these relationships and investigating whether and if so which other societal groups face targeted preventive repression is important to understand the dynamics feeding into aggregate levels of state repression better.

<sup>18</sup> At the second-highest level repression primarily targets the politically motivated while at the highest level this distinction is no longer relevant.

<sup>19</sup> This discussion draws on the measure based on Amnesty International Reports.

<sup>20</sup> In this context, it is important to keep in mind, however, that some ethnic groups in the MAR data are associated with the government.

There is, however, also a more direct potential link between ethnically targeted repression and country-level repressive measures like the PTS. The ordinal scale of the PTS relies in part on the proportion of the population that faces repression. Distinctions between middle and high levels may be taken as implying different strategic approaches to repression, namely selective versus indiscriminate. The argument developed here, however, suggests that whether autocratic governments use repression against smaller or larger proportions of the population is a direct function of how large ethnic groups with incentives for collective action actually are. If there are many or large such groups, governments that target ethnically may be coded as using widespread, indiscriminate repression while governments that use the same strategy but face only few small groups with these incentives may be coded as selectively using repression.<sup>21</sup> Future research using country-aggregate levels of repression should keep the possibility of targeted repression against a large politically excluded and potentially aggrieved ethnic population in mind and distinguish this logic from arguments about indiscriminate repression.

## Results

### *Main Results*

Table 1 shows results from two models: The first model analyzes the variables of interest without taking the potentially moderating effect of the regime type into account. The second model includes interactions between the variables of interest and a state's regime type as described above in order to test the hypotheses.

Hypothesis one expected that repression is higher when discrimination is high. Hypothesis two suggested that repression is higher when the military is small compared to the group. In addition, the possibility of a negative interaction effect between discrimination and the military to group ratio has been considered. In model one, the model without regime interactions, the effect of the variable on the military to group ratio is negative but does not reach statistical significance. The variable on discrimination is significantly positive and the interaction term with the military to group ratio is positive and statistically significant. This suggests that groups that face higher levels of discrimination also face more repression. The positive interaction term, however, runs contrary to the expectation in formal literature and suggests that the effect of discrimination on repression increases in strength as groups become weaker. It seems that governments do not only consider groups threatening when they have strong grievances *and* have a high probability of successfully challenging the government.

Hypotheses one and two expected that only autocratic states use repression in response to group strength and discrimination respectively as only those types of regimes can use repression as a pre-emptive strategy. In order to test these expectations, model two introduces a triple interaction term between discrimination, the military to group ratio and a state's regime type.

In order to understand how the effect of discrimination depends on the size of the military to group ratio and on a state's regime type, I use results from model two to plot the marginal effect of discrimination at different values of the military to group ratio in both types of regimes in Figure 2. The left panel shows that the findings from the non-interactive model

<sup>21</sup> The PTS codebook states, however, that coders distinguish selective from indiscriminate repression when evaluating how widespread repression is.



Table 1: Linear Regression Models on Ethnically Targeted Pre-emptive Repression

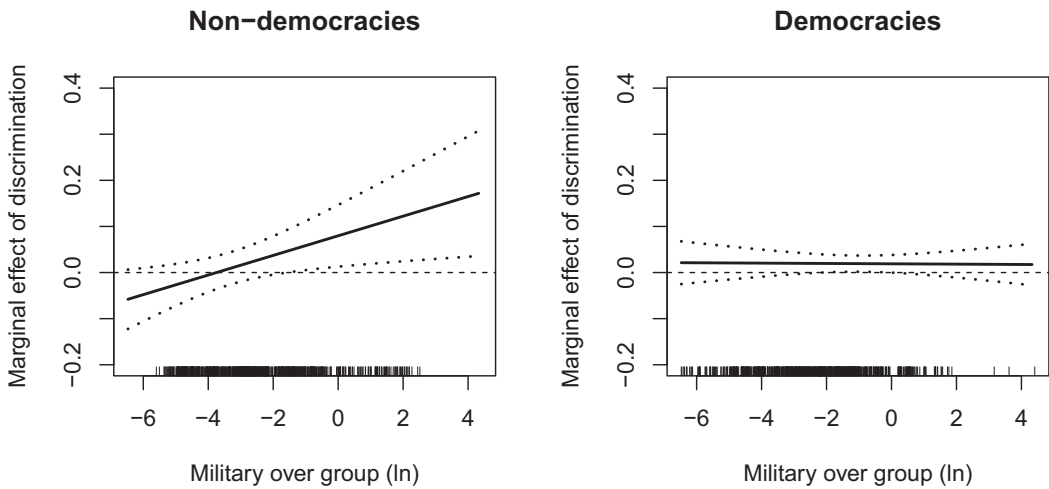
	Repression level	
	(1)	(2)
Intercept	-0.003 (0.043)	-0.077 (0.049)
Military over group (ln)	-0.020 (0.012)	-0.032* (0.019)
Discrimination, t-1	0.045** (0.018)	0.080** (0.034)
Democracy dummy	-0.070* (0.040)	0.065 (0.052)
History of conflict	0.148* (0.078)	0.159 (0.099)
Conflict, t-1	-0.026 (0.084)	0.017 (0.095)
History of protest	0.052 (0.035)	0.133** (0.061)
Protest, t-1	-0.040 (0.044)	-0.116* (0.062)
Group population	0.021 (0.160)	0.052 (0.164)
Others' protest	-0.011 (0.014)	-0.009 (0.014)
Others' conflict	0.025 (0.018)	0.028 (0.020)
Repression, t-1	0.744*** (0.048)	0.731*** (0.049)
Eastern Europe and former SU	0.025 (0.033)	0.042 (0.030)
Asia	-0.026 (0.045)	-0.021 (0.043)
North Africa and Mideast	0.025 (0.080)	0.029 (0.081)
Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.064 (0.048)	-0.054 (0.044)
Latin America and Caribbean	-0.023 (0.025)	-0.023 (0.029)
Military over group (ln) × Discrimination, t-1	0.010** (0.005)	0.021** (0.009)
Military over group (ln) × Democracy dummy		0.029 (0.019)
Discrimination, t-1 × Democracy dummy		-0.061* (0.034)
Conflict history × Democracy dummy		-0.009 (0.160)
Conflict, t-1 × Democracy dummy		-0.117 (0.222)
Protest history × Democracy dummy		-0.142** (0.065)

Table 1: Continued

	Regression level	
	(1)	(2)
Protest, t-1 × Democracy dummy		0.135* (0.074)
Military over group (ln) × Discrimination, t-1 × Democracy dummy		-0.022** (0.010)
Observations	1,469	1,469
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.587	0.588

Notes: Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses; \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

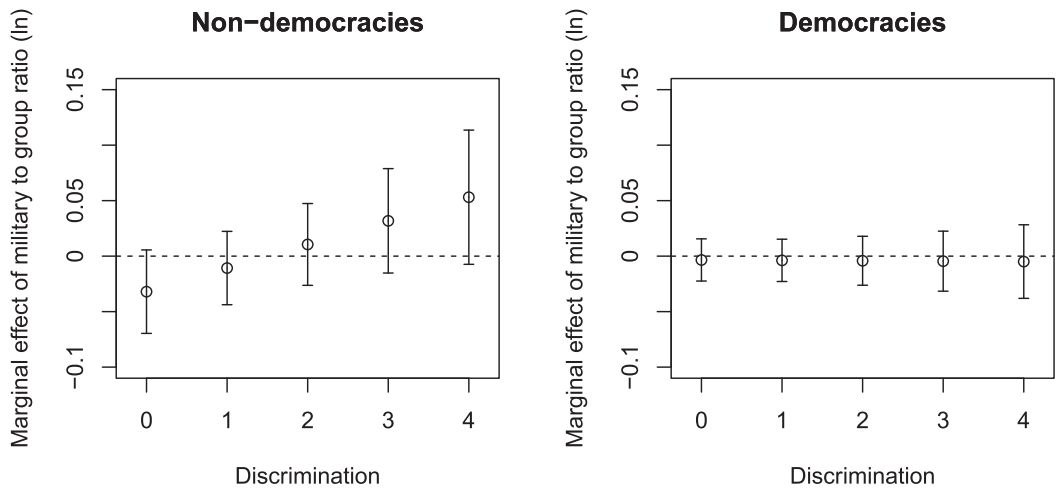
Figure 2: The Effect of Discrimination on Repression as the Military to Group Ratio (ln) Changes



are driven by non-democratic states. Here, discrimination has a significantly positive effect on repression when the military is large compared to the group, that is when the group is weak (above the 70th percentile). The marginal effect of discrimination increases significantly as the military becomes larger compared to the group, that is as the group becomes weaker. In democracies on the other hand, as the right panel shows, the effect of discrimination on repression is positive but not statistically significant other than in the middle of the range of values on the logged military to group variable where the lower bound of the 95% confidence interval moves slightly above 0. The substantive effect of discrimination is also considerably smaller than in the sample on non-democracies at higher values of the military to group ratio. The difference in the marginal effect of discrimination between democracies and autocracies is statistically significant at higher values of the military to group ratio. These findings offer partial support for hypothesis one. Autocracies use more repression against potentially aggrieved groups than democracies. However, and contrary to the expectation derived from formal literature, this is only the case when groups are weak.

Figure 3 shows the marginal effect of the military to group ratio at different values of group discrimination, again in both types of regimes. The effect of group weakness

Figure 3: The Effect of the Military to Group Ratio (ln) on Repression as Discrimination Changes

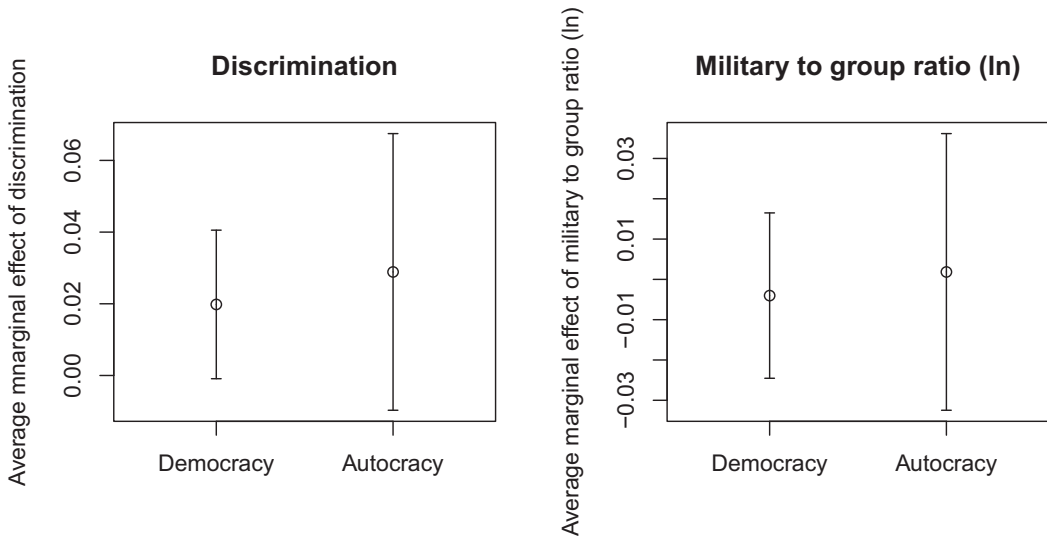


compared to the military does not reach statistical significance at the five per cent level. In autocracies, however, the negative marginal effect of the variable at the lowest level of discrimination and the positive effect at the two highest levels of discrimination are significant on the ten per cent level. This difference in the marginal effect between low and high levels of discrimination in autocracies is statistically significant. Thus, there is some support for the expectation that autocracies use repression in response to group strength, but contrary to the expectation only if groups are not also discriminated. It needs to be noted, however, that the effect of the military to group ratio is not significantly different between regime types.

Taken together, these results suggest that it is not the case that non-democratic governments only fear rebellion by groups that have incentives to rebel due to both discrimination *and* strength as was expected based on assumptions in theoretical literature. Instead, non-democratic governments seem to react to group discrimination and to some degree also to group strength with repression but only if the respective other condition is absent. If both conditions occur at the same time, autocratic governments do not use repression. If groups are strong *and* aggrieved, autocratic governments may fear that they are not able to repress groups' incentives for challenges successfully and may instead use other strategies such as concessions. Importantly, democracies use significantly less repression against weak discriminated groups than autocracies. Thus, hypothesis one is supported for a subset of discriminated groups but not for discriminated groups in general.

In addition to the conditional effects of discrimination and group strength, Figure 4 shows the average marginal effect of the variables on ethnic discrimination and on military strength compared to a group's size for democracies and autocracies. The average marginal effect of these variables is calculated from all observations in the sample while the respective other constitutive term is set to each observation's observed value. As can be seen, the average marginal effects for both variables do not differ significantly across regime types. However, this is unsurprising because in democracies, for both interacted variables, the effect is fairly constant across the values of the other moderating variable while in autocracies both variables have negative effects at low values of the respective

Figure 4: Average Marginal Effects Across Regime Types



other interaction term and positive effects at high values. As a result, in autocracies the differing effects at different values of the moderator cancel each other out so that the overall average effect for both variables differs little from the effect in democracies. This finding confirms the conclusion that hypothesis one is not supported as stated but rather only for a subset of ethnic groups: discrimination increases repression in autocracies more than in democracies but only if groups are weak compared to the state. On the other hand, we find no support for hypothesis two: Group strength does not affect repression differently in democracies and autocracies.

Hypothesis three expected that non-democratic governments are more likely to use repression when groups have previously been involved in a rebellion, while democratic states do not. Hypothesis four repeats this expectation for groups that have previously been involved in nonviolent protests. As Table 1 shows, the dummy variables on rebellion and protest in the past five years do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance in the non-interactive model, albeit the variable on a group's history of conflict is significant at the ten per cent level. In the interaction model, a history of protest significantly increases repression, but only in non-democratic states. A history of conflict, on the other hand, does not increase repression in any regime type. This lends support to hypothesis four and suggests that autocratic states use a history of protest as an indicator for an increased risk of subsequent challenges by groups and use ethnically targeted repression to prevent these challenges. On hypothesis three, the evidence suggests that all regimes may react to a history of violence, albeit this finding is associated with considerable uncertainty.

Overall, I find support for some of the empirical implications of the argument that non-democratic governments use repression to balance groups' incentives for fighting. As expected, I find less evidence that democracies use repression to prevent ethnic rebellion.

In addition to the main variables of interest, the variable on repression in the previous year is significantly negative in both models suggesting that there is considerable path dependency in the use of ethnically targeted repression. The variable on group size in

relation to the population of a state does not reach statistical significance in any of the models. The same is the case for variables on protest or rebellion by other groups. Neither the variable on conflict nor on protest in the previous year are significant at the five per cent level or are significantly moderated by regime type.<sup>22</sup> Thus, neither regime type is straightforwardly associated with repression in reaction to more recent dissent by a group when pre-emptive repression is taken into account.

### *Robustness*

The findings on the measures of interest have been scrutinized using a number of alternative specifications (regression tables in the online appendix). As discussed above, there are cases where it is not clear whether group members that experience repression were involved in collective action or not. When these cases are coded as cases of no repression, results remain fairly similar with some variables reaching higher significance levels. Only the interaction term between protest in the previous year and the regime type is now no longer significant on the ten per cent level. If only data from MAR and not from EPR is used to assess changes in the level of conflict involving other groups, results remain robust.

As it could be argued that the measure on the group's size in relation to the total population offers a better operationalization of a group's probability of winning than the measure on the military to group ratio, the models have also been replicated using both strength measures in interaction with a group's discrimination – and in model two also regime type – alongside each other. In model one, the model without interactive terms with the regime type, the interaction term between discrimination and the military to group ratio is still positive but no longer significant. In the more complex model two, the constitutive term on the military to group ratio is still negative but no longer significant at the ten per cent level. However, this is not necessarily reason for concern as the meaning of this term has changed slightly as it now also marks the effect of the military to group ratio when the group population is very low. All interaction terms of interest remain identical in sign and significance, while none of the interaction terms with a group's population size reaches statistical significance. This suggests that the military to group ratio is not picking up the moderating effect of group size more generally.

In addition, instead of using Cheibub et al's measure of democracy (Cheibub et al. 2010), the analysis has been replicated using XPolity (Vreeland 2008). In these models, the constitutive term on the history of conflict is significantly positive, suggesting that when the XPolity measure is 0, states use repression against groups with a history of conflict. The interaction term is negative and significant at the ten per cent level, providing some evidence that this effect becomes weaker as states become more democratic. Thus, the model using the alternative regime type measure provides some support for hypothesis three. On the other hand, here the history of protest is no longer significant and no longer significantly moderated by regime type as suggested by hypothesis four. The interaction term between discrimination and the military to group ratio is no longer significant in either model. In addition, in model two, the constitutive term on the military to group ratio as well as the interaction terms between discrimination and regime type and the triple interaction between regime type, military to group ratio and discrimination are no longer

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<sup>22</sup> In the interactive model, the variable on protest in the previous year, however, reaches significance at the ten per cent level and the moderating effect of regime type reaches significance at the ten per cent level.

significant. Thus, using the alternative regime measure, group strength plays no role and the effect of discrimination is not moderated by group strength and regime type. Thus, the conclusions of the analysis above depend on the specific regime definition employed in Cheibub et al. (2010) that depends on contested elections.

Results have also been replicated using a measure on whether a group's access to higher office is restricted from the MAR data as an alternative measure of discrimination. In the interactive model, the constitutive term on history of protest is now only significant at the ten per cent level but the moderating effect of democracy remains significant at conventional levels. In addition, in the interactive model, the variable on protest in the previous year as well as its interaction with democracy is no longer significant at the ten per cent level. Moreover, the constitutive terms on the military to group ratio and access to higher office do no longer reach statistical significance and neither do the moderating variables that previously reached significance. This suggests that the effects of discrimination and group strength, and their conditionality on each other and the regime type depend on the specific measurement of discrimination employed in the main analysis.

Models have also been rerun with country-fixed effects. In the simple model, a group's history of conflict no longer reaches significance on the ten per cent level. In the interactive model, the constitutive term on the history of protest and the constitutive term on protest in the previous year that was significant on the ten per cent level are no longer significant. The moderating effect of regime type on previous protest that was significant at the ten per cent level in the original model is no longer significant. In addition, the interaction term between protest history and regime type is now only significant on the ten per cent level. Results on discrimination and group strength and their moderating effects, on the other hand, are robust. However, it is important to note that 65 per cent of states only have one or two groups and thus, there is little variation to exploit when only within-country comparisons are made.

Finally, I have included variables on the number of years since a group's last conflict and protest respectively in all models. In model two, I have interacted these measures with the regime type. However, none of these variables are significant at conventional levels and their effect does not differ between regime types. Their inclusion, however, renders the variable on a group's history of conflict in the non-interactive model and the variable on history of protest and the interactive term with regime type in the interactive model insignificant. This suggests that the model is incapable of disentangling the effect of dissent in the last five years and a more long-term time decaying effect of previous dissent.

## Conclusion

This article finds some evidence suggesting that non-democratic states are more likely than democracies to use repression in order to prevent ethnic groups from engaging in violent collective action. This mechanism could be driving the numerous previous findings of a negative effect of democracy on repression (for an overview see Davenport 2007). Exploring whether democracies are generally less likely to use repression or whether they are more hesitant to use repression as a pre-emptive strategy could add another facet to current understanding of the effect of regime type on government repression. In addition, the finding raises the question whether democratic governments have other pre-emptive strategies at their disposal or whether they instead face a heightened risk of ethnic challenges. Based on the argument introduced here, democratic governments could offer strong aggrieved groups concessions or try and resolve ethnic grievances within the



democratic process in order to prevent challenges from ethnic groups. The evidence found here also suggests that even autocratic governments may resort to alternative strategies when aggrieved groups are very strong. Future research exploring governments' use of concessions as a pre-emptive strategy would provide new insights into the dynamics of ethnic mobilization and especially into the contested role of grievances in these processes.

In this article, I assume that democratic governments – at least on average – face audience costs that prevent them from using ethnically targeted pre-emptive repression while this is not the case in autocracies. It is, however, possible, that these costs also vary between democracies, especially given the inclusive operationalization of democratic regimes applied here. In some democratic states, at least a subset of domestic audiences may be less deterred by incumbents' use of ethnically targeted repression, for example in states with a history of strongly polarized or even violent ethnic contestation. Similarly, some types of autocratic governments may be more hesitant to use ethnically targeted repression than others, for example when the leader's ethnic group relies on the support of smaller ethnic groups that may oppose ethnic targeting of repression out of fear for their own future. These potential additional conditioning factors of the argument introduced here could fruitfully be explored in future empirical work on the strategic logic of ethnically targeted government repression.

The findings of this article suggest that our understanding of repression can be improved by theorizing at the level of potential targets of repression. There is a number of other types of groups that governments may target with repression in order to prevent protest or rebellion, for example women or workers that face precarious working conditions. Unpacking whether governments also target other types of actors with pre-emptive repression is important for better understanding governments' use of repression against their citizens. In addition, we still know little about what types of collective action different types of governments are most concerned with preventing. Understanding who is targeted with repression and why is important to prevent bias: After all, there is a danger that structural reasons are correlated with the presence of potential targets of pre-emptive repression and with increased incentives for some forms of collective action over others. If the targets of repression and their potential tactics are ignored, structural reasons could be mistaken for the actual cause of repression.

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## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

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