Terrorizing Freedom:

When Governments Use Repression to Manipulate Elections

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Robert Mugabe is one of world's longest ruling dictators. He has been president of Zimbabwe – a nominal parliamentary democracy – since the country gained independence in 1980. For the last decade, Mugabe and his political party associates in the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) have faced significant opposition from the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and their leader, Morgan Tsvangirai. In addition to using direct forms of election fraud to stay in power, ZANU-PF has rigged elections in their favor by terrorizing political opposition members and supporters. In Mugabe's words, "We are not going to give up our country for a mere X on a ballot. How can a ballpoint fight with a gun?"[1]

During the 2000 parliamentary election, police, intelligence officials, war vets, and ZANU-PF supporters murdered, tortured and intimidated MDC supporters: the government reportedly killed more than 30 people for political reasons.[2] In 2002, during the presidential election, ZANU-PF ran torture camps across Zimbabwe to "reeducate" opposition supporters.[3] The *Times of London* reported that the violence campaign led to dozens of deaths and disappearances and hundreds of abductions, assaults and torture victims.[4] The US State Department accused ZANU-PF of manipulating the electoral process in the 2005 elections through corruption and intimidation, including unlawful killings, politically motivated kidnappings, and state sanctioned actions by the security forces to torture members of the opposition, union leaders, and civil society activists.[5] Before the 2008 presidential election, Mugabe banned all political rallies and arrested his competitor

[1] President Robert Mugabe, cited in time.com/quotes, and in Gandhi and Przeworski (2009, 2).
[2] US State Department Report 2001; Amnesty International Report 2001.
[3] Schlink, Leo, "Murders in Mugabe torture camps, paper reports." Hobart Mercury (Australia), March 4, 2002.
[4] The Times (London), "Chaos Fears as Mugabe blocks poll observers", March 7, 2002
[5] US State Department Annual Human Rights Report, 2006.

– presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai – ostensibly for violating the ban while attending a prayer meeting. Tsvangirai was severely beaten, sustained a massive head injury, and was denied access to necessary medical treatment.[6]

To illustrate the pattern of electoral repression, Figure 1 maps monthly data on state-sponsored violence before and after elections in Zimbabwe and shows the increase in politically motivated violence, both in terms of the number of events and number of people affected.[7]

[Figure 1 about here]

Zimbabwe is not an isolated case. Most governments in the world now hold elections, but – like Zimbabwe – a growing number of incumbent leaders use elections for non-democratic purposes, such as increasing their hold on power instead of allowing real political competition.[8] To legitimize their rule, leaders like Mugabe allow formally competitive elections in which opposition parties are allowed to compete, but then use manipulation and coercion to minimize their risk of losing power. At the extreme, leaders use violent human rights abuses as a strategy to rig elections in their favor, murdering, torturing or otherwise cruelly repressing voters and political opposition to suppress electoral competition and intimidate voters. These strategic politicians – like Mugabe – undercut global strides toward liberal democracy. They use the ballot box deceptively, to

[6] Thornycroft, Peta. "Tsvangirai 'denied lawyer or medical treatment'." *The Daily Telegraph* (London), March 13, 2007.

[7] We thank Sarah Knoesen for her invaluable research assistance on the Zimbabwe case. For Zimbabwe, we coded monthly data on state-sponsored political repression from three sources: US State department reports, Amnesty International reports, and Lexis-Nexus searches for reports of state sponsored human rights abuses.

[8] Note that we use the term "leaders" to refer to the principal actor instigating the use of state sponsored human rights abuses as an electoral tactic. "Regimes" and "governments" and "the state" are also sometimes used to describe the same actors in other work. This term should be interpreted broadly, referring to all incumbent government leaders and their agents who engage in electorally motivated political repression. Opposition leaders may also use repression, but to avoid confusion, we refer to opposition leaders as such.

publically validate and legitimize their government's hold on power while at the same time violating the rule of law and human dignity of the people who "elect" them. This view of elections contrasts starkly with a widely held and decidedly more optimistic view, summarized by Paul Collier:

> Elections are the institutional technology of democracy. They have the potential to make governments both more accountable and more legitimate. Elections should sound the death knell to political violence (Collier 2009, 2).

This article evaluates the conditions under which governments are likely to use state-sponsored political repression to manipulate elections, and underscores the many ways elections are used as political tools throughout the developing world. We argue that governments are most likely to use repression as an electoral tactic when they perceive that political opposition threatens their hold on power and the abuse will lead to few negative consequences.

The relationship between elections and violence is not new. Political change has always been plagued by violence, and many of the most prominent scholars of democratization, including Robert Dahl, Samuel Huntington, and Adam Przeworski, highlight the increased violence that frequently accompanies political transitions (Dahl 1971; Huntington 1991; Przeworski 1991). Yet few scholars in the democratization literature focus on the strategic use of electoral repression by incumbent governments, nor on when and why such repression is most likely to occur. Rather, electoral repression is more frequently assumed to be a symptom of authoritarianism rather than a tool available to incumbent governments. Given that elections are a necessary condition for democratization, and the increasing focus on "electoral authoritarian" regimes, the

conditions under which elections are likely to provoke increased government repression is an important and understudied topic.

In a related but separate literature, scholars focused on government repression and abuse of human rights have now produced a sizable body of research that explores how democracy and other forms of political liberalization influence the state's use of political repression, and how state-sponsored repression influences the probability of political transition and democratization (Poe and Tate 1994; Poe, Tate and Keith 1999; Snyder 2000; Davenport and Armstrong 2004; Davenport 2007. Yet – with a few exceptions (Davenport 1997, 1996; Richards 1999; Davenport and Armstrong 2004) – there has been little systematic research on the strategic use of human rights violations to manipulate elections. Using a new dataset on elections and political competition, as well as existing data on state-sponsored human rights abuses, we present and test a new theory of when leaders are most likely to employ political repression to manipulate elections.

Because we build on the vast literatures on human rights, political transitions, and elections in authoritarian regimes, we first outline how this article contributes to several ongoing debates in comparative politics and international relations.

Democracy, Elections, and the Rise of "Illiberal" Democracies

Recognizing the gulf between elections and democracy, considerable interest has been expressed in the rise of regimes that are neither fully democratic nor fully autocratic – scholars call them "illiberal democracies," "semi-democracies," or "hybrid" regimes (Zakaria 1997; Diamond 2002; Mainwaring, Brinks, and Perez-Linan 2001). Countries with such intermediate forms of government hold elections but fall short of democracy on other grounds. In these places, elections are not a means to democracy but a means for

incumbents to stay in power (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Lust-Okar 2006), often while attempting to maintain a "semblance of democratic legitimacy" (Schedler 2002).

William Riker wrote in 1965 that "the essential democratic institution is the ballot box and all that goes with it" (Riker 1965, 25). Elections, like protections for human rights, are necessary for democratic governance; they are "the essence of democracy, the inescapable sine qua non" (Huntington 1991). At the same time, it is widely accepted that holding elections does not necessarily mean that a country is democratic, and elections have spread to places in which they are used for decidedly undemocratic purposes. Less than half of the governments that now hold elections do so within a context of consolidated democratic political institutions and respect for human rights.[9]

Scholars offer a variety of explanations for the diffusion of elections among illiberal regimes. According to scholars of electoral authoritarian regimes, elections are held as a response to international pressure (Hyde 2010), to allocate patronage and to divide or control the opposition (Lust-Okar 2004; Gandhi and Przeworski 2009; Magaloni 2006), to facilitate a non-violent transfer of power to a chosen successor (Cox 2008), or to "reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy without running the risks of democratic uncertainty" (Schedler 2002, 37). Although the theoretical approach is similar in that they evaluate the diverse causes and consequences of elections, this literature has not yet explained when elections are likely to provoke human rights abuses. Many scholars implicitly assume that leaders rarely employ human rights abuses to win elections because repression is costly and they have many other tools at their disposal (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005), or that if a country's leader employs repression, the country is necessarily autocratic.

[9] Authors' calculation.

Additionally, the centrality of elections to democracy and the rapid global diffusion of multi-party elections have led many to criticize "electoralism," and argue that holding elections does not guarantee democracy (Karl 1986; Obama 2009; Zakaria 1997). Although to our knowledge, no one has actually argued that elections guarantee democracy, the potential negative externalities caused by elections are widely documented. For example, Fareed Zakaria criticizes the spread of elections to countries without constitutional liberalism, arguing that, "reasonably democratic" illiberal democracies gain legitimacy and strength by holding elections, and therefore risk undermining the spread of liberal democracy.

At the same time, critics have been reproached for applying "diminutive" adjectives to democracy when such "illiberal" regimes should be described as sub-types of authoritarian regimes. As Andreas Schedler argues,

> In the face of regimes that fail to comply even with democratic minimum norms, the notion of 'diminished subtypes' of democracy loses its validity. When applied to nondemocratic contexts, rather than sharpening our grasp of democratic deficits, it weakens our sense of authoritarian realities (Schedler 2006, 4).

Schedler advocates "electoral authoritarianism" as the term to describe regimes that hold elections but are not democratic. Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way suggest "competitive authoritarianism" to refer to a similar concept (2002).[10] Regardless of the label, elections are not always related to democracy, and this trend is not new. As Adam Przeworski writes, "while some voices claim that we are currently witnessing an emergence of a qualitatively new phenomenon, 'electoral authoritarianism,' such regimes were the prevalent form of political organization throughout history" (Przeworski 2009, 6).

10 They differ primarily on the subtype of "hegemonic" regimes.

Many scholars have underscored the rise of hybrid regimes and deplored high levels of electoral violence in "illiberal democracies." Yet they have done little to link these findings to the existing human rights literature, particularly in light of important variations in regimes that hold elections. We seek to remedy this deficiency by considering elections as an institution that can have a variety of effects depending on the existing intuitional environment and on the strategic choices faced by the incumbent government.

Connecting Elections and Repression

The relationship between democracy and human rights is enshrined in numerous international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many United Nations treaties. Western countries, including the United States and Europe, promote democracy in part because of the idea that full protections for human rights require democratic government: democracy brings an end to tyranny and increased liberty, freedom and security for citizens. Mountains of evidence show that stable liberal democracies *are* much more likely than other types of governments to respect human rights, although political transitions often include high levels of coercion and democratizing governments do not always respect human rights (Davenport 2007; Snyder 2000).

Despite the centrality of elections to democracy, as elections have spread to nearly every government in the world, so have complaints about the use of repression as an electoral tool. Fareed Zakaria argues that elections increase political polarization and potentially increase human rights abuses in countries without well-developed respect for rule of law (1997). Others argue that elections in illiberal states eventually bring about broader political participation, civic engagement, and political accountability, all of which

will decrease human rights abuses over time (Lewis-Beck 1990; Lipset 1981; Seligson and Booth 1995; Sisk 1995).

When it comes to evidence on human rights and elections, the facts are few and mainly inconclusive. Staffan Lindberg shows that experience with elections—even among those regimes that are far from democratic—increases the probability of democratization among African countries, thereby implying that that the effect of holding elections over time is to decrease repression (2006). Marc Howard and Philip Roessler show that both united coalitions of opposition political parties and opposition party mobilization increase the chance of a significant episode of liberalizing political change within competitive authoritarian regimes, leading to greater respect for civil and political rights (Roessler and Howard 2009; Howard and Roessler 2006). Steven Wilkinson explores the Indian government's use of voter-initiated ethnic riots as an electoral tactic. Though able to suppress such riots, the Indian government allows them to escalate when it is in their short-term electoral interest, therefore benefitting from the effects of political violence without engaging in it directly (Wilkinson 2006).

There are only a few cross-national statistical studies of repression and elections and these too are inconclusive. In his path breaking study of 49 countries from 1948 to 1982, Christian Davenport found that non-democratic governments are statistically more likely to abuse political rights during national elections (1997). David Richards, however, studied elections in 74 countries from 1981 to 1987 and found that the presence of national elections had no effect on government respect for human rights one way or the other (1999). Focusing on democracies, David Cingranelli and Mikhail Filippov argue that both incumbents and opposition leaders may strategically choose to engage in or ignore

poor human rights practices in the absence of proper electoral incentives. Their study demonstrates that, among democracies, certain electoral rules – such as the election of members of parliament through low magnitude proportional representation districts – are associated with better protections for human rights (2010).

What is clear from this research is that there is a strong connection between stable liberal democracy and government protection for human rights, but that a growing number of elections are taking place in very illiberal places where democracy has yet to be consolidated. Yet the nature of the relationship between elections and government sponsored repression remains poorly understood. On one hand, it is possible that elections will eventually lead to fuller democratic governance and thus better protections for human rights. On the other hand, elections can dramatically increase politically repression, at least in the short term. The next section presents our theory of the conditions under which governments are likely to use electoral repression to stay in power.

Argument and Expectations

Under what conditions do elections provoke increases in state-sponsored human rights abuses? We argue that elections are likely to increase state-sponsored repression when the incumbent government faces a threat to their hold on power and the likely consequences for repression are minimal. Our argument is based on two assumptions: that incumbent leaders and their political parties prefer to stay in power; and that repression is costly, even for autocratic leaders, but these costs are greater when credible domestic or international consequences for engaging in political repression exist.

In support of this argument, we show that levels of political repression near elections change systematically based on, first, whether a government is facing a threat to

their hold on power and second, whether there are likely consequences for engaging in repression. To preview one of our results, incumbent leaders who face an election when they know they are unpopular are significantly more likely to use or sanction violence than leaders who are confident that they are popular. However, given some threat to their power, incumbent leaders who face significant institutional constraints such as an independent court system are less likely to use repression near election times, even when threats to their power are high.

Elections put authoritarian leaders in a bind: they can bring a number of advantages, including an opportunity for an incumbent leader to validate his hold on power, but these contests also introduce greater uncertainty about whether the government can maintain power, even when they are manipulated (Levitsky and Way 2010, 2002; Brownlee 2009). As potentially competitive elections have spread, many leaders now turn to fraud or violence to stay in power.[11] Although fraud and electoral violence have an extensive history, the proliferation of elections across regime types means that the form of elections—and their consequences—varies widely.

It is well established in the human rights literature that domestic threats often prompt governments to respond with political repression (Davenport 1995; Poe et al. 2000). Building on these findings, we argue that leaders only have incentives to use electorally-motivated repression when they feel their hold on power is threatened by electoral competition (Keith and Poe 2004). Because repression is costly to carry out and because it often carries consequences, incumbents should only use repression *as an*

[11] Note that most governments in the world now hold regular elections, and although some scholars model the decision to hold elections as an endogenous decision made by leaders each time elections are held (Cox 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2009), we assume that elections are exogenous, and our argument applies to cases in which elections are held.

electoral tactic when they perceive a threat to their power. If they know they are popular, electoral repression should be unnecessary.

Leaders can be threatened by electoral competition from specific parties or candidates, as well as by the participation of voters that are likely to support their competitors. When multiple candidates are permitted, leaders' strategies to win elections and keep office may include dividing the opposition, deterring entry by candidates, intimidating citizens into voting for the government or not voting, or increasing political "support" before or after the election through coercive tactics. Our first hypothesis is that leaders facing strong electoral competition are more likely to increase human rights abuses near elections than are leaders facing weak electoral competition.

Yet leaders, especially in electoral authoritarian regimes in which the flow of information is restricted and free expression is not permitted, do not always know whether they are facing an electoral threat. In our model, perceived threats to the incumbent leader stem not only from real electoral competition but also from uncertainty about the strength of the competition. Leaders do not always posses good information about whether they face political competition. Reliable public opinion polls may not be available, or leaders may overestimate their actual popularity. Information about the popularity of the incumbent government may be difficult to obtain for other reasons, such as during a country's first multiparty election, its first election following the suspension of elections, or because the leader is relatively new in office.

Thus, we argue that a lack of information may amplify an incumbent leader's incentives to use political repression. Specifically, when leaders have reliable information that their competition is strong or that their own popularity is low, we expect them to have

stronger incentives to use repression than when they know their competition is weak or their own popularity is high. Poor information can therefore serve as a proxy for an actual electoral threat, generating our second hypothesis: when leaders are uncertain about the strength of their electoral challengers or their own level of popularity, we expect them to have increased incentives to repress political opponents than when they know their competition is weak or their popularity is high. This logic holds even if the challengers are not actually strong or the incumbent government is actually popular.

The costs of using repression are not equal for all incumbents. Many incumbents who face electoral threats never turn to repression to stay in power, as elections in consolidated democracies demonstrate. We argue that this is because an incumbent's choice to use repression is constrained by the anticipated consequences of engaging in abuse. The credibility of the consequences depends on the mechanisms of accountability. Violent strategies are especially risky. Human rights abuses – such as murder and torture – are in most cases illegal and unpopular among voters. Perpetrators of these crimes risk getting caught and punished, either while they are in office, or after they step down, even in electoral autocracies. For example, the International Criminal Court is trying Charles Taylor, former (elected) Liberian president and suspected war criminal, for terrorizing the civilian population. Taylor faces a serious risk of going to jail. Domestic courts may also punish leaders for abuses, while international treaty bodies and non-governmental organizations like international election monitors may pressure the international community to intervene. For example, global attention to the Iranian leadership's violent

crackdown on opposition supporters following the 2009 presidential elections increased the resolve of other governments to impose economic sanctions.[12]

Thus, we expect that leaders are more likely to respond to threats to their power by repressing political opposition when they believe they are unlikely to face credible consequences for committing human rights abuses, either because they are unlikely to be caught, or because enforcement mechanisms are weak (Levitsky and Way 2010). Our third hypothesis is that the likelihood that leaders use political repression to manipulate elections decreases as the likely consequences for committing human rights abuses increase.

Figure 2 illustrates our theory of how incumbent leaders consider both threats and consequences when deciding whether to engage in repression to manipulate election outcomes. Our argument also implies that threats and consequences interact. We expect that leaders facing strong electoral competition and weak or non-credible consequences for human rights abuses are the most likely to use political repression to manipulate elections. Leaders facing weak electoral competition and serious (and credible) consequences for abuse are the least likely to increase violence around elections – our forth hypothesis. Threats to a regime are a necessary but not sufficient condition for abuses. Governments facing a high level of threat are more likely to engage in repression than governments facing low threat, even when the probability of consequences is high.

[Figure 2 about here.]

Analysis

[12] See, for example, Judy Dempsey. "Merkel Signals Support for Tougher Iran Sanctions," *The New York Times*. September 2, 2009.

Our theory of repression and elections suggests that incumbents will be most likely engage in election-related repression when they believe doing so increases their probability of staying in power and when consequences for repression are less likely. Governments will be inclined to use repression after an election if doing so helps consolidate power, repress opposition supporters, or suppress post-election challenges to the outcome. We evaluate how threats, competition and uncertainty affect the probability that governments increase human rights abuses near an election.

The analysis focuses on predicting government-sponsored repression of human rights. For cross-national data on repression, we rely primarily on Cingranelli and Richards' Human Rights Data Project.[13] These data are available from 1981-2006, but are only available yearly.[14] The main indicator is a nine-point index measuring a country's overall level of government-sponsored murder, torture, forced disappearance and political imprisonment. Note that these data do not capture violence sponsored by other actors, such as opposition political parties. Additionally, we analyze each component of abuse from the Cingranelli and Richards data and two alternative five-point indices of state-sponsored repression (Gibney, Cornett, and Wood 2010).[15]

For data on election dates and characteristics, we rely on the National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) dataset (Hyde and Marinov 2009). These data contain information for all independent countries with a population over half a million,

[13] http://ciri.binghamton.edu/

[14] We coded state-sponsored repression in Zimbabwe, shown in Figure 1, on a monthly basis in order to illustrate the dynamics of abuse around elections. Unfortunately, such fine grained data are not available cross-nationally, and we therefore rely on the standard cross-national measures of repression which are annual.

[15] http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/

excluding Western countries, for which at least one election event has occurred.[16] Elections can either be for a national executive figure, such as a president, or for a national legislative body, such as a parliament. In order for an election to be included, direct voting must take place for national office.[17]

[Table 1 about here]

One of the primary difficulties in estimating the effect of elections on government-sponsored abuses is that some incumbents choose whether and when to hold elections. As a result, the existence of an election may not be independent of other variables that explain human rights abuses. This is particularly troublesome if incumbents hold elections in order to satisfy opposition movements, as the strength of the opposition will be endogenous to the timing of elections. Fortunately, several variables in the NELDA data indicate that the manipulation of election timing is relatively uncommon. Out of all elections in our sample, more than 90% were held according to a "regular" electoral schedule. Of these, less than 25% were held either "early" or "late." Additionally, although elections caused by opposition strength are likely to be relatively rare, we control for institutional and economic factors that should affect the utility to the incumbent of manipulating the timing of an election. Although this approach is hardly a cure-all for endogeneity issues, it does allow us to rule out some of the more likely confounding variables.[18]

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[16] In highly institutionalized Western environments, we observe very few abuses due to the high level of institutionalized constraints.
[17] This does not imply anything about the extent of the franchise: some regimes may construe this to mean a small portion of the population. However, when voting takes place by committee, institution or a coterie, the "election" is not included. See http://hyde.research.yale.edu/nelda for a discussion of coding rules.
[18] In addition, not all political institutions are set up to allow endogenous election timing without constitutional change or a significant (and politically costly) change in rules. Although in the extreme, all

A second difficulty that is apparent in much of the existing research on elections and human rights is that the strategic use of repression to manipulate elections is unlikely to be limited to the weeks near an election. Instead, as our introductory discussion of Zimbabwe illustrates, electoral repression often begins many months earlier and ends many months after the election. If we were to rely only on annual elections data, the estimates would be likely to be biased, as elections held earlier or later in a given year would be matched with annual human rights data. It is unreasonable to expect, for example, that violence associated with a January election would be limited to the calendar year of the election. Instead, if our theory is correct, repression associated with any particular year should be inversely proportional to the nearness of the election. In the case of a January election, abuses in the year before an election should be given nearly the weight of abuses in the election year.

Our election variable is therefore a measure of the absolute number of months from an election, *Months to Election.*[19] By interacting *Months to Election* with our explanatory variables, we estimate whether particular factors, such as the strength of the opposition and an independent court system, affect the impact of election proximity on government sponsored human rights abuses.[20] By using this estimation strategy, we account for the fact that electoral repression should not be confined to election years.

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governments can manipulate election timing, in practice, such manipulation is much less likely in countries with a constitutionally mandated electoral schedule.

[19] Since our unit of observation is a country-year, the *Months to Election* variable is calculated from the end of each year of observations: so an election in November 2008 would be coded as 12+2=14 months in 2009.

[20] Note that while we take advantage of monthly variation in election timing, our unit of analysis is a country year, since cross-national data on state-sponsored human rights abuses are only available on a yearly basis. In order to merge election data and yearly data, we code each country-year observation as part of some electoral cycle (an electoral cycle for some election contains the observations closer to that election than any alternative election). So, for example, in the United States a 2007 observation would be coded as part of the 2008 election, as would a 2009 observation. An exception is when we're interacting on the *Months before Election* variable in which case an electoral cycle is simply the observations prior to some election and after the last election.

This technique is an improvement over existing research which tends to look at elections as discrete events that can be measured annually.

This technique also allows us to separate pre and post election violence based on our theory. For example, *Months to Election* can be rescaled to measure only the months prior to an election, providing a more appropriate measure of electoral proximity for variables such as polling results that we only expect will have an impact on pre-election violence. For most of our estimates, however, our theory about threats, information, and consequences applies to both pre and post election violence, and *Months to Election* is measured as the number of months to the nearest election, which can occur before or after the current country-year.[21]

While this approach provides significant advantages over techniques used in the existing literature, there are several difficulties. First, the effects of the *Months to Election* variable are not likely to be linear: the difference between one and twelve months is unlikely to be the same as the difference between twelve and twenty-four months. In order to model this nonlinearity, we include a squared measure of *Months to Election* in all models.[22] Also, because we are interested in the inverse effect of *Months to Election* on political repression, we invert the scaling of many of our explanatory variables such that the interactions follow a consistent scale.

Second, our diagnostic models reveal residual autocorrelation and unobserved heterogeneity. Since a Hausman test rejects a random-effects assumption, we include country fixed effects to account for the unobserved heterogeneity and use Hubert-White

[21] The appendix provides an analysis in which pre- and post election violence are separated.
[22] Since some observations are not electorally relevant (for example, an observation 10+ years from an election is unlikely to provide us much information about repression), we drop any observation that is greater than two standard deviations above the mean number of months in an electoral cycle.

standard errors to account for heteroscedasticity.[23] The problems associated with serial correlation create more severe difficulties that are not easily addressed with any single approach (Achen 2000; N. Beck and Katz 2004; N. Beck 2001). Following the recommendations of Beck and Katz (2004) we start with a lagged-dependent variable (LDV) approach and test for the resulting serial correlation of errors. Since we find an acceptable level of correlation, we adopt this as our primary specification.

Our estimation problem is represented below, where γ_i indicates the country fixed-effects, T_{it} is the reversed treatment variable and X_{it} is a vector of covariates.

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta T_{it} + \beta(T_{it} * MonthsFromElection_{it}) + \beta * MonthsFromElection_{it} \\ + \beta * MonthsFromElection_{it}^{2} + \beta X_{it} + \gamma_i + \gamma_{it-1} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

This equation is difficult to estimate in an ordered context due to poor fixed effects estimators and autocorrelation issues (N. Beck, Katz, and Tucker 1998; Greene 2007; N. Beck 2001). Since these issues can create biased and inefficient estimates, we estimate this equation using both a fully pooled ordered probit model as well as a linear least squares model with country fixed-effects, reflecting what we think is the most appropriate specification and also including models that follow the most common approach in the human rights literature.

Electoral Threats to Power

Recall our first hypothesis that leaders who face threats to their power are more likely to use human rights abuses to manipulate elections than leaders facing weak electoral competition. There are a few common methods to measure the strength of the opposition. First, we use the Indices of Legislative and Executive Electoral Competitiveness

[23] We also use leader fixed effects where appropriate and find no significant changes in our key results.

from the Database of Political Institutions (T. Beck et al. 2001), labeled respectively as *Leg Competition* and *Exec Competition*. These variables range from one to seven, where one indicates no contestation and seven indicates that multiple parties contested the election and that the winning party or candidate received less than 75% of the vote share. We also use the Index of Competitiveness of Participation from the Polity IV project (Marshall and Jaggers 2002). This variable, *Political Participation,* ranges from zero to five and measures the "extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena." [24]

Competitiveness is often highly collinear with other factors which should decrease repression, such as institutional stability, checks on government power, and economic wealth. Since this collinearity potentially confounds our analysis, we control for these factors by including log *GDP* (World Bank 2006), log *Trade* (World Bank 2006), institutional *Checks* from the Database on Political Institutions (DPI), and leader *Tenure* from the Archigos Dataset (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009). Since we expect that incumbents will be more capable of directing the state apparatus to use repression and may also value the benefits of holding office more than non-incumbents, control variables include a binary measure of incumbency. *Incumbency* comes from the Institutions and Elections Project (IAEP) (Regan, Frank, and Clark 2009). Finally, we include a measure of *Civil War* intensity from the Major Episodes of Political Violence Dataset (MEPV) (Marshall 2007) and log *Population* from the World Development Indicators (WDI) (World Bank 2006). We include these variables because war and population size tend to be correlated

[24] Since we use the reciprocal of the competitiveness index, we rescale it by adding one (making it a one to six scale).

with an increase in human rights abuses independent of elections, and could confound our relationship of interest (Poe et al. 1999).[25]

Our results in Table 2a show that an interaction between *Competition* and *Months to Election* is a significant and positive predictor of government repression.[26] This finding suggests that, after controlling for institutional and economic confounds, highly competitive elections are much more likely to be associated with repression than are less competitive elections. This finding holds for both legislative and executive elections and across both ordered probit and linear models. These findings are robust to a number of alternate specifications, including year fixed-effects and the removal of strong outliers.[27]

[TABLE 2a about here]

Note that these results do not suggest that more competitive democracies have higher levels of violence. In fact the opposite is the case: observations at the highest level of competition have more than double the average level of respect for physical integrity than observations at the lowest level of competition. However, narrowing the focus to election years changes the story significantly—our model suggests that leaders facing a highly competitive election are responsible for higher average levels of repression during election years than nonelection years. Even during legislative elections, high levels of competitive are associated with increased political repression.

In order to explore this result further, we separate *Physical Integrity* into its constituent parts – *Murder, Torture, Disappearance* and *Political Imprisonment.* We then re-

[25] Goldstone et al. (2010) for example demonstrate that electoral competition has a strong effect on civil war. Since we expect that competition and civil war have an effect on human rights, not controlling for civil war could bias our result.
[26] Note that since our treatment variable is an inverse interaction, a positive coefficient indicates that there is lower physical integrity proximate to an election and a negative coefficient indicates higher physical integrity.
[27] Our results for legislative competition are sensitive to outliers, however participation and executive competition remain significant.

estimate the model using ordered probit.[28] As shown in Table 2b,[29] competition has the strongest effect on torture and murder and little effect on extra-judicial imprisonment. These results could suggest that leaders believe some repression tactics are more effective at quelling opposition movements than others or are less conspicuous. As a further robustness check, we estimate the same model using the Political Terror Scale (*PTS*) (Gibney, Cornett, and Wood 2010) and find similarly significant results for both components of the PTS, including the Amnesty International and State Department data.

[TABLE 2b about here]

Information

Not all leaders face an identical information environment: some leaders have access to reliable information about their own popularity and any potential threats to their hold on power; others face substantial uncertainty over the opposition's strength. As our second hypothesis suggests, the informational environment should influence the propensity of governments to sponsor repression. Incumbent governments with access to accurate information that an opposition movement is strong should be most likely to use repression. However, due to the high cost of losing office, even relatively secure leaders may use repression if they lack reliable information about their probability of victory. It may be cheaper or less risky for some leaders to repress political opposition rather than allow free political expression and the transmission of accurate information about their own support.

We attempt to measure the information environment with four different variables. First, we look at *Unfavorable Polls,* which indicates whether an election was likely to favor

[28] Note that our disaggregated results do not include a lagged dependent variable (LDV). Due to the limited scale of the disaggregated dependent variable, an LDV approach is inappropriate. See Beck 2001.
[29] To economize, we report only the coefficients of substantive interest from our fully specified models.

the opposition. We also look at *Vote Gain*, which indicates whether the prior election was a vote gain for the opposition (Hyde and Marinov 2009). Both of these variables represent binary variables which allow us to measure the amount of information available to an incumbent prior to holding the election. If these information sources exist and indicate that the incumbent faces a serious electoral threat, the government should be more likely to engage in political repression.

Another way to capture the uncertainty environment is to look at the stability of the current regime. When a leader has been in power for a long period of time, she is likely to have more information about her popularity and more experience at using the reins of power to ensure victory. As a result she should be less likely to ramp up political terror in the election period as a means to ensure victory. To measure *Tenure*, we rely on the Archigos dataset of political leaders, which provides data on the number of days since the primary incumbent took power (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009). Since we are only interested in the length of tenure at the time of an election, we recode these data so that each observation contains the tenure in days at the time of the nearest election.[30]

Finally, we also look at whether an incumbent is facing her first *Multi-party Election*, which should correlate with higher levels of uncertainty about an incumbent's electoral chances. In the first multiparty election, since an incumbent is unable to rely on past election results or experience for information about electoral threats, she may be more likely to use repression as a way to hedge against this disadvantage. This binary variable comes from the NELDA dataset (Hyde and Marinov 2009).

[30] We also have to limit our sample since Archigos only measures the length of tenure of the primary political leader. We therefore drop elections where the office primary political leader is not contested.

Following the previous analysis of the effects of competition, we include the same set of covariates to control for expected confounds. For the polling model we also include a measure of whether *Reliable Polling* was available for a particular election from the NELDA dataset (*Ibid.*). Reliable polling is more likely to be available in established and experienced regimes, which have a lower tendency towards violence. By including a variable for reliable polling, *Unfavorable Polls* captures the marginal effect of adverse polling independent of the effect of polling availability.

Our results in Tables 3a and 3b suggest that the information environment has some effect on the likelihood of repression. Consistent with our expectations, when public opinion polls exist and are unfavorable to the incumbent, political repression is substantially more likely to increase around elections. Longer tenure of the incumbent also has a significant and negative effect on repression, particularly in the case of extra-judicial killings and imprisonment, indicating that electoral authoritarian leaders who have been in power for longer have less of a need to increase repression around elections.

[TABLES 3a and 3b about here]

Our estimates of the effect of opposition votes and first multiparty elections are less conclusive: unfavorable results from the previous election seem to have a negligible or even negative impact on repression. Similarly, there does not appear to be higher repression associated with the first multiparty election. These findings suggest that that the relationship between threats and information is more nuanced than we suspected. Additionally, both of these variables are imperfect proxies for electoral information and are likely to fail to fulfill the exogeneity condition due to the number of confounding factors which determine a transition to a multiparty election.

Credible Consequences

Turning to our third hypothesis, we expect that leaders who are likely to face domestic or international consequences for repressive acts will be less likely to use human rights abuses to manipulate elections. To test this hypothesis, we focus on three primary sources of consequences: electoral institutions, an independent legal system, and international censure.

Electoral systems differ in the extent to which they constrain executives and make them accountable to other political actors. As Arend Liphart and others have argued, electoral systems that divide political power among multiple groups, such as courts and legislative bodies, are much less prone to state violence due to the interdependent nature of policymaking (Lijphart 1980). One way to analyze the effects of these institutional consequences is to use indices of veto players. As George Tsebelis argues, multiple veto players with divergent policy preferences can make it very difficult to change the status quo policy (2002). As a result, we expect that systems with a high number of veto players will be less prone to extra-legal means of electoral manipulation than systems with few veto players. To measure veto players, we rely on two common indices. First, we use the *Checks* variable from the Database of Political Institutions (T. Beck, Clarke, Groff, Keefer, and Walsh 2001). This variable counts the number of veto players in a political system, adjusting for whether these veto players are independent of one another. For example, this variable is incremented by one for each legislative chamber and relevant opposition party.[31] To confirm our results, we also use the *Exec Constraints* variable from the Polity IV project (Marshall and Jaggers 2002) as an alternative measure of veto players. This index

[31] Note that *Checks* and *LEIC* are related variables per the DPI coding.

ranges from one to seven and measures the extent of institutionalized constraints on the decision-making power of chief executives, and includes such components as the independence of the judiciary and the degree of legislative opposition to executive action.

A second source of consequences is an independent judiciary. Legal systems which are able to overrule decisions of the executive or legislature provide some check on a policymaker's excess. In some cases, they may also be able to provide a tangible penalty in the form of imprisonment or other legal consequences. We rely on a measure of judicial independence provided by the Institutions and Elections Project (IAEP) (Regan, Frank, and Clark 2009). We construct a dummy variable, *Courts*, based upon their data, which measures whether a court can rule on executive or legislative actions.

A final source of potential accountability stems from international actors, which are particularly influential in the developing world. Governments that use repression to manipulate elections often find themselves monitored and sharply criticized by other democracies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such criticism may lead to tangible consequences in the form of economic sanctions, lower levels of foreign aid, and reduced investment. In order to examine the effect that international actors may have on constraining government use of electoral repression, we focus on membership in international human rights treaties and the presence of international election monitors.

Many governments invite foreign election monitors to verify that an electoral process is democratic. Since these monitors increase the ability of foreign governments and NGOs to document repression, they increase the probability that leaders will be caught and face international costs for their actions. As a result, we expect that incumbents in a

monitored election will choose less observable means of manipulating elections than human rights abuses. In making this argument, we are supported by the work of Hyde and O'Mahony, who demonstrate that incumbents are more likely to use indirect means of manipulation, such as fiscal manipulation when their election is monitored (2010).[32] Our election *Monitor* variable comes from Hyde (2006) and is coded as one if international election observers were present from one or more of the following organizations: Carter Center (TCC), Council of Europe (COE), European Union (EU), International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), and the Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe (PACE).

Membership in international treaties may also increase costs on repressive leaders. Although treaties almost never have credible enforcement mechanisms for human rights violations, they do often empower nonstate actors with tools to pressure repressive governments (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005), and may therefore impose indirect costs on repressive leaders. Treaties may also shape elite-initiated agendas and support domestic human rights litigation (Simmons 2009). Membership in international treaties can signal a country's commitment to international norms, which can come with economic and political benefits that can potentially be revoked in the case of egregious violations (Hafner-Burton 2009). To analyze the effect of treaty membership, we create a variable, *Treaties Ratified*, which is a count of the number of treaties that a country has ratified in a

[32] This issue is complicated by the fact that human rights monitors, including the US State Department reports, have long used the reports of election monitors—and even the fact that repressive governments allow election monitors to access areas of countries that are otherwise off limits—to code repression. Therefore, reports of repression may be higher when observers are present, not because observers increase repression, but because they increase documentation of repression. We thank Judith Kelley for raising this issue.

particular year. These data are from the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the Organization of American States.

We use a similar estimation strategy to our threat and uncertainty models and the same set of covariates are included here. In order to account for the possibility that more constrained executives are also in more competitive electoral systems, we also include *Leg Competition* from the Database on Political Institutions (T. Beck, Clarke, Groff, Keefer, and Walsh 2001). Our results, displayed in Tables 4a and 4b, suggest that the use of state-sponsored electoral repression is mediated by increases in domestic consequences. When the number of veto players increases, governments are significantly less likely to use electoral repression. These results are confirmed using *Checks* from the Database on Political Institutions, as well as *Exec Constraints* from the Polity IV project.[33] We also find that countries with an independent legal system are significantly less likely to increase repression in the period surrounding an election. These results imply that structure of domestic institutions play a role in constraining repressive governments.

[TABLES 4a and 4b about here]

Our results lend less support to the theory that leaders are sensitive to the influence of the international community when engaging in repression. Both election monitors and treaties are insignificant in our main model. When we disaggregate by repression type, we find that election monitors do have a negative effect, but given the sensitivity of these results to specification, we remain less confident in interpreting these estimates.

Finally, threats to a regime are a necessary but not sufficient condition for abuses. We expect that leaders facing strong electoral competition and weak or non-credible

[33] It should be noted that our estimates on Executive Constraints are much more sensitive to our robustness checks and should be interpreted cautiously.

consequences for human rights abuses are the most likely to use political repression to manipulate elections, while leaders facing weak electoral competition and serious (and credible) consequences for abuse are the least likely to increase violence around elections. Figure 3 illustrates this conditional effect by simulating the effect of a standard deviation change in *Competition* on a standard deviation change in the number of *Months from Election*.

[Figure 3 about here]

Robustness checks

Our primary result is that when leaders face stronger and more credible threats to their power, and when leaders face fewer consequences, they are much more likely to use electorally-motivated repression. These results are robust to a number of sensitivity tests and alternative specifications: all models are re-run using generalized least squares and logit; several alternative specifications for autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity, including a first order autoregressive (AR1) model, panel corrected standard errors, and time fixed-effects; and removing severe outliers. Our substantive results remain strong and significant. These results will be made available in an online appendix.

Discussion: Pre and Post Election Violence and Alternatives to Repression

When the consequences for engaging in repression are likely to be low but the political opposition poses a real threat to the incumbent government, our theory suggests that leaders are more likely to engage in human rights abuses before, during or after an election to reduce the strength of the opposition's threat to their power. Prior to (and during) an election, leaders may sponsor repression to prevent opposition candidates

from running or to prevent voters from voting for their preferred candidate. Following an election, incumbent governments may sponsor repression to prevent opposition leaders and disaffected voters from contesting the results. Therefore, we have attempted to capture spikes in repression surrounding elections, and our empirical analyses focus on the most proximate election.

However, the dynamics of pre- election repression could be sufficiently different from those of post-election repression that they should be analyzed separately. Though our theory suggests that similar pressures – threats and consequences – characterize pre and post election dynamics, we will also run our models for only pre-election violence (months to next election) and only post-election violence (months to previous election), with the relevant independent variables recoded appropriately.

Additionally, increasing the use of political repression around elections is one of many tactics that incumbent leaders can use to stay in power. We have provided a model of the conditions under which elections are likely to increase the use of repression. However, a fully specified model of election manipulation would also include all possible methods that a government could potentially use to manipulate an election, the relative costs of each method, and a theory of the conditions under which each method of manipulation is most likely to be employed. Despite its potential importance, the challenges in specifying such a comprehensive model are numerous. The full set of options available to a government is virtually limitless, many tactics are covert and therefore difficult to observe, and governments have the incentive to engage in "strategic manipulation," engaging in the forms of manipulation that are most effective and least likely to be caught (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009). They can include overt election fraud, such as stuffing ballot boxes,

manipulating the voter register, or falsifying election results entirely. But manipulation can also include less overt or illegal forms, like candidate exclusion, onerous registration requirements, electoral laws intended to ban certain candidates, monopolization of state-run media, the abuse of government resources to campaign, pre-electoral fiscal manipulation, gerrymandering, encouraging administrative incompetence in opposition strongholds, politically biased election administration, or designing electoral laws that discourage opposition party coordination (Schedler 2002).

Although other forms of manipulation are substantively important, we do not think they seriously undermine the interpretation of the results we have presented. The existence of other forms of manipulation may make it more difficult to identify the effect of threats, information, and consequences on repression, but it is not clear how the electoral spikes in human right abuses around elections would be explained by the omission of other forms of manipulation, particularly since alternative methods of manipulation may substitute or compliment electoral repression.

Nonetheless, we make every effort to control for alternative forms of electoral manipulation to ensure that our results on repression are not misleading. We control for fiscal manipulation with a measure of *Fiscal Balance* intended to capture a government's capacity to buy, rather coerce, votes (Hyde and O'Mahony 2010). From the NELDA data set, we also account for whether a government is experiencing good economic *Growth* or an *Economic Crisis*. We control for *Election Timing* and *Election Postponed*, used here to measure whether the government has previously manipulated the timing of an election – another method for fixing election outcomes. Finally, we control for the use of overt election fraud by measuring *Election Fraud* based on whether there were serious

complaints about the quality of the election, either domestically or internationally. Our results, available in our appendix, are robust to these additional controls.

Conclusion

Using a new dataset on elections, we generate some of the first global evidence of the conditions under which governments are most likely to use human rights abuses as a strategy to manipulate election outcomes. These results provide support for our argument. Throughout the developing world, we find that leaders are more likely to increase human rights abuses in the period surrounding elections when they face greater electoral competition or uncertainty about their competition and also fewer consequences for engaging in repression.

We interpret this as evidence that some incumbents– including those in countries like Cambodia, Egypt, Iran, or Zimbabwe – have used abuses to rig election outcomes, and document the conditions under which such electorally motivated abuses are likely. In effect, elections may exacerbate human rights violations in these places in the short term; without elections, the violations would probably be fewer (though some violations would probably still occur for other reasons).

Our results do not speak to whether or not leaders who use human rights abuses to fix elections actually succeed in staying in power, or whether periods of electorally induced political violence are an inevitable part of political liberalization. Many of the world's longest-standing "consolidated" democracies, including France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, experienced periods of increased political repression surrounding

elections.[34] This history raises fundamental questions about the long-term relationship between political repression, elections, and democratization. Some scholars and pundits may be tempted to interpret the fact that leaders sometimes use political repression around elections as confirmation that elections are "bad" for countries without a history of elections and democracy. Our analysis does not support this conclusion.

Rather, several important implications follow from the evidence provided in this paper, some of which are relevant to ongoing concerns in policy communities about election-induced violence. First, the countries most likely to experience increases in political repression surrounding elections are precisely those places in which the (frequently autocratic) incumbent government is threatened by an organized and potentially powerful opposition. Although repression is detrimental to democracy in the short term, competition is necessary for democracy in both the short and the long term, and if our analysis is correct, then more often than not, electorally-motivated repression is a symptom of a threatened and potentially weakening autocrat rather than a sign that democratization – and future protection for human rights – is doomed.

Another implication of our analysis is perhaps even more important for policy-makers.[35] As mentioned in the introduction, scholars have deplored the spread of elections to countries without a history of "constitutional liberalism" (Zakaria 1997). Our analysis supports this complaint to some extent, but provides a potential second-best option for countries that do not already possess a history of constitutional liberalism. We have shown that although electoral threats increase the probability that a government will increase

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[34] See, for example, Alexander Keyssar (2009)

[35] A number of NGOs and IOs have focused attention in recent years to election-related violence. For example, see the "Election Violence Education and Resolution" project sponsored by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, http://ever.dd.ifes.org/.

repression around elections, domestic checks and likely consequences substantially decrease the use of repression. Accountability works best when it comes from strong domestic political institutions. However, we find some suggestive evidence that international accountability measures, such as treaties, may provide additional constraints and liability on leaders. Even if these accountability measures are relatively weak, they can still serve as a constraint on some forms of electoral repression. If elections continue to take place in nearly all countries in the world, a focus on accountability for human rights abuses is especially important, and may help reduce the use of electoral repression. More optimistically, for countries without strong domestic political institutions or a history of constitutional liberalism, an increased in credible mechanisms of international accountability may be able to serve as a short-term check on leaders until domestic checks on leaders become better developed.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Election[a] Mean	Election[a] Stand. Dev.	Pre Election[b] Mean	Pre Election[b] Stand. Dev.
Checks	16.448	1.697	16.853	1.552
Exec Competition	2.525	1.994	3.375	2.246
Leg Competition	2.13	1.728	3.037	2.289
Months to Election	4.185	3.733	31.245	26.672
Physical Integrity	4.489	2.203	4.192	2.247
Political Participation	3.01	1.279	3.542	1.364
Leader Tenure	13961.538	3087.354	13793.75	3186.264
Treaties Ratified	7.209	2.858	8.011	2.936

	All Elections	Legislative Elections	Executive Elections
Num. of Elections	856	677	391
Mean Months to Election	25.10	27.00	40.59
Stand. Dev. Months to Election	23.92	24.23	46.32
Num. Unfavorable Polls	590	451	308
Num. Monitored Elections	273	224	155
Num. Multi-party Elections	92	72	51
Num. Opposition Vote Gain	387	341	174
Num. Independent Courts	1951	461	281

(a.) Observations twelve months or less from an election year. (b.) Observations greater than twelve months from an election year.

Table 2a: Political Threat and Repression

	OLS	*Probit*	*OLS*	*Probit*	*OLS*	*Probit*	*OLS*	*Probit*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
LegCompetition*Months$_{it}$	.117	.101					.211	.145
	(.051)**	(.039)***					(.080)***	(.061)**
LegCompetition$_{it}$	-.090	-.004					-.025	.035
	(.053)*	(.036)					(.069)	(.047)
ExecCompetition*Months$_{it}$			.201	.124			-.194	-.086
			(.060)***	(.042)***			(.099)*	(.080)
ExecCompetition $_{it}$			-.074	.026			-.090	.019
			(.061)	(.039)			(.077)	(.051)
PoliticalParticipation* Months$_{it}$					.045	.062	.002	.005
					(.046)	(.035)*	(.064)	(.049)
PoliticalParticipation $_{it}$					-.223	-.157	-.199	-.193
					(.054)***	(.033)***	(.062)***	(.039)***
MonthsToElection$_{it}$	-.120	-.147	-.363	-.215	-.109	-.145	-.075	-.119
	(.077)	(.060)**	(.127)***	(.083)***	(.083)	(.067)**	(.085)	(.070)*
MonthsToElection2$_{it}$	-.128	-.043	.302	.193	-.096	-.010	-.181	-.111
	(.108)	(.077)	(.136)**	(.070)***	(.106)	(.095)	(.139)	(.119)
Tenure $_{it}$	.016	-.031	-.002	-.038	-.004	-.023	-.010	-.020
	(.046)	(.026)	(.048)	(.026)	(.046)	(.025)	(.046)	(.026)
Incumbent*Months$_{it}$	.244	.094	-.047	-.005	.114	.104	.059	.078
	(.197)	(.180)	(.096)	(.070)	(.085)	(.068)	(.087)	(.069)
Incumbent $_{it}$	-.021	.017	-.091	-.019	-.047	.0007	-.068	-.008
	(.143)	(.095)	(.072)	(.052)	(.063)	(.047)	(.064)	(.048)
Checks*Months$_{it}$	-.048	.005	-.107	-.054	-.041	.041	-.001	.028
	(.068)	(.062)	(.050)**	(.034)	(.066)	(.062)	(.073)	(.076)
Checks $_{it}$	.035	-.021	.019	-.076	.037	.047	.085	.029
	(.044)	(.035)	(.060)	(.040)*	(.042)	(.033)	(.043)**	(.038)
ln(GDP)$_{it}$	-.483	-.090	-.277	-.092	-.474	-.125	-.473	-.120
	(.227)**	(.052)*	(.255)	(.056)*	(.221)**	(.054)**	(.219)**	(.054)**
ln(Pop)$_{it}$	-.559	-.238	-.958	-.214	-.924	-.207	-.992	-.210
	(.307)*	(.029)***	(.329)***	(.033)***	(.292)***	(.031)***	(.297)***	(.031)***
ln(Trade)$_{it}$	.317	.146	.320	.138	.312	.157	.316	.152
	(.110)***	(.047)***	(.119)***	(.050)***	(.110)***	(.048)***	(.110)***	(.048)***
CivilWar$_{it}$	-.317	-.132	-.299	-.147	-.320	-.135	-.318	-.136
	(.049)***	(.030)***	(.048)***	(.030)***	(.051)***	(.033)***	(.052)***	(.033)***
Physint$_{it-1}$	.456	.530	.442	.511	.443	.533	.437	.531
	(.021)***	(.017)***	(.023)***	(.018)***	(.021)***	(.017)***	(.021)***	(.017)***
N	2198	2198	1846	1846	2170	2170	2170	2170
R2	.304		.305		.303		.307	
Pseudo-R2		.249		.227		.254		.254

Robust standard errors in parentheses. *significant at 10%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

Table 3a: Information and Repression

	OLS	Probit	OLS	Probit	OLS	Probit	OLS	Probit	OLS	Probit
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Tenure*Months$_{it}$	.182	.056							.153	.054
	(.081)**	(.048)							(.048)***	(.033)
Tenure $_{it}$	-.006	.055							.040	.047
	(.061)	(.031)*							(.051)	(.028)*
UnfavorablePolls*Months$_{it}$			.443	.233					.198	.145
			(.137)***	(.088)***					(.127)	(.087)*
UnfavorablePolls$_{it}$			.356	.134					.116	.025
			(.156)**	(.092)					(.102)	(.071)
ReliablePolling*Months$_{it}$			.176	.153					-.104	.049
			(.146)	(.086)*					(.118)	(.085)
ReliablePolls $_{it}$			.032	.156					-.116	.010
			(.165)	(.081)*					(.100)	(.061)
VoteGain*Months$_{kt}$					-.057	-.115			-.277	-.297
					(.071)	(.052)**			(.123)**	(.097)***
VoteGain$_{it}$					-.096	.045			-.118	-.007
					(.062)	(.047)			(.077)	(.059)
MultiPartyElection*Months$_{it}$							.211	-.009	.179	.025
							(.100)**	(.073)	(.125)	(.096)
MultiPartyElection $_{it}$							.021	.035	-.121	-.009
							(.117)	(.087)	(.128)	(.096)
MonthsToElection$_{it}$	.095	.067	-.326	-.200	.079	.088	.069	.063	-.029	-.022
	(.127)	(.089)	(.184)*	(.131)	(.071)	(.056)	(.064)	(.052)	(.178)	(.134)
MonthsToElection2 $_{it}$	-.136	-.075	-.063	-.067	-.170	-.132	-.255	-.109	.124	-.039
	(.102)	(.084)	(.149)	(.091)	(.076)**	(.060)**	(.086)***	(.070)	(.143)	(.104)
LegCompetition*Months$_{it}$	-.009	.021	-.046	.014	.025	.029	.002	.002	-.061	.0006
	(.081)	(.046)	(.057)	(.039)	(.036)	(.028)	(.033)	(.027)	(.055)	(.040)
LegCompetition $_{it}$	-.121	-.050	-.213	-.090	-.106	-.044	-.107	-.056	-.116	-.036
	(.064)*	(.037)	(.064)***	(.038)**	(.046)**	(.028)	(.049)**	(.029)*	(.056)**	(.032)
ln(GDP)$_{it}$	.001	-.163	.154	-.186	-.463	-.094	-.452	-.095	-.130	-.091
	(.311)	(.073)**	(.338)	(.074)**	(.246)*	(.051)*	(.246)*	(.051)*	(.276)	(.056)
ln(Pop)$_{it}$	-1.590	-.201	-1.640	-.209	-.695	-.233	-.752	-.233	-.936	-.240
	(.407)***	(.036)***	(.486)***	(.038)***	(.330)**	(.027)***	(.329)**	(.027)***	(.378)**	(.031)***
ln(Trade)$_{it}$	.0008	.196	.179	.210	.353	.163	.344	.178	.264	.150
	(.147)	(.064)***	(.163)	(.066)***	(.114)***	(.047)***	(.113)***	(.047)***	(.121)**	(.051)***
CivilWar$_{it}$	-.262	-.151	-.211	-.137	-.323	-.135	-.324	-.134	-.362	-.163
	(.064)***	(.038)***	(.069)***	(.038)***	(.050)***	(.033)***	(.050)***	(.032)***	(.054)***	(.036)***
Physint$_{it-1}$	.385	.519	.386	.503	.427	.519	.423	.522	.405	.502
	(.031)***	(.021)***	(.031)***	(.022)***	(.021)***	(.016)***	(.021)***	(.016)***	(.023)***	(.017)***
N	1315	1315	1191	1191	2276	2276	2313	2313	1894	1894
R2	.227		.242		.274		.273		.277	
Pseudo-R2		.238		.238		.24		.241		.235

Robust standard errors in parentheses. *significant at 10%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

Table 4a: Credible Consequences and Repression

	OLS	*Probit*	*OLS*	*Probit*	*OLS*	*Probit*	*OLS*	*Probit*	*OLS*	*Probit*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Checks*Months $_{it}$	-.120	-.125							-.093	-.095
	(.059)**	(.057)**							(.076)	(.064)
Checks $_{it}$	.006	-.086							.004	-.089
	(.040)	(.032)***							(.047)	(.035)**
Courts*Months $_{it}$			-.195	-.197					-.156	-.181
			(.076)**	(.060)***					(.095)	(.079)**
Courts $_{it}$			.081	-.025					.132	-.019
			(.100)	(.057)					(.104)	(.059)
TreatiesRatified*Months $_{it}$					.060	.024			.053	-.006
					(.039)	(.031)			(.063)	(.052)
TreatiesRatified $_{it}$					.038	.030			.027	.002
					(.062)	(.025)			(.069)	(.030)
Monitor*Months $_{it}$							-.071	.0003	-.026	.034
							(.096)	(.070)	(.119)	(.085)
Monitor $_{it}$							-.162	-.061	-.193	-.051
							(.080)**	(.047)	(.087)**	(.054)
MonthsToElection $_{it}$	-.208	-.134	-.013	.026	-.173	-.109	-.160	-.114	-.046	-.021
	(.068)***	(.055)**	(.086)	(.068)	(.068)**	(.055)**	(.073)**	(.063)*	(.099)	(.084)
MonthsToElection2 $_{it}$	.033	.069	-.074	.049	.017	.058	.025	.065	-.097	.069
	(.063)	(.055)	(.076)	(.069)	(.065)	(.056)	(.066)	(.059)	(.080)	(.073)
Incumbent $_{it}$	-.006	.004	.014	.011	-.010	.004	-.005	-.002	.032	.011
	(.062)	(.044)	(.065)	(.045)	(.062)	(.044)	(.062)	(.044)	(.065)	(.046)
Incumbent*Months $_{it}$	.109	.100	.172	.106	.104	.086	.110	.083	.191	.117
	(.066)*	(.045)**	(.078)**	(.056)*	(.066)	(.045)*	(.067)	(.044)*	(.079)**	(.057)**
LegCompetition*Months $_{it}$	.073	.036	-.002	-.052	-.017	-.032	.010	-.018	.037	-.004
	(.042)*	(.034)	(.029)	(.029)*	(.032)	(.032)	(.027)	(.026)	(.057)	(.047)
LegCompetition $_{it}$	-.080	.007	-.074	-.057	-.075	-.047	-.071	-.041	-.082	-.016
	(.048)*	(.033)	(.050)	(.032)*	(.045)*	(.030)	(.045)	(.029)	(.055)	(.037)
ln(GDP) $_{it}$	-.468	-.074	-.531	-.092	-.460	-.069	-.531	-.076	-.582	-.102
	(.214)**	(.050)	(.235)**	(.052)*	(.221)**	(.049)	(.215)**	(.049)	(.246)**	(.054)*
ln(Pop) $_{it}$	-.651	-.239	-.555	-.240	-.532	-.242	-.417	-.234	-.274	-.234
	(.286)**	(.026)***	(.312)*	(.027)***	(.299)*	(.026)***	(.296)	(.026)***	(.335)	(.028)***
ln(Trade) $_{it}$	.284	.151	.323	.176	.294	.154	.297	.157	.323	.175
	(.103)***	(.045)***	(.111)***	(.048)***	(.102)***	(.044)***	(.102)***	(.045)***	(.114)***	(.049)***
CivilWar $_{it}$	-.304	-.122	-.329	-.133	-.315	-.135	-.313	-.136	-.325	-.126
	(.047)***	(.030)***	(.048)***	(.030)***	(.047)***	(.030)***	(.047)***	(.030)***	(.049)***	(.030)***
Physint $_{it-1}$	.450	.540	.430	.529	.445	.537	.446	.538	.430	.530
	(.020)***	(.016)***	(.021)***	(.016)***	(.020)***	(.016)***	(.020)***	(.016)***	(.021)***	(.017)***
N	2452	2452	2341	2341	2502	2502	2493	2493	2286	2286
R2	.3		.28		.294		.295		.287	
Pseudo-R2		.252		.249		.249		.249		.252

Robust standard errors in parentheses. *significant at 10%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

Table 2b: Political Threat and Repression by Type

	Physint	PTS-A	PTS-S	Disap	Kill	Imprison	Torture
LegCompetition*Months$_{it}$	.123	.112	.144	.085	.118	.04	.134
	(.038)***	(.045)**	(.043)***	(.048)*	(.041)***	(.042)	(.043)***
ExecCompetition*Months$_{it}$	.166	.105	.166	.021	.103	.187	.287
	(.037)***	(.043)**	(.042)***	(.042)	(.05)**	(.046)***	(.056)***
PoliticalParticipation*Months$_{it}$	.124	.104	.123	.097	.093	-.009	.18
	(.03)***	(.052)**	(.043)***	(.038)**	(.038)**	(.038)	(.036)***

These are ordered probit estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. They include the same control variables as Table 2a, except we estimate without the lagged dependent variable.
PTS-A and PTS-S stand for Political Terror Scale (Gibney, Cornett, and Wood 2010) using Amnesty and State Department data, respectively.

Table 3b: Uncertainty and Repression by Type

	Physint	PTS-A	PTS-S	Disap	Kill	Imprison	Torture
Tenure*Months$_{it}$	.01	.008	.053	.13	-.009	-.077	-.004
	(.048)	(.056)	(.055)	(.06)**	(.056)	(.054)	(.053)
VoteGain*Months$_{kt}$	-.101	-.133	-.185	-.034	-.007	-.151	-.093
	(.048)**	(.048)***	(.049)***	(.059)	(.056)	(.055)***	(.055)*
MultiPartyElection*Months$_{it}$	-.034	-.076	-.138	.109	.087	-.058	-.175
	(.061)	(.062)	(.063)**	(.078)	(.073)	(.07)	(.07)**
UnfavorablePolls*Months$_{it}$	.403	.187	.296	.194	.293	.348	.505
	(.083)***	(.086)**	(.086)***	(.097)**	(.098)***	(.105)***	(.103)***

These are ordered probit estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. They include the same control variables as Table 3a, except we estimate without the lagged dependent variable.
PTS-A and PTS-S stand for Political Terror Scale (Gibney, Cornett, and Wood 2010) using Amnesty and State Department data, respectively.

Tables 4b: Credible Consequences and Repression by Type

	Physint	PTS-A	PTS-S	Disap	Kill	Imprison	Torture
ExecConstraints*Months$_{it}$	-.138	-.209	-.147	-.112	-.073	-.092	-.1
	(.048)***	(.052)***	(.05)***	(.049)**	(.051)	(.046)**	(.051)**
Courts*Months$_{it}$	-.397	-.297	-.347	-.372	-.339	-.206	-.318
	(.058)***	(.074)***	(.066)***	(.07)***	(.069)***	(.074)***	(.082)***
TreatiesRatified*Months$_{it}$	.117	.102	.123	.122	.172	.106	.067
	(.034)***	(.048)**	(.042)***	(.042)***	(.036)***	(.037)***	(.044)
Monitor*Months$_{it}$	-.216	-.405	-.235	-.242	-.144	-.179	-.157
	(.074)***	(.101)***	(.1)**	(.087)***	(.086)*	(.086)**	(.09)*
Checks*Months$_{it}$	-.215	-.202	-.247	-.184	-.121	-.099	-.192
	(.07)***	(.075)***	(.071)***	(.067)***	(.061)**	(.074)	(.065)***

These are ordered probit estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. They include the same control variables as Table 4a, except we estimate without the lagged dependent variable.
PTS-A and PTS-S stand for Political Terror Scale (Gibney, Cornett, and Wood 2010) using Amnesty and State Department data, respectively.

Figure 1: Variation in Political Repression by Election in Zimbabwe

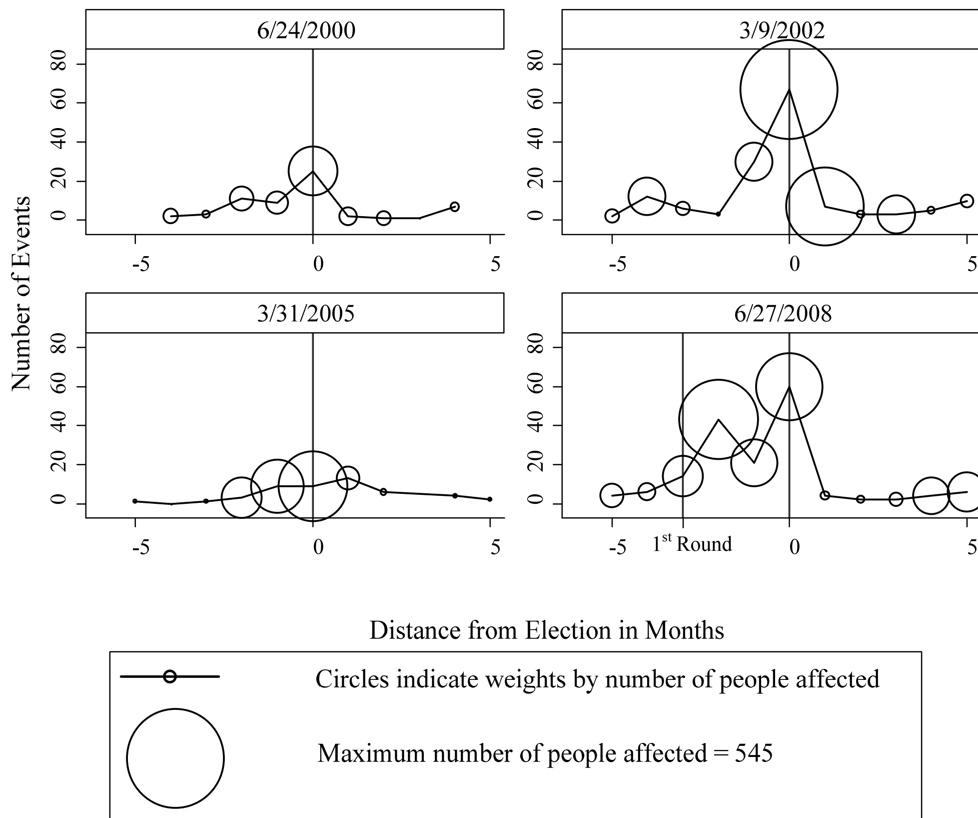


Figure 2: Threat, Consequences, and Repression

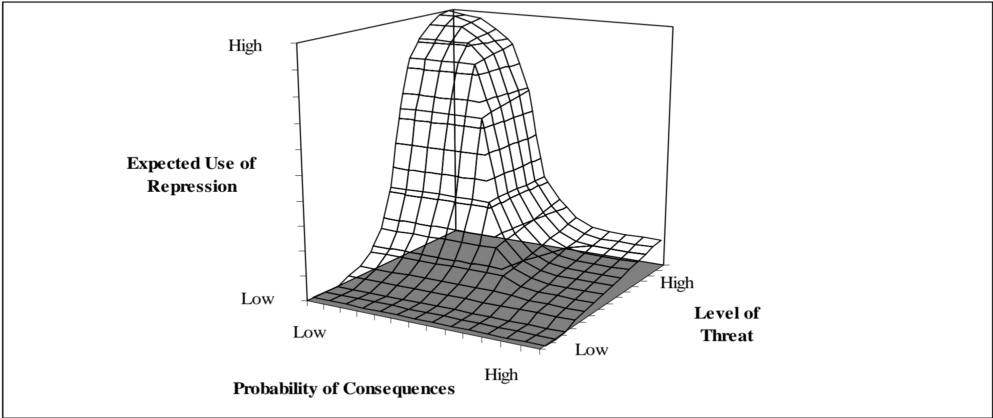
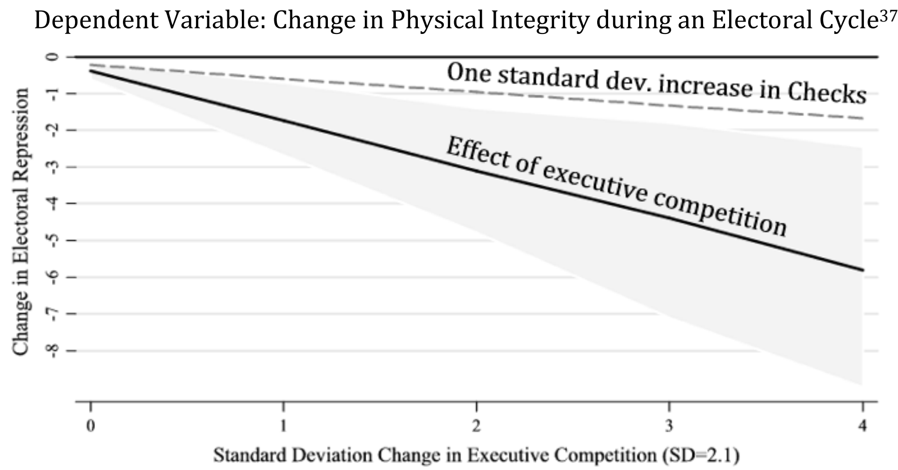


Figure 3: Change in Electoral Repression by Competitiveness[36]

Dependent Variable: Change in Physical Integrity during an Electoral Cycle[37]



[36] We do not plot changes in the non-interacted terms here since we are primarily interested in the conditional effect of elections given competition and consequences, Plotting the unconditional effect of elections would move the intercept of this graph up because independent of the effect of competition, elections have a positive impact on physical integrity.
[37] The change in physical integrity during an electoral cycle is defined as the change in physical integrity associated with a standard deviation change in the number of months from an election (49.3 months).

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