Violence Breeds Violence
How Violent Crime Affects Repression in Democratic Regimes

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Abstract

Recent research on human rights has examined the relationship between violent dissent and repression in democracies. Yet, it has not examined whether other forms of societal violence, most notably violent crime affect a country's level of repression. Drawing on a principal-agent framework, this article develops two causal mechanisms about how violent crime may increase repression in democratic regimes. First, high levels of violent crime deteriorate public safety, and thus citizens are likely to demand or support heavy hand policies. Second, citizens do not demand coercion but states resort to repression because non-controlled agents of security often impose order by employing abusive methods. Using the homicides rates as the primary measure of violent crime, I conduct multiple cross-national time-series estimates from 49 democracies between 1981 and 2004. Empirical results show that violent crime has not only a significant, but also a substantive effect on physical integrity rights violations under democracies.

Introduction

Does violent crime fuel repression in democratic regimes? This question is of a great deal of scholarly interest because of the simultaneous movement of democracy and human rights over the last three decades of the 20th century. Prominent studies in the existing literature claim that democracy improves citizens' human rights (e.g., Poe and Tate 1994). The logic of this argument rests on the idea that political institutions constrain state leaders' repressive behavior, as well as democratic values facilitate non-violent mechanisms of conflict resolution. Following directly from this perspective one could expect no association between crime and repression in democratic countries.

The previous consensus on the relationship between democracy and human rights has been challenged, however. Recent works have shown that democracy does not mitigate repression when face violent dissent (e.g., Davenport 2007a; Conrad and Moore 2010), indicating that the effect of democracy on human rights is strongly conditioned by the presence of insurgent violence. These studies have improved our knowledge on how democracies behave under violent dissent. Yet we still know too little about *whether* and *how* other forms of societal violence, most notably violent crime influences a country's level of repression.

In this article I tackle these questions by applying a principal-agent framework for the study of the crime–repression phenomenon under democracy. I focus on two distinct relations: (a) citizens and elected leaders, and (b) elected leaders and its repressive apparatus. Based on insights from case-study research, I develop two causal mechanisms about how violent crime may breed human rights violations in democratic countries. The first causal pathway suggests that high levels of violent crime deteriorate public safety, and thus citizens are likely to demand or support heavy hand policies. In addition, crime may provoke repression, albeit citizens do not trade human rights respect for increasing citizens' security. The second pathway correspond to cases in which citizens do not demand repression but states still incur in human rights violations. In particular, high levels of crime bring into action non-controlled agents of security who are accustomed to impose order by employing abusive methods.

The present explanation departs from existing research in two aspects. The first causal pathway counters the claim that democracy is associated to lower repression because citizens usually punish abusive governments at the ballot box (e.g., Poe and Tate 1994). In turn, I argued that citizens' preferences on repression are contextually determined, rather than fixed over time. The implication is that when violent crime severely threats citizens' security, democracy allows citizens to support zero-tolerance and repressive policies. The second mechanism departs from a common assumption in which state leaders have entirely control over security agents' behavior. Research has been centered on government leaders and the factors shaping their decisions about coercion. As a result, it takes for granted that state leaders monopolize repression against the citizenry. Yet, because political leaders delegate repression to actors who control the instruments of violence (e.g., the police), on the one hand, and these actors work in an environment without direct supervision, on the other hand, repression may arise from undisciplined state security agents who carry out repression without orders from above. To clarify, the theory in this article does not contradict neither rejects previous theories on repression; rather it adds new insights that may help to understand human rights violations.

This article begins by reviewing the theoretical arguments on violence, democracy, and human rights violations. Then, I proceed to develop the theoretical argument and the following two sections test the hypotheses in a set of regression models with the national homicides rates as the primary measure of violent crime. The findings obtained in this study show that violent crime has a significant and substantive effect on physical integrity rights violations in democratic regimes. Indeed, the impact of violent crime is equivalent to the effect of transnational terrorist attacks on repression. A brief conclusion summarizes the findings and discusses its implications.

Literature Review

One of the most prominent findings in the literature on human rights is the relationship between democracy and lower levels of repression (e.g., Poe and Tate 1994; Poe, Tate, Keith 1999; Davenport 1995, 2004; Cingranelli and Richards 1999; Zanger 2000; Hafner-Burton 2005; Neumayer 2005a; Englehart 2009; Cingranelli and Filippov 2010). Scholars have postulated a variety of mechanisms underlying such empirical regularity. One contention is that a set of values rooted in democratic processes provides peaceful mechanisms of conflict resolution and thus governments avoid repression (Henderson 1991). Another argument is that democracy increases the cost of human rights violations because elections empower citizens to replace repressive governments from office (e.g., Poe and Tate 1994). Finally, another institutional argument is that veto players constrain leaders' decisions with regards to the use of coercion (e.g., Poe, Keith, and Tate 1999).

Despite previous statistical results indicate that democracy is robustly associated with lower repression, scholars have become increasingly aware that this association is by far more complex. First, recent work qualifies the form of the relationship between democracy and human rights. Davenport and Armstrong (2004) provide the best attempt to address this issue by showing that this relationship is not linear; instead it resembles a threshold.[1] These authors find that below 8 in the Polity scale, democracy has not effect on repression, but above that threshold democracy has a strong and robust influence on repression. Contrary to previous works, "only those states with the highest levels of democracy, not simply those conventionally defined as democratic, are correlated with better human rights practices" (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005:439, at abstract).

Second, recent statistical studies show that the effect of democracy on human rights is conditioned by the presence of violent dissent. Davenport (2007) stresses the role of civil war in explaining government repression in democratic regimes and highlights how the link between democracy and human rights is strongly conditioned by exogenous factors. Similarly, Conrad and Moore (2010) show that popular suffrage and free press increase the likelihood to stop torture, albeit such effect disappears when elected governments are challenged by violent insurgents (also see Davenport, Moore, and Armstrong 2008). In short, liberal democratic institutions such as popular suffrage, veto players, and freedom of expression decrease coercion only in contexts of peace, suggesting that governments respond with repression when faced with violent threats, irrespective of its nature. Taken together, these studies have improved our understanding on the relationship between democracy and repression. Yet, as a consequence of its focus on the most severe forms of political violence (*civil wars*) as causes of coercion in democratic regimes, empirical researchers have overlooked the potential influence of other forms of violence on state repressive behavior. In particular, despite previous research showed that "soft" forms of violent dissent do not influence coercion in democracies (Carey 2010; also see Davenport 1995), there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that high rates of violent crime may trigger repression.

For instance, the sociological literature on police brutality in the US shows a positive relationship between crime and repression. In an analysis of 170 cities, Jacobs and O'Brian (1998) found that interpersonal violence measured by the homicide rate increases police use of lethal force. Skeptics may argue that the police use of force is legitimate and it does not constitute an act against human rights. However, case research on the violent crime–repression nexus points to the use of abusive methods by states actors in dealing with crime. For example, Ahnen (2007) shows that the Brazilian military and civil police apparatuses accounted for 6,021 and 1,067 homicides throughout the period 1994-2001, respectively (also see de Mesquita and Loche 2003:191). Importantly, Ahnen found that police killings are associated to the homicides rates

[1] Previous studies postulated a U-inverted relationship between democracy and repression (e.g., Fein 1995; Regan and Henderson 2002).

across states and that the presence of right-wing governments explains variation in police killings. From these findings, an important conclusion is that "the impact of democracy on respect for basic rights is indeterminate a priori, and depends on the social, political, and economic context in which it operates" (Ahnen 2007:144).

However, despite the existing case-study literature analyzing the influence of violent crime on state-sponsored repression, we still know little about whether this relationship holds across nations. This article takes this reason as its empirical point of departure to examine the general effect of crime on human rights violations across the universe of democracies. Before turning to the empirical analysis, the following section provides a mechanisms-based explanation on violent crime and repression.

Why Violent Crime Breeds Repression?

Understanding the exercise of power in democratic regimes requires a focus on citizens, elected leaders, and public bureaucracy. In a democracy, it is supposed that citizens choose candidates that will execute policies the electorate prefers and then elected leaders delegate policy implementation to the public bureaucracy (see Przeworski 1999; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984; Munck 2004). I thus focus on two distinct principal-agents relations to explain the crime–repression nexus: (a) citizens and elected leaders, and (b) elected leaders and the repressive apparatuses. Drawing on this framework and taking insights from case research, two causal pathways are proposed.[2] On the one hand, we may think of public security as a public good that citizens consume and states supply.[3] Under certain conditions the provision of public security collides with citizens' commitment to human rights, however. The first causal mechanism stresses that high levels of violent crime deteriorate public safety, and thus citizens are likely to demand or support heavy hand policies. On the other hand, crime may fuel repression, albeit the average citizen does not trade human rights respect for public order. In line with this, the second pathway describes that citizens do not demand repression, but states response with repression against crime.

Citizens trade repression for security and states supply

Theories of human rights focus on the factors that influence leaders' decision to repress, and have long assumed that citizens reject the use of government repression in any context. In particular, scholars stress that elections empower ordinary citizens to oust repressive governments from office (e.g., Poe and Tate 1994; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). Yet, the assumption that citizens never tolerate coercion is puzzling, as previous work on political violence and public opinion has shown that citizens are more willing to trade-off civil liberties restrictions and repression for higher sense of security. Put otherwise, the higher citizens' perception of threat, the higher their tolerance and demand for civil liberties restrictions and/or repression (e.g., Arce 2003; Davis and Silver 2004; Gibson 1998; Marcus et al. 1995).

Take for instance the case of Peru.[4] After the military returned to the barracks in 1980, three distinct democratically elected governments were challenged by of the presence the Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (MRTA) –two left-oriented guerrilla insurgencies. Whereas Belaúnde administration (1980-'85) resorted to massive repression against insurgents, president García (1985-'90) promoted social development and denounced human rights violations at hands of the military against insurgent activists. Meanwhile, Fujimori (1990-2000) reinforced the state repressive apparatuses and tolerated all sort of human rights crimes against rebels and indigenous people. The number of "subversive

[2] To clarify, mechanism is defined "as the pathway or process by which an effect is produced" (Gerring 2007).
[3] For a similar view but applied to democratization, see Ulfelder (2007).
[4] The following description is based primarily on Arce (2003).

actions" dropped from 3149 to 310 throughout the period 1989-1998. Interestingly, guerrilla "subversive actions" decreased citizens' approval for García but increased support for Fujimori (Arce 2003), indicating that people were willing to trade human rights respect for public security.

I thus propose to consider citizens' preferences on repression as contextually determined phenomena, instead as a fixed variable. This contention resembles a common claim in the literature on political violence and civil liberties: "support for civil liberties should not be regarded as an attitude in itself or as an abstract concept; instead it should be treated as a construct that characterizes the priorities assigned in cases of value trade-offs" (Davis and Silver 2004:29). Furthermore, work on policing in new democracies suggests that citizens are often willing to "to tolerate abuses of civil rights and the rule of law in the name of law and order" (Tanner 2000). Thus, we need to examine the conditions under which citizens are more likely to support repressive policies that prioritize order over human rights.[5] At the theoretical level, the core insights are that democracy allows citizens either to choose or remove abusive governments from office, and that preferences of the citizenry are shaped by contextual factors (see Anhen 2007).

Political violence affects citizens' perception about the trade-off between repression and the sense of personal security, but it is certainly not the only one. Violent crime may influence citizens' views of threat and insecurity, increasing their preferences for repressive policies. Arguably, social order is one of our most basic goods and hence law enforcement constitutes a defining attribute of modern states (e.g., Buchanan 1971). Indeed, public security can be seen as a prerequisite of human and economic development (e.g., North 1990). This provides the reason for the first mechanism between violent crime and repression. Despite the enforcement of law must be constrained in a democracy (e.g., O'Donnell 1999), citizens' sense of threat provoked by high levels of crime is likely to increase popular support for government strategies that give *carte blanche* to the repressive apparatuses in dealing with crime.

Single national surveys provide good examples illustrating how violent crime shapes popular support for repression in democratic regimes. In 1988, survey research found that 60 per cent of Venezuelans supported greater levels of coercion in fighting crime and 47 per cent supported the use of lethal violence against criminals (see Ungar 2009:37). Two decades later, another poll carried out in Caracas showed that 32 percent of respondents agreed that "[t]he police has the right to kill criminals" (Birkbeck and Gabaldón 2009:179). Similarly, despite the armed forces were the hallmark of repression during civil war in Guatemala, a national survey found that 70.5 per cent of respondents favored the military presence in the streets in the face of a post-conflict security crisis (Perez 2003:634). It is also important to note that support for government repressive strategies against crime is not exclusive of middle and upper classes. Instead, case-study research indicates that citizens' support for heavy hand policies is a phenomenon that crosses all social classes (Caldeira 2000; Caldeira and Holston 1999; Basombrío 2003; Smulovitz 2003).

It should be emphasized that the case research findings summarized above are illustrations of more general phenomena, rather than mere exceptions of it. Indeed, cross-national survey research demonstrates that citizens are willing to trade off physical integrity rights and democracy for security. For example, Bateson (2010) shows that crime victimization and fear of crime are correlated with greater support for authoritarianism in Latin America. Her research also indicates that citizens' fear opens the space for rightist politicians that favor heavy hand policies, as well as the intervention of the military in domestic order (also see Holland 2010). Similarly, other scholars have found that citizens with unfavorable assessment on public security are less likely to support democratic rule in countries from Africa and Latin America (Fernandez and Kuenzi 2010). Overall, this literature suggests that crime victimization and the threat to

[5] Needles to say, my claim is not that law and order collide inescapably with citizens rights. It depends on the kind of government policies with regards public order and security.

personal security hinder citizens' commitment to democratic values, raising the chance of autocratic type policies against crime.

Citizens do not trade repression for security, but states supply

Supporting governments that supply repressive policies to guarantee security is a decision that citizens may reject even in contexts where criminal violence threats their personal safety. It might be that the median citizen does not accept the trade-off between human rights abuses and personal security. However, principal-agent theory tell us that the willing of people does not necessarily translate into policy implementation due to asymmetries in preferences among actors, thus, we cannot expect that citizens' commitment with democratic values will lead automatically to "good" policies against crime. It could be the case that citizens support pro-human rights policies in fighting crime, but once in office elected politicians switch toward repressive policies.

Another possibility that has been least studied emerges from asymmetries between government leaders and state security agents (see Conrad and Moore 2010; Rivera 2012). Scholarship on repression usually has assumed that state leaders' and agents' preferences are in line (e.g., Poe 2004), but this is not always the case. For instance, over history we have seen cases where political leaders ordered coercion but its security apparatus avoided repression against citizens; instead defection of the repressive apparatus facilitated regime breakdown (e.g., Russian Revolution in 1917, East European Revolutions in 1989) (see Francisco 2005). In contrast, there are cases in which state agents resort to repression despite the fact that state leaders have a strong commitment with human rights values. Pointing to violence "that it is undertaken by low-level state agents of their own volition," scholars identify an "informal" form of state repression (White and Falkenberg 1995:332).

The second mechanism follows directly from this latter logic and points to how undisciplined and non-controlled state actors are likely to increase human rights violations in countries where criminal violence is severe. Indeed, an important proportion of the security personnel under dictatorship –which clearly had no commitment with human rights– survived in newly democratized countries. Those actors who were accustomed to protect regime stability through repression and usually were unaccountable (see Wiatrowski and Goldstone 2010), then turned into the main responsible of public security in emergent democracies. Moreover, in many developing countries democracy came about in an environment of increasing insecurity and societal violence (LaFree and Tseloni 2006). Although political scientists often neglect the phenomenon of crime,[6] the magnitude of crime is astounding in many countries. In Central America, for example, "criminal and gang-related violence has become so pervasive that many citizens look back on the days when violence was mostly political almost with nostalgia" (Seligson and Booth 2010:124). Similarly, Bateson (2010:2-3) argues that "Latin Americans still live in a shadow of violence" and "it is no exaggeration to say that the violent crime wave constitutes a public security emergency."

The main causal pathway at work here links crime with the lack of commitment of state security agents to human rights. We know that history matters in explaining a wide variety of social outcomes (e.g., Gerring et al., 2005; Gerring et al., 2012), thus, we may argue that past repressive routines are still present among state security actors even after democratic rules are well institutionalized (e.g., Pereira and Ungar 2004). Accordingly, it is expected that high levels of violent crime motivate repressive responses from actors that used to abuse their power under dictatorship. This pattern is reinforced because in most countries the reform of the state security apparatus and the judicial system has been limited and incomplete (e.g., Call 2002). In fact, leaders committed with democratic values have met with actors that are reluctant to reform and impede changes.

Yet, the fact that societal violence motivates repression does not offer a complete explanation. Crime might fuel abusive reactions from state security agents, but if the judicial

[6] However, see Fajnzylber, Lederman and Loayza (2002a/b), Neumayer (2003, 2005b), LaFree and Tseloni (2006).

system works well state actors will have incentives not to repress. Put differently, the influence of crime on state agents' motives to coerce does not necessarily translate into repression if they are legally sanctioned in case of abuse. Importantly, however, research on criminology shows that because security actors are allowed to use violence in order to perform and they work in an environment without direct supervision, state agents are able to abuse their power without being punished. From this perspective, actors in charge of public security are able to use illegal violence and commit human rights violations, avoiding legal sanctions from public authorities. In this vein, Pinheiro (1999:3) claims that in Latin America "the democratic state, in most cases, is no longer directly responsible for committing these abuses. Its responsibility lies in its failure to control the arbitrary practices of its own agents or to fight impunity, a failure which is a consequence of the precarious functioning of the judiciary." Human Rights Watch (2005) offers a similar portrait from democratic Nigeria, where state security agents often violate human rights and remain unpunished.[7] According to the report, this pattern is rooted in the role that the police had during pre-colonial and colonial politics, as well as the contemporary weakness of the judicial system.

Case-based research provides support for this view by showing how state agents are able to avoid the rule of law. For example, Brinks (2008) shows that police officials who have committed illegal homicides can evade judicial sanctions because they supply partial or biased information which judges used to dictate sentence. Otherwise stated, even though judicial actors are independent from the police, they are highly dependent on police information to investigate and produce judicial decisions –including the investigation and punishment of police violations (Brinks 2008). Within case research and multiple reports from non-governmental organizations point to different strategies employed by state agents to remain unpunished. For example, Human Rights Watch (2009) describes how extrajudicial killings by the Brazilian police are usually referred as "resistance killings." By doing so, state actors legitimate what certainly is illegitimate use of force. More generally, manipulation strategies include at least planting false evidence, changing crime scenes, altering forensic reports, and threaten and even killing witnesses (see Brinks 2003/2008).

Summary

The main theoretical argument developed here claims that, all else being equal, violent crime influences the levels of physical integrity rights violations through two different causal pathways. One contention emphasizes that high levels of violent crime deteriorate public safety, and thus citizens are likely to demand or support governments that lead repressive policies against crime. Another contention highlights that, even though citizens do not demand heavy hand policies, states may resort to repression because non-controlled security agents often impose order by using coercion. I believe that such "mechanismic" view of the crime–repression relationship constitutes a useful approach that allows identifying very different causal pathways that are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive explanations. What it does, rather, is to expand our understanding about the phenomenon of interest (see Gerring 2010).

Admittedly, there is a trade-off between mechanism-based explanations and proper empirical analysis. As John Gerring (2010:1500) puts it, "the more demanding goal of rigorously testing causal mechanisms in causal arguments is admirable but often unrealistic." Therefore, "the analysis of causal mechanisms is best regarded as an important, but secondary, element of causal assessment—not a necessary condition." Precisely, because I am not able to assess the proposed mechanisms for lack of data, I provided good evidence from different strands of research that establishes the plausibility of the theoretical argument.

[7] According to this report, "The majority of the victims are ordinary criminal suspects, arrested for crimes ranging from petty theft to armed robbery. Many of these arrests were unlawful and arbitrary because the police failed to inform the suspects of their reasons for arrest or produce evidence against them" (HRW 2005:2).

Before moving on to the empirical analysis, it is worth reflecting upon the fact that violent crime may have a differentiated effect on distinct categories of physical integrity rights. Scholars have been frequently concerned with four repressive categories: political imprisonment, disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Certainly, violent crime might have an affect on some of these categories, but not in others. Frequently, violent crime is an important issue in democratic elections but does not threat government tenure directly –criminal are not political opponents, as insurgents are. For this reason, it is expected no association between violent crime and political imprisonment. In turn, given that violent crime hinders public security and governments allocate its coercive sources to guarantee citizens' security, it is hypothesized here that high levels of violent crime have a positive effect on the levels of disappearances, torture, and state murders.

Measurement

To measure the dependent variable I use the Physical Integrity Rights Index from Cingranelli and Richards (2004). This indicator is based upon annual-country reports from Amnesty International and the U.S. State Department. It is measured in a 9-point additive scale derived from four ordinal indicators on political imprisonment, disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings. I reversed the scale for an easier interpretation, hence the index ranges from 0 (absence of repression) to 8 (greatest repression). As discussed earlier, on the other hand, the theoretical argument predicts that violent crime has different effect on different strategies of government repression. Because of this, I also use separated indicators for political imprisonment, disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings.[8] The scales are also reversed, so that higher values indicate more repression.

The primary explanatory variable in this article is related to violent crime, which is certainly the most difficult measurement decision to satisfy (see Noepolitan 1996). Following standard research on crime, national homicides rates are used as a proxy of violent crime. Unfortunately, crime statistics are limited when one requires a measure for a large sample of countries across time and its quality is often substandard. Based on national police organizations reports with regards the number of intentional homicides, the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) annually supplies the International Crime Statistics. However, these numbers derive from official police reports, thus, the main problem is that "crime might be measuring the conduct of officials rather than real crime" (Gottfredson, quoted in Bergman 2006:221). The second source comes from the United Nations Surveys on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems.[9] These surveys rely on national justice systems which in turn may draw on police reports, then, they "also opens the way for willful manipulation of undesirably high crime rates" (Neumayer 2003:626). Finally, the World Health Organization

[8] These categories are defined as follows: *Political imprisonment* indicates "the incarceration of people by government officials because of: their speech; their non-violent opposition to government policies or leaders; their religious beliefs; their non-violent religious practices including proselytizing; or their membership in a group, including an ethnic or racial group." *Disappearances* refer to "cases in which people have disappeared, agents of the state are likely responsible, political motivation may be likely, and the victims (the disappeared) have not been found. In most instances, disappearances occur because of a victim's political involvement or knowledge of information sensitive to authorities." *Torture* indicates "the purposeful inflicting of extreme pain, whether mental or physical, by government officials or by private individuals at the instigation of government officials. This includes the use of physical and other force by police and prison guards that is cruel, inhuman, or degrading, and deaths in custody due to tangible negligence by government officials." Finally, *extrajudicial killings* refer to murders "by government officials without due process of law. They include murders by private groups if instigated by government. These killings may result from the deliberate, illegal, and excessive use of lethal force by the police, security forces, or other agents of the state whether against criminal suspects, detainees, prisoners, or others. Deaths resulting from torture should be counted, as these deaths occurred while the prisoners were in the custody of government or its agents. Deaths from military hazing also count" (Cingranelli and Richards 2008).

[9] http://www.uncjin.org/Statistics/WCTS/wcts.html

(WHO) has become the most reliable source of information on violent crime[10] (e.g., Neopolitan 1997; LaFree 1999; Neumayer 2003; LaFree and Tseloni 2006). In its mortality database, the WHO provides data on the number of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants which are caused by "homicide and injury purposely inflicted by other persons." Importantly, contrary to the Interpol and the United Nations databases, the WHO relies on cause of death reports by developed by hospital personnel, rather than police.

I gathered data on homicides rates per 100,000 inhabitants for all democratic countries for which WHO data is available between 1981 and 2004. However, countries with less than five consecutive observations and those with missing data for more than three uninterrupted years were excluded from the empirical analysis. Following Neumayer (2003:627) I dropped observations "that seemed to be inflated" by the presence of internal or interstate armed conflicts. The resulting sample includes 49 countries from four world regions: Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Western Europe and North America. Furthermore, in order to fill missing values and increase the number of observations I also gathered data from the regional divisions of the World Health Organization. Thus, I will use two measures of homicides rates in the empirical analysis: the first takes into account data exclusively from the WHO and the other considers both WHO and WHO regional divisions (see Appendix A)

Previous work has found a number of factors that help to explain the variance of repression across space and time (see Davenport 2007b, for a review). In line with this research, I incorporate the following control variables. I take into account whether institutional variation across democracies affects states' coercive behavior. Scholars have argued that citizens' participation in elections and the existence of multiple veto players constrain leaders' repressive behavior by increasing the cost of repression. Therefore, the greater political participation and the number of veto players, the lower the levels of human rights violations. Accordingly, first I measure political participation as the total percentage of population who actually voted in the election (Vanhanen 2000). Second, data on veto players measures the degree of executives' political constraints and includes information on five areas of veto: the executive, two legislative chambers, the judiciary, and the subnational government's ability to establish monetary policy. The index itself ranges in value from 0, indicating the absence of constraints, to a maximum value of 1 (Henisz 2002). Another institutional variable is included in the analysis. To measure regime durability I use data from Polity IV, which provides information on the number of years since the last regime change or the end a transition period characterized by the lack of institutional stability (Marshall and Jaggers 2009).

Another contention in the literature is that repression is a near-certain outcome of civil and international wars. When violent dissent challenges the status quo, government leaders resort to repression in order to maintain state stability. The civil war variable is a dichotomous one coded "1" if a country experiences an internal armed conflict with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths each year and "0" otherwise. Similarly, to measure international war I use a binary variable coded "1" when a country experiences an interstate war against one or more states and "0" otherwise. Both variables come from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002). Furthermore, I control for socioeconomic factors that commonly affect human rights violations. The logic here is straightforward: economic development is associated with lower conflict and thus governments in wealthier societies need lower levels of repression to maintain order (Mitchell and McCormick 1988). Inversely, more populated societies are destabilized because of scarcity of resources and thus social conflict triggers repression as control mechanism (Henderson 1993). To measure these variables the log of the GDP per capita and the log of the total population are included, respectively (Gleditsch 2002). Finally, given that repression is a learning process in which past abuses affect present and future practices among state actors, the analysis includes the dependent variable lagged one year. Its inclusion also serves to control for serial autocorrelation (Appendix B summarizes all variables).

[10] http://www.who.int/healthinfo/morttables/en/index.html

Method and Results

The statistical analysis includes a set of regression models in which state repression is regressed against violent crime, along with the multiple controls discussed above. The unit of observation is the state-year and the empirical universe covers all democratic countries for which relevant data on intentional homicides are available between 1981 and 2004. Although crime data is scarce, the models include between 63.5 and 71.6% from all the democratic-country year observations that are possible during the period of analysis. I used the Revised Combined Polity Score to define the empirical domain in this study; countries with values equal to or above 6 in the Polity score are included in the sample. This indicator seeks to capture the degree of institutionalization of political regimes along three related dimensions: procedures of political participation and methods of executive selection, political constraints on the exercise of power, and political participation. Because the dependent variables are ordered ordinal, I used ordered probit models with Huber-White standard errors clustered by countries that are robust toward arbitrary heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation. Year dummies are included but are not shown.

Table 1 presents the results from a set of regression estimates on the relationship between crime and human rights violations. Models 1 to 4 assess the effect of crime on aggregated indicators of repression, and Models 5 to 12 explore the crime impact on political imprisonment, disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings. As discussed earlier, the violent crime measure relies on two sources of information: the *homicides* variable comes from WHO data, whereas the *homicides2* variable is based on data from the WHO and its regional divisions. As found, the violent crime variable fails to provide explanatory power in any of the first two models. As anticipated by the theory, this lack of a relationship is not surprising since there is no reason to expect that crime affects the entire set of physical integrity rights. In particular, it is very unlikely that governments resort to political imprisonment as a strategy for confronting criminal actors and delinquents.

In Models 3 and 4 the dependent variable excludes the category of political imprisonment from the physical integrity rights index. As can be seen, the crime variable is statistically significant and its coefficient is in the expected direction in both models. In order to illustrate the relationship of interest, the change in the predicted probabilities of the repression variable is considered here. Setting the civil and international wars variables at 0 and the others to their mean, the base probability of falling into the best category of repression in Model 3 is .12. An increase from the minimum to the maximum of the crime variable takes this probability down to 0. In turn, most of the control variables perform as expected. Wealthier countries are associated with lower levels of repression; by contrast, past levels of repression, civil war, and population size have a strong positive effect on government coercion. The coefficients for international war and the institutional variables are in the expected direction, but not significantly different from 0 (expect veto players, in Model 4).

Certainly, from these results we cannot conclude that violent crime is associated with more disappearances, torture, and state killings; it might be that the link between crime and one category of the physical integrity rights is driven the overall result. Table 1 displays a series of estimates for each category of repression and shows that violent crime is indeed positively related to disappearances, torture, and killings committed by the state (Models 7-12). Overall, these findings suggest that homicides rates provide helpful information in predicting human rights violations under democratic contexts. When challenged by high levels of societal violence, elected governments in democratic countries are likely to use repression in order to guarantee public security.

[Table 1 about here]

Figure 1 presents a set of graphs that illustrate the impact of violent crime in the predicted probabilities of disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings.[11] To clarify, the three variables are measured as 3-point ordinal scale which is coded as follows: 0 = zero homicides (*not occurred*); 1 = from 1 to 49 (*practiced occasionally*); 2 = more than 50 (*practiced frequently*).[12] As expected, the dot line in Graph 1 shows that an increase from the minimum to the maximum of the crime variable significantly reduces the probability of falling into the best category (*non occurrence*). By contrast, the same movement in crime produces a significant increase in the intermediate category of disappearances. Similarly, crime produces a small rise in the probability that disappearance occur frequently. Interestingly, nearly the same pattern can be observed for state killings (see Graph 3). With regards to torture, unexpectedly, the raise of crime does not increase the category of *practiced occasionally*, instead it produce an important drop in its predicted probability. As expected, on the other hand, violent crime negatively affects the non- occurrence of torture; the probability of falling into the best category drops to 0 when crime rises. In turn, the *practiced frequently* category has a robust increment as violent moves from its minimum to the maximum (see Graph 2).

[Figure 1 about here]

As an extension to assess the influence that violent crime has on repression, in a further test I incorporate a new variable of political violence and then compare its substantive effects on the variable of interest. Piazza and Walsh (2009) demonstrate that transnational terrorist attacks increase physical integrity rights violations, in particular disappearances and extrajudicial killings. I thus include in the statistical analysis a variable of foreign terror, measured as the annual number of transnational terrorist attacks (from Young and Dugan 2010). Results of the probit models in Table 2 show that violent crime is statistically significant regardless the inclusion of foreign terrorist attacks, though crime losses its significance in Model 18. With regards to foreign attacks, results are slightly different from previous research.[13] As found, terrorist attacks increase political imprisonment, torture, and extrajudicial killings. In general, results from Table 2 show the robustness of the empirical relationship between crime and human rights violations.

We have seen that the association between crime and repression is statistically significant, but also substantively important. Yet it is useful to consider in what extent the effect of crime on repression compare to other forms of political violence which command great interest in the literature on human rights (e.g., terrorist attacks). Because both violent crime and foreign terrorist help to explain variation in torture and extrajudicial killings, Table 3 presents how changes from the minimum to the maximum values of crime and terrorism affect the probability of torture and killings, respectively.[14] As can be seen, both violent crime and foreign terrorist attacks produce important changes in the probability that torture falls into the best (*non occurrence*) and intermediate (*practiced occasionally*) categories. In turn, these variables noticeably increase the probability of failing into the worst category (*practiced frequently*); moving crime from its minimum to its maximum raises 54 per cent the probability of systematic torture, compared to an effect of 44 per cent of the terror variable. The key theoretical variables also have a powerful impact in the predicted probability that democratic governments will not engage in extrajudicial killings (70 per cent). In contrast, the likelihood that a state-year will fall into the intermediate and highest categories of killings grows as societal violence and terrorism increase, respectively.

[11] The three graphs are based on the Models 7, 9, and 11 from Table 1, respectively.
[12] These predicted probabilities were calculated with civil and international wars at zero and all other independent variables to their means.
[13] These differences may relate to the fact that earlier research examined the link between transnational terrorism and repression in a global sample (Piazza and Walsh 2009).
[14] Changes in probability were calculated using CLARIFY (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000).

[Table 2 about here]

[Table 3 about here]

In short, democratic governments respond by increasing its levels of repression and human rights violations in the face of violent crime. This result confirms previous findings from case studies and in parallel is consistent with recent large-N research that indicates violent dissent suppresses the effect of democracy on human rights. Arguably, states in democratic regimes resort to violence in order to guarantee citizens' security and public order. Paradoxically, by pursuing the protection of physical integrity rights from horizontal threats, democratic states might turn into a vertical threat for citizens' human rights. Importantly, the empirical results in this study indicate that violent crime has a robust and substantive impact on a country' levels of repression, even compared to the effect of transnational terrorism. The wave of violent crime and public insecurity in most developing democracies over the past decades hinders the human rights of the citizenry and the quality of democracy.

Discussion

Repeatedly, quantitative research on human rights has found that democracy reduces government repression. Not surprisingly, democracy has been viewed as the most common factor improving citizens' human rights in the contemporary world. Contrary to much of this work, this article stems from a theoretical insight that the effect of democracy on human rights is contextually determined, depending primarily on the presence of societal violence. If democracy coexists with peace, democratic institutions constrain repression and improve human rights. Yet, if violent dissent destabilizes democratic countries, democracy does not guarantee the protection of human rights. Thus, this analytical framework provides a foundation for a better understanding of state repression under democracy.

Following directly from this framework, this article has examined both theoretically and empirically whether and how violent crime influences human rights violations. In particular, I have argued that violent crime breeds repression in democratic regimes through two different causal pathways. First, high levels of public insecurity influence citizens' support for governments that command repressive policies against crime and delinquency. This claim is in sharp contrast with existing work which emphasize that democratic elections allow citizens to move out repressive governments. While previous research has considered that citizens' preferences on coercion are fixed, the argument here draws on the notion that such preferences are shaped by the level of physical threat and thus might vary over time.

Second, violent crime may fuel human rights violations, albeit citizens do not support coercive strategies. Given that newly democratized states came together with severe waves of crime and security actors from previous authoritarian regimes survived to regime change, public security crisis under democracy bring into action non-controlled agents who tend to impose order through repression. This argument departs from much of existing research in an important way. Scholars have long assumed that government leaders have complete control over public security agents, thus, the levels of repression depend entirely on political leaders' decisions. However, this assumption not always holds because state leaders delegate repression to actors who control the instruments of violence, and such actors work in an environment without direct supervision. One implication derived from this principal-agent problem is that repression may arise from undisciplined state security agents who carry out repression without orders from above.

In its empirical part, this article demonstrated that violent crime has a significant and robust effect on the levels of physical integrity rights violations. As expected, it is important to note that while a country's level of intentional homicides is associated to disappearances, torture,

and extrajudicial killings, it has no effect on political imprisonment. Thus, this study showed that high levels of violent crime provide foundations for human rights violations in democratic countries. From a broader perspective, this article adds new evidence to the growing literature showing that the effect of democracy on repression is mitigated by the presence of violent dissent. Importantly, while these studies have emphasized the role of civil wars in conditioning the effect of democracy, this article found that less severe forms of violence (*e.g., violent crime*) also have a strong effect on the respect of human rights in democracies.

By way of conclusion, it is important to highlight that conventional wisdom suggests that public security and human rights do not collide in a democracy. It follows that democracies are viewed as well equipped to stop violent crime and respect human rights simultaneously. This normative view contrasts with often unobserved features of democracies, however. In particular, governments of newly democratizing states have experienced severe levels of violent crime that create public dilemmas on how to restore law and order. When threatened, hobbesian views arise among citizens and politicians that trade repression for public security. In addition, violent crime has induced the presence of undisciplined and non-controlled state agents. Further research on these issues will provide a better understanding of human rights violations in democratic countries.

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Appendix A
Countries of analysis

Argentina (82-2004), Australia (81-2003), Austria (81-2004), Brazil (85-2004), Belgium (81-97), Bulgaria (90-2004), Canada (81-2004), Chile ('89-2004), Colombia (84-2004), Costa Rica (81-2004), Denmark (94-2001), Dominican Republic (81-2004), Ecuador (81-2004), El Salvador (90-2004), Estonia (92-2004)/(92-2004), Finland (87-2004), France (81-2004), Germany (91-2004), Greece (81-2004), Hungary (91-2004), Ireland (81-2004), Israel (81-2004), Italy (81-2003), Guatemala (96-2004), Jamaica (81-91), Japan (81-2004), Latvia (92-2004), Mexico (97-2004), Netherlands (81-2004), New Zealand (81-2004), Nicaragua (90-2004), Norway (86-2004), Panama (96-2004), Paraguay (94-2004), Peru (86-91), Poland (91-2004), Portugal (81-2003), Romania (96-2004), Russia (2000-2004), South Korea (1988-2004), Spain (81-2004), Sweden (87-2004), Switzerland (81-2004), Thailand (92-2002), Trinidad and Tobago (81-2002), United Kingdom (81-2004), United States (81-2004), Uruguay (85-2004), Venezuela (81-2004).

Appendix B
Summary of variables

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Physical Integrity Rights Index	1309	2.241	2.197	0	8
Political imprisonment	1309	0.458	0.726	0	2
Disappearances	1311	0.224	0.544	0	2
Torture	1311	1.016	0.762	0	2
Extrajudicial killings	1311	0.548	0.741	0	2
Political participation	1312	44.120	15.371	0	70
Veto players	1308	0.640	0.204	0	0.894
Regime durability	1312	33.978	39.201	0	195
Civil war	1311	0.042	0.201	0	1
International war	1311	0.017	0.128	0	1
(ln) GDP per capita	1311	8.896	0.952	6.424	10.584
(ln)Population size	1311	9.509	1.446	6.91	13.829
Foreign terrorist attacks	756	2.160	7.662	0	77
Homicides	846	6.837	11.943	0.083	89.854
Homicides2	954	6.855	11.913	0.083	89.854

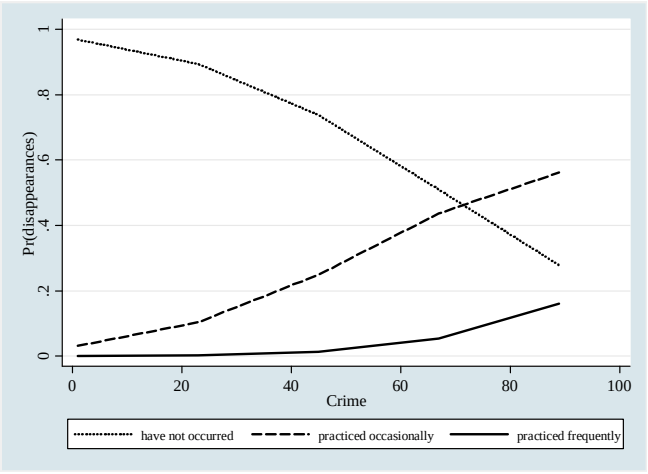
Table 1
Effects of violent crime on state repression

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Physint	Physint	Physint2	Physint2	Polpris	Polpris	Disap	Disap	Torture	Torture	Killings	Killings
Lag repression	0.692***	0.668***	0.819***	0.779***	1.272***	1.279***	1.082***	0.983***	1.068***	1.026***	1.481***	1.410***
	(0.037)	(0.034)	(0.048)	(0.045)	(0.084)	(0.081)	(0.168)	(0.150)	(0.084)	(0.080)	(0.103)	(0.097)
Participation	-0.001	-0.003	-0.001	-0.002	0.002	-0.001	0.003	0.002	0.004	0.002	-0.000	-0.001
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
Veto players	-0.473	-0.488	-0.564	-0.599*	-0.357	-0.312	-1.291**	-1.423***	-0.046	-0.054	-0.350	-0.434
	(0.279)	(0.267)	(0.295)	(0.282)	(0.334)	(0.315)	(0.442)	(0.412)	(0.360)	(0.348)	(0.366)	(0.351)
Durable	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.002	-0.001	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Civil war	0.575	0.748*	1.194*	0.954*	0.422	0.632	7.199***	1.102**	0.785*	0.623	0.040	0.117
	(0.376)	(0.319)	(0.550)	(0.380)	(0.412)	(0.333)	(0.545)	(0.390)	(0.397)	(0.353)	(0.486)	(0.383)
International war	-0.211	-0.238	-0.366	-0.334	0.097	-0.088	-4.950***	-5.032***	-0.512	-0.510	-0.237	-0.196
	(0.382)	(0.366)	(0.343)	(0.329)	(0.641)	(0.634)	(0.513)	(0.440)	(0.317)	(0.297)	(0.460)	(0.456)
Ln GDP pc	-0.438***	-0.485***	-0.475***	-0.513***	-0.243	-0.320	-0.510*	-0.495*	-0.673***	-0.739***	-0.493**	-0.507***
	(0.117)	(0.114)	(0.122)	(0.118)	(0.171)	(0.164)	(0.235)	(0.223)	(0.146)	(0.142)	(0.154)	(0.148)
Ln Population	0.175***	0.192***	0.188***	0.206***	0.157***	0.165***	0.194**	0.237***	0.195***	0.212***	0.164***	0.183***
	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.046)	(0.044)	(0.068)	(0.064)	(0.037)	(0.036)	(0.049)	(0.046)
Homicides	0.003		0.016**		-0.005		0.028***		0.019**		0.015*	
	(0.005)		(0.006)		(0.006)		(0.007)		(0.007)		(0.006)	
Homicides2		0.002		0.016**		-0.007		0.026***		0.015*		0.016**
		(0.005)		(0.005)		(0.007)		(0.006)		(0.006)		(0.006)
N	815	917	818	921	815	917	818	921	818	921	818	921
Period	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003	82-2003
Log likelihood	-979.654	-1081.165	-831.524	-925.420	-386.575	-423.742	-174.405	-204.551	-555.868	-612.298	-361.008	-398.665
pseudo R-sq	0.335	0.350	0.378	0.388	0.338	0.361	0.516	0.519	0.372	0.387	0.465	0.479

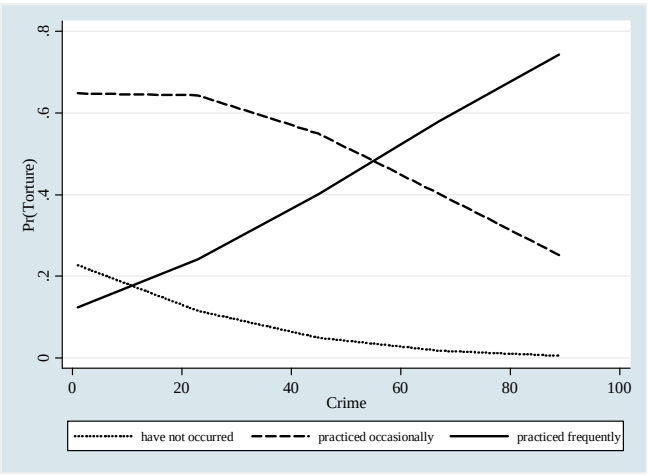
Standard errors in parentheses
* p<.05, ** p< .01, *** p<.001
Physint: Physical Integrity Rights Index; Physint2: Physical Integrity Rights Index (excludes political imprisonment);
Polpris: political imprisonment; Disap: Disappearances: Tort: Torture; Killings: extrajudicial killings

Figure 1
Effects of crime on disappearances, torture, and killings

1. Disappearances



2. Torture



3. Killings

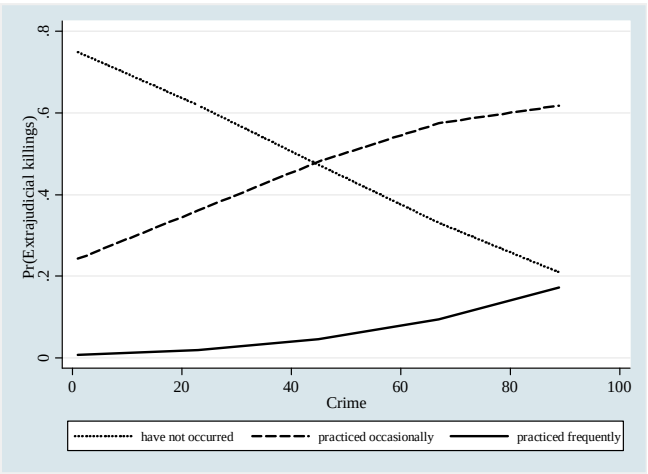


Table 2
Transnational terrorism

	13 Polpris	14 Polpris	15 Disap	16 Disap	17 Torture	18 Torture	19 Killings	20 Killings
Lag repression	1.052***	1.062***	0.927***	0.915***	1.004***	1.012***	1.149***	1.066***
	(0.112)	(0.109)	(0.200)	(0.180)	(0.106)	(0.102)	(0.152)	(0.137)
Participation	0.007	0.004	0.001	-0.003	0.008	0.006	-0.001	-0.002
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Veto players	-0.874*	-0.960*	-1.405**	-1.356*	0.200	0.111	-0.888	-0.941*
	(0.422)	(0.425)	(0.534)	(0.530)	(0.441)	(0.439)	(0.466)	(0.455)
Durable	-0.007*	-0.007*	-0.009**	-0.005**	-0.002	-0.001	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Civil war	0.503	0.913*	7.266***	0.838	0.830*	0.629	0.382	0.175
	(0.501)	(0.436)	(0.558)	(0.505)	(0.410)	(0.376)	(0.685)	(0.464)
International war	-0.156	-0.393	-4.901***	-4.502***	-0.743	-0.706	-0.175	-0.194
	(0.945)	(0.939)	(0.503)	(0.440)	(0.406)	(0.378)	(0.448)	(0.438)
Ln GDP pc	-0.271	-0.289	-0.344	-0.439	-0.800***	-0.843***	-0.779***	-0.828***
	(0.250)	(0.249)	(0.332)	(0.308)	(0.201)	(0.197)	(0.219)	(0.212)
Ln Population	0.153*	0.163**	0.0893	0.180*	0.206***	0.215***	0.202**	0.220***
	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.097)	(0.089)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.068)	(0.065)
Foreign attacks	0.019*	0.020*	0.005	0.007	0.019**	0.019**	0.030**	0.032**
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Homicides	-0.000		0.043***		0.020*		0.024*	
	(0.007)		(0.010)		(0.009)		(0.010)	
Homicides2		-0.003		0.029***		0.014		0.026**
		(0.007)		(0.008)		(0.007)		(0.009)
N	479	541	482	545	482	545	482	545
pseudo R-sq	0.348	0.385	0.537	0.522	0.353	0.375	0.470	0.486

Standard errors in parentheses
* p<.05, ** p< .01, *** p<.001
Polpris: political imprisonment; Disap: Disappearances: Tort: Torture; Killings: extrajudicial killings

Table 3
Comparing the substantive effect of crime and terrorism on repression

	Torture = 0	Torture = 1	Torture = 2	Killings =0	Killings =1	Killings =2
Violent crime	-.323	-.221	.544	-.717	.393	.323
Foreign terrorism	-.287	-.151	.437	-.727	.339	.387