

TOTALITARIAN RESPONSES TO NONVIOLENT PROTEST MOVEMENTS: THE RATIONALITY OF STRATEGIC STATE VIOLENCE

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In an episode of the cartoon show *The Simpsons*, the town of Springfield is suddenly thrown into a power blackout (Groening). The citizens soon realize that all of the security alarms in the retail stores are no longer functional, and within minutes a mob of looters proceeds to terrorize the city. As the Simpson family watches from their roof, the sound of approaching police sirens becomes audible. Yet Marge's sigh of relief—"Finally, some repression!"—is short-lived, as Police Chief Wiggum announces to the looters, "Alright everyone, disperse immediately. We are prepared to use force—what, what? We're not prepared?" With the threat of repression removed, the chaos continues.

While *The Simpsons* is admittedly not an academic example, the need for state violence in response to violent uprisings or revolutions is intuitive. Recent history does not provide an example of a government surviving armed revolution through nonviolent means. If a state intends to keep its power, civilian violence must be met with some form of repression (Tilly 209).

The rational state response to a nonviolent movement, however, is different. The American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's is often cited as an example of the success of state nonviolence: encounters between nonviolent protesters and nonviolent police forces often rendered the protests ineffective or unsuccessful. In these cases, the state's nonviolent response denied the protesters the desegregation or racial equality they sought to achieve (Barkan 1985: 69).

Conversely, violent state responses to Civil Rights Movement protests are said to have contributed to the protests' eventual suc-

cess (Barkan 1985: 69). The Civil Rights Movement's ability to achieve desegregation and stronger civil rights protections was largely a function of "the crude and unlearned responses of certain Southern officials to [nonviolent] protest[s]" (Barkan 1985: 69).

In this case, a non-legalistic state response effectively dealt with a nonviolent movement. However, the nature of the United States' democratic government must be taken into account when evaluating the state's reaction. In fact, the fundamental differences between democracies and non-democracies necessitate that states deal with a "people power movement" in different ways, as Kurt Schock observes:

Unlike democracies, where dissent is expected and tolerated, non-democratic regimes cannot simply ignore protest, as its mere existence represents a threat to the regime. If protest is ignored, the regime will appear helpless in the face of defiance, and resistance will spread (50).

Since dissent and protest pose an inherent threat to a non-democratic state, the government must suppress any public voicing of disapproval before resistance becomes more widespread and threatens the regime's survival. Inaction—allowing the protest to run its course—is not an option in a non-democracy. Furthermore, protesters in non-democratic states could be emboldened by the "weak" yet otherwise optimal nonviolent response that has proved to be so successful in democracies. Thus, a totalitarian government must choose between legalistic action and violent repression to ensure its continued existence.

The particular dynamics of nonviolent protest, however, complicate this choice in that the protesters peacefully pursue the demands of the movement in the face of state violence (Sharp 546). A violent state response, then, plays directly into the hands of those targeted for state repression (Barkan 1984: 563). This dilemma raises the question: how should a rational, unified, totalitarian government respond to nonviolent protest?

As the government must respond, and as violence could further the goals of the protest movement, it seems that a non-

democratic state should follow a legal, nonviolent course of action. However, I argue that, when faced with a nonviolent social movement, it is in a totalitarian state's interests to respond immediately with what I call "Proportionally Overwhelming Repression." The unique composition of a non-democracy allows such states to respond with overwhelming violence that is proportional to the scale of the protest in question.

My analysis does not make a distinction as to the nature or goals of the nonviolent protest movements in question. Yet, these differences become essentially irrelevant within a totalitarian state, as any protest poses a threat to a non-democratic regime.¹

Further, each method of nonviolent action "may precede or accompany acts of non-cooperation or nonviolent intervention," exacerbating the threat that one form of protest may lead to another (Sharp 119). Given that all forms of protest challenge the legitimacy of a regime, varying methods of protest will be considered equally in this analysis.

This paper is divided into six parts. Section I will introduce four non-democracies to serve as case studies throughout the paper. To advance the theory of Proportionally Overwhelming

¹ Gene Sharp classifies 198 different types of nonviolent protest, and places them into five categories: nonviolent protest and persuasion; social noncooperation, economic noncooperation; political noncooperation; and nonviolent intervention (Sharp xii-xvi). Sharp maintains that the most direct challenges to the regime are the methods of nonviolent intervention, which include hunger strikes, the establishment of alternative social institutions, nonviolent land seizure, and civil disobedience of 'neutral' laws (357). These methods, according to Sharp, are most likely to "induce change through the mechanisms of accommodation or of nonviolent coercion" (358). However, Sharp admits that all of the methods of nonviolent protest he elucidates can serve a purpose that is revolutionary in nature, and thus directly threatening to the existence of the regime. For example, Sharp notes that political noncooperation may be based on changing "the nature or composition" of the ruling government (286), whereas economic strikes and boycotts can encompass a broader social objective (258). Further, social noncooperation is based on a direct withdrawal of consent to be ruled from "the person, activity, institution, or regime with which they have become engaged in conflict" (183), and lastly, nonviolent protest and persuasion can be aimed towards activating third party interest, "arousing attention and publicity for the issue," or towards the growth of the movement by recruiting new protesters (118).

Repression, Section II will discuss the dynamics and goals of non-violent protest. Section III will juxtapose the political dynamics of non-democracies and democracies, allowing examination of the effects of protest behavior and government repression in non-democracies. Two existing theories that help explain the relationship between repression and protest in non-democracies will be analyzed in Section IV. Section V will present the idea of Proportionally Overwhelming Repression as the most advantageous response for a rational non-democracy in dealing with a nonviolent protest movement. Proportionally Overwhelming Repression will be differentiated from a basic level of repression, quantified, and applied to several case studies. Section VI will conclude with a discussion of further complicating variables and the possible implications. Throughout the analysis, I will use case studies from the Philippines, South Africa, Burma, and China, as well as several existing statistical models, to illustrate the need for Proportionally Overwhelming Repression to ensure state stability.

Proportionally Overwhelming Repression: An Introduction

In this paper, I develop the concept and strategy of Proportionally Overwhelming Repression (POR), a measure of extremely violent restraint indicated by such variables as troop deployments and civilian casualties, and determined by the threat posed by the protest movement, as measured by the size of demonstrations, the extent to which the public supports the protesters, and the strength of the protesters' commitment to the nonviolent nature of their movement.

POR must be distinguished from the standard idea of repression, as this concept indicates the use of massive force against an opponent that physically harms protesters and increases the perceived risks associated with protest participation. Thus, the extreme violence of POR makes involvement with protest movements unappealing.

I. CASE STUDIES: BACKGROUND

Four case studies of domestic conflict and unrest are examined in this paper: Burma, China, South Africa, and the Philippines. What follows is a brief summary and contextualization of these conflicts, inspired in part by Kurt Schock's book, *Unarmed Insurrections*.

Burma

The movement for democracy in Burma sought to undermine the oppressive one-party system of rule and topple the military regime in power. As Schock writes, "According to Robert Taylor, the military consistently responded to protests with 'minimal manpower and maximum firepower to demonstrate, as rapidly as possible, its determination to keep the unrest from spreading and to serve as a deterrent' (Taylor 1987, 336)" (94). Ultimately, the heavily battered resistance movement was unable to continue the struggle, and after two years of conflict, the resistance was unsuccessful in toppling the military regime (Schock 98).

China

The Chinese student protest movement in the mid- to late-1980s was met with a brief period of state tolerance (Schock 100). In fact, according to Schock, "Many came to believe that the state would not actually use force to suppress the movement, thereby lowering the risk of activism" (101). However, the political elite refused to capitulate to the demands of the students, and the military crackdown began:

The military began using violence to end the demonstrations, the hunger strike, and the sit-in occupation of Tiananmen Square on the evening of June 3. [...] As many as one thousand people were killed during the confrontation, most of whom were unarmed citizens attempting to block the advancing troops. Afterward the government

arrested thousands of political activists, forcing others to go underground or abroad (Schock 101).

Facing this intense state repression, the resistance movement fell apart.

South Africa

The movement for racial equality and against apartheid spanned most of the twentieth century. Notably, an incident of police violence in Sharpeville killed at least 69 demonstrators and wounded 178. The largest incident occurred in Soweto in June of 1976. While not immediately successful in bringing down apartheid, it brought activists together and sustained them until the 1980's, when Nelson Mandela was released (Schock). Ultimately, the government's repression failed to bring down the protesters, who had enough resources to continue their struggle. As a result, "the anti-apartheid movement recast the political context; it became increasingly costly to maintain repression, third parties were activated, and elite divisions were exacerbated" (Schock 68).

The Philippines

The Anti-Marcos movement in the Philippines was an insurrection against the unpopular ruler Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos had been the object of grassroots resistance after instituting martial law and fostering rampant political instability and corruption (Schock 72). These factors helped coalesce Marcos's opposition into "active opposition," ultimately resulting in his fall from power, despite sporadic government efforts at repression (Schock 74).

II. THE FUNCTIONAL DYNAMICS OF NONVIOLENCE

Basic Dynamics

According to Max Weber, “A state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (78). This view of state power is central to the use of nonviolence as a strategy among civilian protesters. By defining the state’s ability to use physical force as a “monopoly,” this philosophy acknowledges that the state possesses more tools for violence than the protesters. Thus, a state’s choice to use violence to suppress violence is rational. Nonviolent strategy by protesters is also rational in that it emerges from the understanding that violent tests of state power by domestic actors are ultimately futile, as it is precisely in the arena of violence that the state is strongest (Sharp 452). Gene Sharp writes:

The opponent is usually well-equipped to apply military and other violent means of combat and repression...instead of meeting him directly on that level, where he is strong, nonviolent actionists rely on a totally different technique of struggle, or “weapons system,” designed to operate to their advantage (452).

This separate “weapons system,” as Sharp notes, is “*designed to operate*” to the advantage of the protesters. By this, he means that nonviolent protest takes into account that the state—with its monopoly on the use of “combat and repression”—will find “bully[ing] and brutaliz[ing]” to be the most rewarding course of action in dealing with a protest movement (Chong 26). By eschewing violence in the face of repression, protesters politically deflect the state’s violent attacks and redirect their effects in a way that harms the state where it is most vulnerable. Sharp has called this dynamic “political jiu-jitsu,” as it “[throws the state] off balance, politically” (110).

Martin Luther King described the dynamics of nonviolent resistance as follows:

The goal of the demonstrations...is to dramatize the existence of injustice. [...] Negroes can achieve this goal when four things occur:

1. Nonviolent demonstrators go into the streets to exercise their constitutional rights.
2. Racists resist by unleashing violence against them.
3. Americans of conscience in the name of decency demand federal intervention and legislation.
4. The administration, under mass pressure, initiates measures of immediate intervention and remedial legislation (Sharp 127).

Inspiring violence—number two on King’s list—was essential to arousing the nation’s consciousness to civil rights injustices. The Civil Rights Movement is a prime example of state brutality as an agent of organized dissent (Chong 21).

A confrontation between a nonviolent protest group and a violent repressive power works to the advantage of the protesters, who are seen as victims of the state (Sharp 109). The “asymmetry” inherent to violent suppression of nonviolent citizens raises more “questions about the legitimacy of authority...than [in] the violent repression of a violent challenge” (Schock 42). This dynamic of “political jiu-jitsu” comes into play as soon as the state responds violently to a nonviolent social movement. As justifications for such repression become less palatable to the public, domestic and third party support for the state begins to wane (Sharp 546).

The 1963 Birmingham struggle during the United States Civil Rights Movement is, perhaps, the most notable successful application of the nonviolent protest strategy. Nonviolent protesters in Birmingham were met with high-pressure water hoses and police dogs (Morris 268). The Movement achieved “victory” in Birmingham—desegregation and a number of civil rights statutes—“thanks in large part to the violence of the white response” (Barkan 1985: 69). Conversely, when officials in Albany, Georgia were faced with nonviolent protests in 1961 and 1962, their response was nonviolent. Thus, they were able to “outmaneuver

the local campaign” by “den[ying] the protest the type of outrage needed to attract sympathetic publicity” (Tuck 151).

The Public Relations Game

Dennis Chong models a “public relations game,” which is structured like a classic prisoner’s dilemma (Fig. 1). This model presents both the police/state and the protesters as rational actors:

		Police	
		Violent	Peaceful
Protesters	Violent	- , ++	-- , -
	Peaceful	++ , --	+ , +

(Fig. 1) (Chong 22)

In his model, Chong notes:

The activists have a dominant strategy; they want to be orderly at any cost, whether the authorities are combative or accommodating. On the other hand, the authorities’ preference is contingent on the disposition of the protesters—if the protesters get rowdy, the authorities will crack down on them; but if they are well-behaved, the authorities will be light-handed (23).

Restricting the model to nonviolent protest populations *does*, however, leave the state with a dominant strategy, which is in theory independent of the nature of the protests it faces:

		Police	
		Violent	Lawful
Protesters	Peaceful	++ , --	+ , +

(Fig. 2)

In this case, the state cannot achieve a positive private outcome unless its response to the protests is nonviolent. The “public relations” at work here resemble the internal dynamics of Kurt Schock’s theories on “the activation of third parties” (67). Schock

claims that the “intense media coverage” generated by “violent confrontations between armed state forces and unarmed protesters” will tend to “activate” (i.e. mobilize) uninvolved parties, who will then demand that the offending government yield to the protesters’ demands (43). Although Gene Sharp questions “the importance of national and world opinion to the outcome” of protest movements, he admits that this opinion can influence group morale (461). This concession ultimately affirms the importance of third party activation to the outcome of a protest.

Eventually, third parties will most likely “take action against a regime or provide support for challengers in situations where violence is used to repress an unarmed challenge” (Schock 43). Thus, within the context of the “public relations game,” a violent response to a nonviolent protest must be thoroughly irrational or motivated by factors external to Chong’s model. We know, however, that violent repression has been successful in a number of different countries, including Burma and China, whose governments used “violent and indiscriminate repression” against nonviolent social movements (Schock 116). The success of quick, brutal repression in non-democracies like Burma and China points to a major weakness in both nonviolent strategy and the existing models for government and protest behavior—they focus on protest in democracies. What, then, makes a non-democracy so different?

III. THE NATURE OF THE NON-DEMOCRACY

The central reality of protest theory, it seems, is that “regimes differ markedly in their capacity to endure various kinds of disruption” (DeNardo 34). The basic division of regimes into democracies and non-democracies is often explored in political science literature, and was notably delineated in Gupta, Singh, and Sprague’s article on the dynamics of repression in both regime types (311). According to the authors, the possibility of global isolation, a country’s international reputation, and differences in social culture distinguish the protest environment in a non-de-

mocracy from that in a democracy.

Possibility of Democratic Isolation

While most totalitarian states are not completely isolated from the outside world, the nature of their international relationships does tend to differ from those of democratic nations. David Leblang has shown that there is a strong correlation between a country's level of economic development and the nature of its government: more often than not, democratic states' economies reliably post strong growth figures and are more open to trade than are totalitarian states (454). As a result, democracies exhibit higher levels of international economic and political interdependence than do non-democracies (Oneal et al. 11). This interdependence makes it nearly impossible for democratic governments to prevent third party activation.

Conversely, the characteristics of totalitarian states' international relations make it easier to inhibit the effectiveness of nonviolent protest by denying third parties the information and access they would need to help the protesters' cause. Non-democracies tend to be less involved in the international networks that so occupy democracies' foreign policymakers (Leblang 453). The Burmese case study exemplifies the extent to which "international isolation" and the lack of its citizens' "integrat[ion] into transnational networks" can facilitate the success of violent repression (Schock 148).

Yet it is, perhaps, the tendency of totalitarian states to cultivate relations with each other, to the exclusion of democracies, which represents the greatest impediment to third party activation or intervention when these states choose to suppress nonviolent protests by violent means. Governments that make use of such tactics do well not to condemn their ideological comrades for similar actions. In this case, totalitarian third parties may be *aware* of repression but may not be moved to intervene, as their own ideologies do not recognize the legitimacy of those rights being quashed by their foreign counterparts. This dynamic re-

duces the importance of third party outrage in a non-democratic state's decision-making process and hinders the protesters from progressing to their goals.

National Image

A major concern of the U.S. government in handling the 1960's Civil Rights Movement was maintaining its image as a bastion of global democracy (Chong 22). In the midst of the Cold War, the Kennedy Administration was troubled by "the prospect of adverse international publicity," and based much of its response to the demands of the protesters on its national image abroad (Chong 22). The reputation of a non-democracy, which usually does not hinge on respect for human rights, is less sensitive to the backlash that could result from brutal repression (Lutz and Sikkink 638).

Social Culture

The totalitarian leader's reputation for human rights abuses may also foster a governmental and social culture that threatens the integrity of its citizens' human rights in everyday life. Thus, "feelings of helplessness...in the face of [a ruler's] capacity for repression" give the government more leeway to deploy violent force to suppress public dissent (Sharp 44). Alternatively stated, the use of "extralegal methods of official control" often results in negative attention and third-party mobilization, but a totalitarian government is unlikely to view its actions as "extralegal," and the general environment of repression can lead citizens and foreign observers to accept the government's assertions of legality.

The power of the non-democracy does not necessarily rely upon the consent of the people over whom it has power. In Gupta, Singh, and Sprague's definition of democracy, the government features an "effective head of state [who] is elected" (311). Contrarily, a non-democracy is "not necessarily dependent on the cooperation and obedience of the people they actually

rule...non-cooperation by the oppressed may be a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for a successful unarmed insurrection” (Schock 45-46). All of these factors have been incorporated into a model Schock uses to address the “repression-dissent paradox” and to quantify the consequences of repression in non-democracies (156).

IV. DYNAMICS OF REPRESSION AND PROTEST BEHAVIOR IN A NON-DEMOCRACY

The Repression-Dissent Paradox

Schock’s “repression-dissent paradox” describes how “sometimes repression crushes dissent, whereas at other times it generates increased mobilization” (Schock 156). A number of statistical models have been advanced to explain the dual nature of this strategy. The two most prominent and competing models are substitution theory and the Inverted-U hypothesis. Despite their differences, both hypotheses ultimately provide support for a policy of consistent repression in a non-democracy.

Substitution Theory

In his analysis of governmental deterrence, Lichbach develops a model of conflict, which allows for “decision making and price taking by the opposition group” (272). Central to his model is an equation that relates the opposition group’s chosen strategy to the marginal productivities of the protest tactics they have at their disposal:

$$OT_n / n = OT_v / v$$

Where O is the level of obtainable government revenue benefits for an opposition group;

T_n is an opposition group’s total nonviolent activities;

T_v is an opposition group’s total violent activities;

n is the price per unit of an opposition group’s nonviolent activities;

and v is the price per unit of an opposition group's violent activities (Lichbach 274-277).

By taking into consideration the marginal returns to a specific type of protest, opposition groups eventually settle on a protest strategy that delivers the optimal result achievable given their capabilities and resource constraints. Lichbach's model necessitates that "an opposition group [shift] its tactics in response to [a] government's coercive policy: An increase in [government] repression of nonviolence may decrease the nonviolent activities of an opposition group but increase its violent activities" (268).

However, parts of Lichbach's assertion cannot be reconciled with the historical evidence provided by our case studies. As was the case in both South Africa and the Philippines, "when the state focused its repressive capacities on one type of nonviolent action, the challengers shifted to other types" (Schock 81). While the protesters did shift their tactics to achieve a higher marginal benefit, they did not choose to adopt a strategy of massive, violent resistance. Rather, they found different channels for nonviolent resistance. Thus, the state does not necessarily have to worry about violent repression leading to increasingly violent protests. However, outbreaks of violence would not necessarily impose an insurmountable cost on the government, as violent protest behavior does carry with it the greatest potential payoff for the state (See Fig. 1).

Ultimately, Lichbach determines, "The rule for government is: Don't reward and punish the same tactic; reward one and punish the other" (287). Whether opposition groups substitute violent protest for nonviolent protest or one type of nonviolent protest for another, it is in the state's best interest to follow coherent policies of either reward or punishment for violent and nonviolent protests. Lichbach argues, "consistent government accommodative and repressive policies reduce dissent, while inconsistent policies increase it" (268). The success of a consistent response is illustrated in the government's reaction to democratic protest in Burma which was demobilized due to repression. Since totalitarian states must quash dissent on pain of dissolution—as shown at

the outset of this paper—it is in the state’s interest to maintain a consistent policy of repression or non-repression. I will show in section V that a non-democratic state cannot but follow a path of violence when presented with this choice.

Inverted-U Hypothesis

Gupta, Singh, and Sprague advance the idea of a “U-shaped relationship” between state repression and protest behavior in democratic countries, and an “inverted U-shaped relationship” in order to explain this connection in non-democratic countries (313). The shape of the inverted-U appears in a graph that models the level of repression on the x-axis and the level of protest on the y-axis. In this model, protest peaks when repression levels are moderate, and is at its lowest when repression is either absent or severe. This relationship illustrates that in a non-democracy, “brute force can at times be effective” (Gupta et al. 323).

Central to understanding the Inverted-U hypothesis and the incentives that make the mobilization of brute force so attractive to non-democracies is an assertion put forth by Lichbach. He finds that “the threat and severity of coercive violence used by a regime increases the anger of dissidents, thereby intensifying their opposition, up to some high threshold of government violence beyond which anger gives way to fear” (270). This principle is illustrated by the cases of Burma and China, both of which were characterized by “violent and indiscriminate repression [that] had the effect of demobilizing and suppressing the movement” (Schock 116). Escalation is a dominant strategy, which leads “regimes and their opponents [...] to engage in violent conflict to the limit of their abilities” (Gurr 232). Within the context of this model, a totalitarian state’s ability to repress dissent is nearly unlimited and unhindered. Consequently, a non-democracy that has demonstrated the willingness and capability to employ extreme and indiscriminate force as a means of repression will only encounter insignificant levels of protest.

So, does violent repression consistently yield better results

for non-democratic governments than do less physically aggressive methods of controlling dissent? Just as repression in Burma and China overwhelmingly defeated the nonviolent democratic movements in those countries, repression of protesters in South Africa and Nepal, along with the attempted repression of those in the Philippines, demonstrates the failure of violent government response to quash protests. This indicates a spectrum of governmental repression and mobilization that warrants further examination.

V. A STRATEGY OF “PROPORTIONALLY OVERWHELMING REPRESSION” IN NON-DEMOCRACIES

The Need for Repression

This analysis has repeated that a non-democratic government that ignores nonviolent protest risks the spread of this behavior by “appearing to be helpless in the face of defiance” (Sharp 111). The conclusion in the earlier discussion of Lichbach’s model of substitution theory stated that it is the consistency of the state’s response that is most important, regardless of the nature of the tactic it chooses. While I do not contest the need for consistency in response, the choice of violent repression over a legalistic response is vital to the defeat of a nonviolent movement in a totalitarian state. I contend that, from the point of view of a non-democratic regime, nonviolent protest should not be treated differently from violent insurrection.

Nonviolent action is as much “a serious threat to [a ruler’s] policy or regime” as is a violent movement (Sharp 110). What distinguishes the nonviolent form of struggle is the potential to activate “political jiu-jitsu” by causing a government’s “repression to rebound against its position...weakening its power” (Sharp 110). “In the absence of repression,” DeNardo concludes, “any demand can mobilize demonstrations that exceed the threshold of insurrection [...] in a repressive climate, however, no guarantees exist” (173).

The victory of the anti-Marcos movement in the Philippines shows the importance of repression by illustrating the failure of what was, at least in part, a legalistic campaign to defeat a nonviolent protest. Schock writes that Filipino ruler Marcos “relied on legalistic arguments and held a series of referenda and plebiscites in an attempt to certify his rule. These techniques were characterized by intimidation and fraud, and they ultimately failed to provide the regime with the legitimacy it sought” (69). The response to the anti-Marcos movement involved an alternating reliance on questionable legalistic techniques and limited violent repression until the very end of the protests, when violence became the sole reaction of the state to the protesters’ demands (Schock 72-79). In the end, Marcos’ inconsistent, mixed approach to repression allowed protesters enough political opportunities to force the downfall of his regime (Schock 70).

The Spectrum of Violent Governmental Response

The failure of the Filipino government to consistently use POR reaffirms that the effectiveness of state repression in response to a nonviolent protest movement cannot be predicted by the measure of troop deployment or the number of civilian victims of government crackdowns. When considering what may determine the success of violent repression under totalitarian regimes, I argue that the two most important variables for consideration are the quickness with which violence is mobilized and the proportionality of the response to the extent of the protest movement.

The Need for Immediacy

One of the three proximate causes of a revolutionary situation is governmental inaction (Tilly 209). When faced with a threat to the regime, it is vital to a non-democracy’s survival that its violent, repressive response be immediate. Immediacy serves three functions: first, it stops the protest before the threat of its continued

existence allows dissent to spread; second, the quick repression of a protest reduces the visibility of the demonstration by shortening its duration and minimizing the likelihood of a third party or the media finding out about the conflict; and finally, the immediacy of response to protest has direct consequences for the public perception of consistency of government response. In other words, if a non-democracy has chosen a path of violence, the public must assume that consequential significant protests will be met with similar, proportionally overwhelming levels of repression.

As before, consistency is vital to minimizing the negative effects of repression, as citizens in a non-democracy are more likely to tolerate extreme repression, “provided that [the rules of repression] are strictly enforced and fairly applied to all” (Gurr 257). In fact, Gurr argues that “the sum of repressed hostility in the population” tends to be lower when sanctions have been imposed consistently rather than when punishments seem to be meted out at random (256). The effects of consistency in the face of POR are evident in the protests in Burma. Violence consistently applied had the ultimate effect of “demobiliz[ing] the movement” and allowing the government to stay in power (Schock 94).

On the other hand, protest in the Philippines is representative of the need for an immediate response of POR rather than a delayed reaction. Near the end of the struggle, the Filipino government attempted to switch tactics from legalistic techniques to proportionally overwhelming repression. In recounting the major turning point in the anti-Marcos movement, when governmental troops refused to follow orders and repress the nonviolent protesters, Schock writes:

Marcos ordered two battalions to go to the military camps to crush the mutiny, but as their tanks approached the military camps, unarmed civilians led by nuns and priests formed a human barricade...The unarmed protesters effectively immobilized the troops sent in by Marcos, and they subsequently retreated. The dramatic events sparked a nationwide defection of soldiers and officers. Jet fighter pilots ordered to attack the military bases re-

fused to carry out the orders, since doing so would have led to widespread casualties of unarmed civilians (78).

This attempted tactical switch was certainly not too little, but it did occur too late in a governmental response strategy that had been publicly nonviolent up to that point. The population did not tolerate the inconsistency of the government's reaction to the protests, and the Marcos regime eventually fell to popular non-cooperation.

The Need for Proportionally Overwhelming Repression

Both models predicting protest behavior in the wake of government repression indicate that the use of POR can be effective. However, repression alone is not enough to overcome the mobilization effect of government violence. Repression must cause a change in public sentiment: "anger [must give] way to fear" (Lichbach 270). Anything less than POR places the government right in the middle of the inverted-U, producing the maximum amount of protest behavior. POR ultimately reduces the amount of resources expended by the regime and protesters on the struggle in which they are engaged. While the initial allocation of resources required by overwhelming repression may be higher than those needed to mount a peaceful or feeble violent response, the quarantine and depression effect of overwhelming repression will make it the best totalitarian strategy in the long run.

Here, the case studies prove illustrative. Part of the explanation for the failure of the apartheid government to maintain power in South Africa might rest in the lack of government commitment to violent repression. The South African anti-apartheid movement used repressive, albeit inconsistent, tactics that were ineffective in overwhelming the black population's protest activities (Schock 58-67).

The most notable instance of POR in the South African campaign came in 1976, when the government deployed lethal force in an attack on students protesting the use of Afrikaans as the official language of instruction in Soweto's schools (Schock 56).

As this took place in the beginning of the modern struggle, and the government was unwilling to use POR again, the negative effects of governmental inconsistency were activated, and protests continued (Olzak and Olivier 273).

Quantifying Proportionally Overwhelming Repression

Conway Henderson has created a model that can be used to quantify the concept of POR. Henderson quantifies the repression used in a given country “by coding country descriptions (N=152) of ‘integrity of the person’ into numerical values based on Gastil’s five-level political terror scale, a procedure already used successfully by Carleton and Stohl” (Henderson 127). The scale for repression is one to five, with five indicating the highest level of repression. His measure of democracy comes from an indexing by Wesson and associates, who categorized each type of government and assigned a value based on its ability to “limit arbitrary power and represent the will of the people to the government” (Henderson 128).

The values for the non-democracies I have examined are as follows:

Country	Repression	Democracy
Burma	3	1
China	3	1
Nepal	3	3
Philippines	4	3
South Africa	5	2
Thailand	2	3

(Fig. 3)

It is possible to expand further on the democracy variable. The level of democracy can also represent the degree to which the tradition of protest is institutionalized as a part of government, as “solutions in democracies are generally of a political nature” (Gupta et al. 323). The more likely it is that protest is institution-

alized, the more likely it is that there will be protest, as protest participation poses less of a risk when it is an integral part of civic culture. Thus, by extension, it is possible to view the democracy classification as an accurate yet imprecise measure of protest likelihood or behavior.

Given that “proportionally overwhelming repression” can become an actual proportion:

$$L_{\text{POR}} = R/D$$

Where L_{POR} is the level of proportionally overwhelming repression;

R is the repression index; and

D is the democracy index.

Using this equation, we can quantify the degree of POR likely to have been used by each country:

Country	L_{POR}
Burma	3
China	3
Nepal	1
Philippines	1.33
South Africa	2.5
Thailand	0.67

(Fig. 4)

As the table shows, there is a correlation between regime dissolution and inappropriately calibrated uses of force. A ratio close to one, or a formulation in which the level of repression is equal to the level of democracy, cannot be considered an “overwhelming” display of force. Burma and China, which both succeeded in overpowering their protest movements, have a much higher ratio force ratio than do Nepal, the Philippines, or Thailand, none of which could suppress the protest movements they faced.

In South Africa, the apartheid movement could not maintain its power over the state, despite the seemingly high level of POR. The possible explanatory factor might be the political “jiu-jitsu” effect of third party mobilization. Henderson provides a variable

for the level of economic development which correlates with economic interdependence and global trade relations (136).

Incorporating this variable, labeled L_{econ} , into the analysis for comparison, we see:

Country	L_{POR}	L_{econ}
Burma	3	4.26268
China	3	6.18415
Nepal	1	2.77259
Philippines	1.33	5.60212
South Africa	2.5	7.71286
Thailand	0.67	5.76832

(Fig. 5)

South Africa's level of economic development is the highest among all of the countries examined. This might reflect the fact that a government's need for repression changes once it has reached a certain level of economic interdependence. Whether that change means that the use of POR must be higher or lower cannot be determined. Economic interdependence does, however, appear to be a confounding variable.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Implications

The conclusion presented here—that strategically acting totalitarian governments will overwhelmingly repress protest movements in their countries—is unsettling on a human level. It has been difficult for me to argue this point, particularly because I tend to support nonviolent protest movements and abhor the idea of violent repression. While the data does indeed seem to support the thesis of this paper, it also provides us with several ways in which to make state violence a less attractive response to nonviolent protest. The finding that POR becomes less logical in the face of economic development and interdependence presents a

strong argument in favor of increased trade relations and foreign investment in non-democracies. This, in turn, would promote democracy while helping to protect human rights by controlling repressive regimes. Furthermore, nonviolent protesters under totalitarian regimes can strategically benefit from the proposed risk calculation. Planning for extreme repression would allow such groups to train followers and allocate resources in such a way as to be prepared for a violent repression.

Closing Remarks

The notion of POR holds true in both a qualitative analysis of pertinent cases and a quantitative examination of relevant variables. This indicates that a strategy of overwhelming repression, relative to the amount of nonviolent protest in a given non-democratic country, can actually be the most rational way for a totalitarian regime to respond to a nonviolent movement. The presence of repression alone is not enough to defeat a movement, and might actually exacerbate the situation, but an overwhelming amount of repression has what seems to be a significant deterrent effect in a non-democracy.

Mario Rosenthal wrote of “the dead-end street where all dictatorships ultimately arrive: kill everybody who is not with you or get out” (Sharp 93). Although this statement seems extreme, it might not be far from the truth. Despite the fact that nonviolence is designed to function in the face of violence by activating a “political jiu-jitsu” dynamic, it seems that overwhelming repression can activate its own dynamic of fear that prevents the growth and continuation of protest movements. The sad truth is that a dictatorship does not have to eliminate *all* of its enemies to ensure its survival—often, the overwhelming, violent, and visible repression of a significant number of dissenters is enough to secure the regime’s continued existence.

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