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# The Northern Ireland Research Initiative: Data on the Troubles from 1968 to 1998<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

In recent years the study of conflict has increasingly focused on the analysis of violence at the sub-national level. Despite many advances, these efforts have been unable to address key questions within the literature, including inquires concerning the dynamic interactions between governments and challengers—the conflict–repression nexus. In this article, we present a new data project, the Northern Ireland Research Initiative or NIRI, and identify the ways in which this effort is particularly well suited to advance our understanding of the relationship between repression and dissent in Northern Ireland and beyond. NIRI is a disaggregated events-based dataset relying on new sources of conflict data that includes a broad range of actions (e.g. localized, short-term events and aggregate/larger-scale long-term activities) over the period of the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1968–1998).

## Keywords

Civil war, contentious politics, dataset, dissent, Northern Ireland, state repression

## Introduction

Following from Pitirim Sorokin's (1937) initial data-gathering efforts into revolution and contentious politics, there have been numerous advancements in the field of data collection on domestic political conflict across a range of projects: for example, *The World Handbook*

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of *Political and Social Indicators* (Russett et al., 1964; Taylor and Jodice, 1983), *Civil Conflict* (Gurr, 1968), *The Correlates of War* project (Singer and Small, 1994) and the *Cross-National Polity Survey* (Banks and Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1976). These early efforts were carefully compiled, global in scope and aggregated to the nation-year. Built on these foundations, we see the first examinations of how different political, economic and demographic factors influenced societal as well as governmental conflict behavior (e.g. dissent, terrorism and insurgency on the one hand and protest-policing, counter-terrorism and human rights violations on the other).

While useful, there are numerous limitations with this work, the most prominent of which is the assumption that the nation-year is the appropriate unit of analysis (see Davenport, 2007; Kalyvas, 2006; Snyder, 1978). Addressing this issue, many researchers have concluded that, if we are to understand what influences conflict and violence (i.e. what takes place in a specific time, in a specific place and by specific individuals), then we must direct our attention to the actions at the level they occur, or at least move in that direction. From this proposition, diverse subnational efforts have emerged (e.g. Earl et al., 2003; Davenport and Stam, 2009; Kalyvas, 2006; Kocher et al., 2011; Lyall, 2009; Straus, 2006; Wilkinson, 2004).

Despite the advances made by the new wave of subnational data collection, there are still many questions left unanswered. We focus here on outstanding questions regarding the dynamics of interaction between states and challengers, a phenomenon known as the conflict-repression nexus. Simply, the conflict-repression nexus is the relationship between state repression and dissident behavior addressing how increases or changes in the tactics of one influence the other. While there have been many attempts to understand this relationship (i.e. Davenport et al., 2005; Hibbs, 1973; Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 1998; Rasler, 1996), our understanding of the interaction remains limited. Most significantly, the nature, direction and scope of repression's causal influence on domestic conflict remains unclear.<sup>2</sup> Repressive events have been shown to increase dissent (e.g. Francisco, 1996; Kocher et al., 2011; Kwaja, 1993), decrease dissent (e.g. Lyall, 2009; White, 1993), generate inverted-U effects (e.g. Moore, 1998; Rasler, 1996) or produce no effects whatsoever (e.g. Gurr and Moore, 1997).

In large part, our inability to conclusively address this topic has been a product of two factors. Operationally, the data collected has relied too heavily on data generated by a single source (e.g. media), focused too often on a single type of activity (e.g. political killings) and not paid sufficient attention to the temporal sequencing of disaggregated events data. Conceptually, researchers have tended to treat all events equally, overlooking the possibility of influential events that mark a shift in patterns of repression and dissent. We maintain that, without attending to these issues, our understanding of the relationship between conflict and repression is significantly hindered.

Our aim in the current article is not to solve all of the puzzles of the conflict-repression nexus. Instead, we seek to illustrate how a new type of data collection can overcome some of the existing limitations in this area of study and generate new understanding of the topic by picking up the more complex, agency-contingent conflict dynamics which drive the conflict-repression nexus. Toward this end, we present a unique database on political conflict behavior during the Troubles in Northern Ireland known as the Northern Ireland Research Initiative (NIRI). Relying upon government records from the UK and Northern Ireland and local nongovernmental organization reports, as well as local and international news sources, the database includes approximately 11,000 events between 1968 and 1998. Like its predecessor, the work undertaken here is careful in its compilation, but it is national and not global

in scope and it is disaggregated to a subnational unit (e.g. states, cities, villages or street addresses). Coded behavior includes armed attacks, lethal terrorist bombings and shootings, like other research on the topic (e.g. Lafree et al., 2009; Mesev et al., 2009; Sutton, 1994; White, 1993), but also protests, arrests, instances of harassment, home invasions and non-lethal terrorist activity which has not yet been compiled systematically for this case. From this work, we are able to more deeply explore the operational and conceptual issues currently afflicting research on the conflict–repression nexus through the case of the Northern Ireland conflict.

In this article, we begin with an overview of existing subnational data collection efforts with a specific focus on the conflict–repression nexus. We then proceed with our introduction of NIRI. With NIRI we return to the nexus and use the data to offer some preliminary findings to demonstrate how disaggregated, multisource conflict data is the appropriate tool to overcome existing limitations and address outstanding questions. We conclude with an overview of how subnational research should proceed in the future and how the Northern Ireland Research Initiative will contribute to that effort.

## **Sub-national data and the conflict–repression nexus**

Following decades of scholarship identifying the factors associated with variation in large-scale, aggregate levels of violence, the field of conflict studies has undertaken a “subnational turn” in recent years (e.g. Cederman et al., 2009; Kalyvas, 2006). Rather than seek to account for aggregate categories of conflict such as civil war, human rights/repression, ethnic conflict or genocide, the subnational shift led scholars to address similar phenomena on a more precise level, including individual incidents of violence.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the new unit of analysis, the explanations offered in these analyses tend to move away from large structural explanations, such as the institutional characteristics of the regime, towards more micro causal explanations focusing on the contingent effects of conflict dynamics.

Despite these advances, the dynamic interactive effects linking state and challenger behavior in the conflict–repression nexus remain largely unknown (Davenport et al., 2005). This deficiency is especially noteworthy because cross-national research has consistently shown across data, method and context that, while increasing levels of dissent tend to escalate subsequent levels of political repression, the influence of political repression on subsequent levels of dissent can be positive, negative, multidirectional or even nonexistent (see reviews in Davenport et al., 2005; Davenport, 2007; Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 1998).

We believe that one of the primary reasons for this has to do with limitations in the existing data collection efforts—both operational and conceptual. In the construction of existing subnational data projects, efforts to disaggregate political conflict have paradoxically not gone far enough on some dimensions while over-reaching on others. Operationally, efforts to disaggregate have been hindered by source bias, event selection and insufficient attention to temporal disaggregation. Conceptually, in the effort to disaggregate, existing data have dissected conflict categories down into constituent parts, while paying only limited attention to the links between local-level events and broad categorical shifts in state and dissident behavior.

### *Operational limitations*

Although data has been collected from government documents (e.g. Kocher et al., 2011), survival records (e.g. Davenport and Stam, 2009) or perpetrator interviews (e.g. Humphreys

and Weinstein, 2006), the data employed in most analyses of subnational conflict are generated from news reports (e.g. Earl et al., 2003; White and White, 1995). Problems of selection bias influence each source, leading to empirical challenges for studies relying on any single source. For example, media coverage tends to over-report large incidents and events near urban centers (Davenport and Ball, 2002); media reports and government documents are predisposed to positions that are more favorable to the government (Davenport, 2010); and survivors tend to be subject to memory lapses as well as trauma (Pham et al., 2004). This renders most research problematic in the sense that the single-source data used are probably subject to some form of bias.

An additional data limitation with current research is the focus on either lethal or non-lethal events while often completely ignoring the other type of activity (e.g. Cederman et al., 2009; Kalyvas, 2006; Lyall, 2009). Such focus is especially problematic in the study of political conflict because it has rendered scholarship unable to distinguish between the termination of state repression and the substitution of tactics—two very different phenomena.

Finally, while much attention has been paid to the spatial disaggregation of political conflict and violence, significantly less attention has been paid to disaggregating and ultimately sequencing events in time. Many studies investigate the effects of variables that are temporally invariant or slow to change, such as elevation or forest cover (e.g. Rustad et al., 2008), or static measures of temporally variant variables such as ethnic concentration or inequality (e.g. Cederman et al., 2009). Others look at changes in levels of violence occurring over large temporal units, such as years (e.g. Fjelde and Hultman, 2010). By aggregating government and dissident behavior within temporal units, such subnational work fails to correct many of the issues and complications identified in cross-national research or account for the possible effects of event sequencing on conflict escalation and de-escalation.

### *Conceptual limitations*

In addition to operational limitations, the structure of our existing data collection efforts has conceptually limited subnational analyses of repression and dissent. In part owing to data structures that treat all events equally, existing subnational analyses have ignored possible explanations for the relationship between dissident behavior and repression such as the possibility that influential events mark a shift in patterns of repression and dissent (Hess and Martin, 2006). Within existing research there is a practice of treating every event as if it is essentially the same—differentiated only by its scope, type or frequency. Beyond these characteristics, however, it is expected that all events have comparable influences. This is highly problematic because all events are not the same to the actors of the conflict and thus the impact of highly salient events on the likelihood of violent behavior must be taken into account.

Davenport (1995) makes this distinction in his discussion of the empirical confusion between “rates” (i.e. discrete acts of repressive activity) and “levels” (i.e. distinct categorical values that represented cumulative practices). The former captures the amount of repressive effort exerted at a particular time/place (e.g. Davenport, 1995), whereas the latter captures the aftereffect of previous effort but also its overall scope and intensity (e.g. Poe and Tate, 1994). One gets from the first to the second with a precipitous increase in the scope, type or frequency of repressive activity. The point of the increase though is not that things get worse but that the situation represents a qualitatively different one than before the shift occurred. We contend that the mechanisms linking repressive events and dissident behavior may

operate differently within the context of varying levels of applied repression (see Falletti and Lynch, 2009). Without attending to such matters and identifying phase shifts in levels of repression, we could potentially miss fundamental adjustments in both government and challenger behavior and misspecify the causal relationships linking the two.

Collectively, the operational and conceptual problems identified above account for the inability of scholars studying subnational conflict to resolve the various deficiencies of the conflict–repression nexus. Emphasis on single sources and types of events has historically limited our ability to overcome source bias and draw broader conclusions about patterns of violent and nonviolent behavior. Without greater temporal disaggregation, we have been unable to break down the various action–reaction sequences that constitute the nexus; and without attention to the links between constitutive events and categorical shifts in conflict behavior, understanding of the ways that events concatenate into categorical shifts in conflict behavior has remained limited, as have explanations for how changes in the broader conflict shape local levels of repression and dissent.

In order to further this study and address these operational and conceptual limitations, we seek to advance our understanding of the relevant topic through a new dataset on the Troubles in Northern Ireland from 1968 through 1998 entitled the Northern Ireland Research Initiative. Using multiple sources and including both lethal and nonlethal events disaggregated temporally, NIRI demonstrates the ways in which broadly collected subnational conflict data can be used to overcome the limitations in our existing analyses of the conflict–repression nexus.

## The Northern Ireland Research Initiative

Since the beginning of the conflict, commonly known as the Troubles, there has been a great deal written about who has done what to whom. Indeed, there are very few conflagrations in world history that have been studied as much (see the Conflict Archive on the Internet bibliography<sup>4</sup>). This includes a series of studies designed to explicitly catalog the violence that took place including compendiums detailing *all* deaths that occurred throughout the conflict (e.g. Sutton, 2004) as well as efforts to catalog the experiences of particular communities (e.g. Ardoyne Commemoration Project, 2002). Furthermore, a limited number of scholars have examined other forms of contention during the Troubles, such as punishment or sectarian attacks on symbolic targets (e.g. Jarman, 2004; LaFree et al., 2009).

Progress in the collection of Troubles-related data requires significantly more disaggregation across both time and space, as well as the ability to systematically gather data across multiple forms of violence (e.g. both lethal and nonlethal). Toward these ends, in 2007 we began NIRI. Northern Ireland is a particularly fruitful area to situate our analysis because of the range of violations which took place over a concentrated geographic area, the variation in patterns of conflict and repression over time based on changes in government and dissident behavior and the availability of diverse sources of data from multiple actors across the entire span of the conflict. Over the past five years, NIRI has engaged in a series of data collection projects designed to capture the patterns of conflict and violence that took place at multiple levels during the Troubles. Using numerous, partially overlapping, data sources, the goal of these efforts is to identify and catalog all events from all actors that took place in Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1998. The result is an unrivaled events database that can be used to develop and test theories of why states repress, why dissidents protest, how

governments and challengers interact with each other, why violence occurs, which type of violence occurs, how violence was ultimately replaced by nonviolent claims-making and inevitably what were the political, economic and social aftereffects of the Troubles. Conceived in this manner, NIRI presents major advances in the collection of data on political violence across a number of dimensions.

First, NIRI has made great strides in the understanding of conflict broadly as well as the Troubles specifically by collecting data from a number of sources. Most notably, the project has gathered thousands of records from British government security forces as well as thousands of additional reports by a local human rights organization, the Associates for Legal Justice, to complement the information available from media sources. The nonstate, non-media sources complement existing newspaper event data by presenting greater coverage of rural incidents, capturing a greater number of smaller and under-represented incidents (e.g. bomb scares in addition to lethal bomb attacks), cataloging political as well as military events, and capturing alternative perspectives on the different incidents of violence.<sup>5</sup>

Second, rather than limiting our collection to deadly acts or just to violent acts, all forms of contentious political activity were coded into the database (i.e. protests, strikes and boycotts, protest-policing and surveillance activities). The end result is the coding of more than 70 different event types ranging from the distribution of information through to torture and terrorism (see the online appendix for a complete listing).

Third, the dataset moves away from the traditional conflict variables and records a series of important factors yet to be considered by conflict research that range from the micro (such as recording the connections between individual events as well as the connections between perpetrators) to the macro (such as the changing patterns of counter-insurgent strategy). At the same time, the identities of the perpetrators as well as (any potential) victims are coded along multiple dimensions, from their organizational affiliation and their degree of involvement to their religious identity. Furthermore, each event is referenced to the street on which it took place and the day on which it occurred. Recognizing that the level at which we analyze political conflict can influence our conclusions, the aim is to generate a record of events as spatially and temporally disaggregated as possible so that interested scholars can choose to analyze these events at units that are theoretically meaningful. All sources are coded for the same variables and using the same criteria, ensuring comparability across source.

As we assembled our database, the various sources were brought together, de-duplicated (i.e. all redundant entries were eliminated) and arrayed into a time-series of contentious political activity resulting in over 11,000 incidents occurring in Northern Ireland. Below, we use the NIRI dataset to demonstrate the utility of this type of data collection effort for addressing the effect of critical events and phase shifts on the conflict–repression nexus.

## **NIRI and the conflict–repression nexus**

As discussed above, despite the advances within the field of conflict and repression studies, many questions regarding the relationship between these two activities have been left unanswered (Davenport, 1995). Although numerous unexplored hypotheses could be examined with NIRI, within the current research we focus on the relationship between the conflict–repression nexus and “critical” events (or phase shifts)—a conceptual limitation within existing data, addressed above, which results from the conflation of events of varying political or social significance. This analysis demonstrates the utility of macro-level disaggregated

conflict data and the application of NIRI for questions pertaining to the conflict–repression nexus.

Our presumptions regarding the influence of critical, precipitous increases of state repression are quite straightforward. Separating out discrete acts of repressive activity (rates) and cumulative practices (levels) of political repressive behavior allows us to identify the potentially divergent effects of each, while removing previously held assumptions that challengers are only responsive to short-term fluctuations in applied rates of political repression. Studies assuming that the influence of repressive action on subsequent dissent only occurs through the channel of repressive rates ignore the opportunity of challengers to react to changes in their strategic environment. Our argument is that not only do challengers respond to changes in the *levels* of repressive action, but also that the confusion of rates and levels of repression has led to a misidentification of repression's effects.

Using data from NIRI we are able to address the operational and conceptual issues raised above in order to disentangle these effects. Operationally, we employ the NIRI data to resolve issues related to single source bias, overreliance on particular events and temporal disaggregation. Conceptually, our analysis focuses on identifying changes in levels of applied repression and examining the results of these changes distinct from the effects of tactical changes in the rate of repression. Because NIRI's data collection is ongoing, the findings presented below represent data from only a subsection of the full project from the years 1968–1974.<sup>6</sup> For the following analyses we use data from four sources: (1) a new coding of *Lost Lives* (McKittrick et al., 1999) presenting an events-based description of all individuals killed during the Troubles; (2) a record of human rights violations coded from witness statements collected by the Associates for Legal Justice; (3) coding of a community cataloging of conflict-related activities, *Ardoyne: The Untold Truth* (Ardoyne Commemoration Project, 2002); and (4) a new coding of Deutsch and Magowan's (1975) media-based chronology of Northern Ireland events. All forms of violent and nonviolent activity coded from these sources are employed in the analysis and each event is temporally referenced to the week in which it took place.

## Findings

Before we can examine how phase shifts in the overall levels of repression might influence the effects of repressive events on dissent, we first identify when shifts in the level of political repression in Northern Ireland took place. To identify these shifts we use a modified version of a temporal fixed effects model estimating repressive activity.<sup>7</sup> This method identifies lasting shifts in repressive action from the month in which they began through the end of the analyzed period.<sup>8</sup>

With this procedure, we identified two phase shifts in the application of political repression between 1968 and 1974. Both phase shifts identified had positive coefficients in the analysis, suggesting a successive series of shifts toward increased repression as the British slowly ratcheted up their presence in Northern Ireland. Interestingly, the months identified are consistent with qualitative accounts of changes in the application of British policy in Northern Ireland, which provides some external validation to our analysis.<sup>9</sup> The econometric method employed within our research, however, is a systematized accounting of identified trends that is less prone to historical selection bias. It can also be readily adapted to address other contexts.

**Table 1.** The effects of phase shifts and repressive actions on dissent

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Repression <sub>-1</sub>	0.06* (0.03)	-0.24 (0.29)	0.02 (0.03)	0.11 (0.28)
Phase shift I: August 1971		0.63 (0.55)		-2.43** (0.78)
Phase shift II: July 1972			2.77*** (0.64)	4.47*** (0.89)
Phase shift I × Repression <sub>-1</sub>		0.29 (0.29)		-0.14 (0.28)
Phase shift II × Repression <sub>-1</sub>			0.08 (0.05)	0.19** (0.06)
Dissent <sub>t-1</sub>	0.34*** (0.06)	0.32*** (0.07)	0.25*** (0.06)	0.24*** (0.06)
Dissent <sub>t-2</sub>	0.18** (0.06)	0.15* (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	0.04 (0.07)
Constant	1.43 (0.35)	1.36 (0.41)	0.32 (0.41)	0.25 (0.46)
N	243	243	243	243
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.23	0.24	0.29	0.32

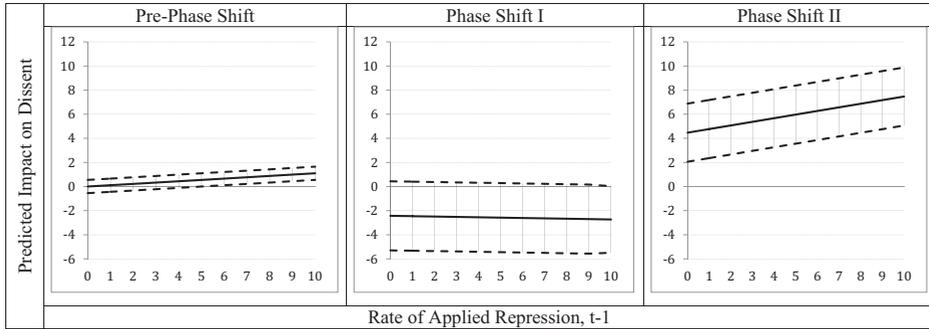
\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed test).

Having identified phase shifts in repressive activity, we proceed to investigate how these phase shifts influence the responsiveness of dissent to fluctuations in the applied rates of repressive events. We analyze time-series data of weekly counts of activity undertaken by the IRA (and affiliated Republican groups) as well as political repression committed by the Northern Ireland and British governments against them.<sup>10</sup> Table 1 displays the results of a series of models estimating the effects of repressive action (such as roadblocks, house searches, arrests, beatings, protest policing and shooting) on dissent (such as leafleting, protests, civil disobedience, riots and bombings). The models identify the effects of both rates and levels of repression by the British and Northern Ireland political authorities on subsequent IRA actions.<sup>11</sup>

To allow us to compare our findings to the approach adopted by existing research, model 1 displays the results of an analysis that *ignores* the potential for phase shifts in repressive action (the current research standard). All repressive actions in the model are identified by *rates* of repressive events occurring in the month prior to dissident actions. When analyzed, the model reveals a statistically significant and positive correlation between the rate of repressive activity occurring in the prior month and subsequent acts of dissent, confirming that repression has escalatory influences on dissent, what is referred to as the “backlash” effect.

However, as we argued above, repression may influence dissent not simply through fluctuations in rates of repressive events but also through phase shifts in levels of repressive action. Models 2–4 in Table 1 address this conjecture by evaluating the effects of both rates of repressive actions and phase shifts in levels of repression on dissident behavior. Including phase shifts in our models provides valuable clues as to how repression influences dissent both in Northern Ireland specifically and during conflict more broadly. Looking at model 2, including the first phase shift along with an interaction of lagged rates of repressive behavior and the level of repression, the previously identified correlation between rates of repressive activity and subsequent dissent disappears. In short, when levels are considered, rates are no longer important. In model 3, levels are significantly related to dissident behavior, while rates of political repression remain insignificantly correlated with IRA/challenger behavior.

The most interesting results are reported in model 4, which includes the two phase shifts. Both phase shifts are significantly related to dissent, but the direction varies between them. The first phase shift is significantly related to a decrease in dissent while phase shift II is



**Figure 1.** The impact of increasing rates of repression on dissent.

related to an escalation of challenger behavior. Rates of repression, meanwhile, are positively and significantly related to IRA/challenger behavior, but only in the context of the second phase shift.

Figure 1 displays the interactive effects of increasing *rates* of applied repression under varying repressive *levels* as estimated in model 4. For each graph, the solid line represents the estimated effects of increasing rates of repression under the different phase shifts, while the dotted lines present the 95% confidence intervals. The figure demonstrates how rates and levels of repression can interact to produce widely varied influences on dissent. Prior to the first phase shift, rates of repression have a weakly positive impact on dissent. During the first phase shift, increasing rates of repression appear to have no impact on dissent. Finally, during the second phase shift, dissent is significantly higher even during low repressive rates. As rates increase, dissent escalates more steeply than when rates of repression increased during the pre-phase shift levels.

Taken together, the evidence presented suggests that the temporal reflexes of dissidents are responsive to both measurements of state repression. Clearly the findings challenge prior research on the conflict–repression nexus. Existing research focused solely on rates of repression would miss the dynamics identified within the current study. The omitted variables bias would therefore lead to a misidentification of repression’s effects that has helped contribute to the inconsistent identification of government coercion, a limitation NIRI is able to overcome.

## Conclusions: future research and uses of NIRI

While recent subnational work within conflict studies has gone far in addressing some of the major questions of contention, this work has failed to adequately address the relationship between conflict and repression. Within this article, we argued that a principal reason for this deficiency is attributable to both operational and conceptual limitations of existing data collection. In order to address current limitations, we introduce a new data collection effort called the Northern Ireland Research Initiative that includes all type of contentious activity (both violent and nonviolent) across multiple sources and across time/space between the years of 1968 and 1998. Through a more expansive definition of contention as well as the use of creative, nontraditional social science data sources, we are able to expand our

understanding of the conflict–repression nexus and assist in further developing the subnational turn in conflict studies.

Using NIRI in a pilot analysis, we find that there are interesting as well as important phase shifts in the relationship between conflict and repression brought on by “critical events” (especially precipitous increases in state repression) which enhance the level of government coercive action. The findings lend support to our argument that, not only does the IRA respond to changes in the applied levels of repressive action by the British and Northern Irish governments, but also the confusion of rates and levels of repression within the existing literature has led to a misidentification of the effects of this repression.

The insights provided from this investigation are crucial for several reasons. For one, the analysis has implications for how we understand the relationship between the context in which repressive events occur and the relation between individual acts of repression and dissident behavior. This helps to provide insight into how we think about the application of repressive behavior and its effects. For one, dissidents appear to be influenced to a greater extent by overall rates of applied repression than they are by fluctuations in rates of repressive events. As a result, fluctuations in the rates of repressive events might be better understood as the local-level responses of individual agents than as the larger strategic interest of putting down dissent (e.g. Earl and Soul, 2006).

Our findings have specific implications for the Northern Ireland case. Through a sequential analysis of the NIRI data we empirically identify critical shifts in the ways in which the government responded to Republican threats. Both Internment (phase shift I) and Operation Motorman (phase shift II) represent fundamental changes in the way that the government conducted the conflict and subsequently influenced the IRA’s response. However, the results of the above analysis challenge some conventional understandings of these phases of the Troubles. Internment is commonly understood as a failed repressive policy, with backlash from the action leading to the imposition of direct rule from London (Coogan, 2000). Operation Motorman, by contrast, is typically viewed as a largely successful effort by the state to utilize repression to take back Republican-controlled territory (Dewar, 1985). Such findings are based almost exclusively on categorical understandings of levels of repression. By providing a systematic analysis of rates as well as levels, our study presents a challenge to such positions and suggests that one cannot adequately capture the impact of repression by addressing levels (or rates, e.g. Lafree et al., 2009) of government actions alone.

Methodologically, our findings suggest that it is only through disaggregation that we can better develop a sense of what is taking place in the world of conflict/contentious politics. The current path undertaken within the subnational conflict movement should be continued and, indeed, deepened by developing new data and methodologies to allow the further study of the actors and activities of interest. Our research suggests that scholars need to consider tactical repertoires, adaptation, phase shifts and lagged effects very carefully as they consider why conflict occurs as well as when it ends. The assumptions of homogenized tactical selection as well as event and temporal equivalence should no longer be accepted without explicit examination. Furthermore there should be some coordination across subnational efforts so that, at a minimum, comparisons can be made across projects. Crucially, however, all of this disaggregation cannot aid in accounting for conflict without greater theoretical understanding of the links between micro-actions and macro-strategy. This study provides a first step in this direction, but clearly more theory is necessary. Data such as NIRI are crucial as scholarship begins to advance in this direction.

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## Notes

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2. Interestingly, the impact of political dissent, terrorism and insurgency on government behavior is much clearer and more consistently identified (e.g. Davenport, 2007).
3. In so doing, this community joined scholars interested in protest and social movements who were already engaged in subnational variation (e.g. Davenport et al., 2011; Earl and Soule, 2006; McAdam, 1982).
4. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/discrimination/read.htm>.
5. Additional information on each source can be found on the NIRI website (<http://niresearchinitiative.weebly.com>).
6. Events omitted from this study are those that fall outside the temporal boundaries of our analysis and those perpetrated by actors other than the British government or the IRA.
7. The model was adapted to regress weekly counts of incidents of repression on dummy variables identifying each month from the start of the Troubles in August 1968 through December 1974. Months were employed to avoid degrees of freedom problems. To better account for long-term shifts in repressive policy, the dummy variables for each month were modified. The month variables are still coded dichotomously, but instead of being coded 1 only on the month they identify, they are coded 1 for that month and each month following it.
8. The method assumes that phase shifts in repressive action are permanent, lasting from the month in which they were initiated through the end of the period under analysis. Future research could identify how shifts in levels of repressive action potentially phase out over time.
9. The first shift identified corresponds to the introduction of Internment, which began in August 1971. The second shift corresponds with the deployment of Operation Motorman. A third month, January 1972, was significant at the 0.10 level. January 1972 corresponds to the actions of Bloody Sunday.
10. The Box–Jenkins methodology was employed to identify any potential auto-regressive or moving-average components of our dependent variable, dissent (Enders, 2004). The analysis revealed that weekly counts of dissent display a two-stage lagged auto-regressive property but do not appear to have a moving average component. Accordingly, our ordinary least squares models estimate the effects of lagged repression on subsequent dissent while incorporating the auto-regressive properties of dissident actions. STATA version 10 was used for this analysis.
11. Ordinary least squares results are reported for ease of interpretation. The analysis was replicated using an autoregressive Poisson form (Brandt and Williams, 2001). Results proved substantively similar.

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