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# *Multi-Dimensional Threat Perception and State Repression: An Inquiry Into Why States Apply Negative Sanctions\**

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*Theory:* Regimes respond to domestic threats with political repression. The precise nature of the domestic threat itself, however, is subject to discussion.

*Hypothesis:* State repression is a function of either a unidimensional conception of domestic threats (i.e., where there is one attribute of political conflict considered by the regime) or one that is multidimensional in character (i.e., where there are several attributes considered), conditioned by certain political-economic characteristics: democracy, economic development, coercive capacity, dependency and lagged repression.

*Methods:* A pooled cross-sectional time series analysis of 53 countries from 1948 to 1982.

*Results:* Three different aspects of political conflict (conflict frequency, strategic variety, and deviance from cultural norm) are statistically significant in their relationship to repression, supporting the multidimensional conception of domestic threats. Additionally, the degree to which the government is democratic significantly alters the pattern of relationships between political conflict and repressive behavior.

## **Introduction**

Implicit within most studies that assess the impact of conflict on repression<sup>1</sup> is the assumption that governments generally respond to only one

\*All data employed within this analysis may be obtained from ICPSR. Documentation necessary to replicate the analyses can be obtained from the author. All statistical analyses were conducted with SAS, with some exploratory analyses being conducted within STATA version 3.1.

<sup>1</sup>To avoid redundancy I will use "conflict" interchangeably with "dissent," "dissident behavior" and "political opposition."

Repression is defined as government regulatory action directed against those challenging existing power relationships. This is similar to Goldstein's definition (1978, 1983) where, "political repression consists of government action which grossly discriminates against persons or organizations viewed as presenting a fundamental challenge to existing power relationships or key government policies, because of their perceived political beliefs" (1978, xvi).

To decrease redundancy within the text "repression" will be used interchangeably with "repressive behavior" and "negative sanctions."

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aspect of dissident behavior—particularly, the frequency of the events.<sup>2</sup> According to this literature, as the number of conflict events directed against the state increase, so do the repressive efforts of the regime to control this behavior.<sup>3</sup> The exact nature of the relationship is believed to be both direct and linear.<sup>4</sup>

This assumption of unidimensional threat perception and response is extremely important to the study of political repression. If accepted, it leads us to conclude that regimes are not only myopic in focus, paying attention to only one aspect of dissent in its use of repressive behavior, but also uniform with regard to how they will respond to relatively diverse manifestations of domestic unrest. Within this perspective, political conflict would be responded to similarly (with repression) in the Tiananmen Square incident of June 1989 in China and in the Kent State incident of May 1970 in the United States. These situations were perhaps comparable in terms of the number of conflict events that occurred but definitely not with regard to the number of different strategies that were applied by dissidents, the targets selected for protest or the magnitude of conflictual activity relative to previous experience. With reference to these criteria, the threat posed to the regime was different in each case.

In light of the examples provided and extant cases, the assumption of unidimensional threat perception and response should be somewhat difficult to accept even on an intuitive level. Considering available work on this subject, the assumption also counters several arguments made within the literature itself. Directly concerning this issue, numerous authors (Stohl and Lopez 1984; Eberwein 1987; Gurr 1986a, 1986b; Ziegenhagen 1986; Franks 1989; Hoover and Kowalewski 1992) maintain that repressive responses to dissent vary significantly according to two factors: 1) different attributes of the conflict behavior encountered, and 2) the structure of the political economy (i.e., system type, economic development and so forth). To these authors, domestic threats are not unidimensional phenomena but rather multidimensional, defined, and responded to differently across contexts.

What attributes of political conflict are actually considered by regimes in their classification of domestic threats? What relationship do the different

<sup>2</sup>Only one measure of conflict is ever employed within these analyses. Some have represented this variable dichotomously as well, where overall frequency counts determine whether or not conflict is significant (worthy of behavioral regulation) or not (Cingranelli 1992; Poe and Tate 1992).

<sup>3</sup>I would highlight that I am addressing this relationship as a long-term structural issue and not as a short-term logistical one similar to that discussed by Lichbach and Gurr (1981).

<sup>4</sup>There are some authors who suggest that non-linear relationships exist as well (Duvall and Shamir 1980; Jackson et al. 1978).

aspects of political conflict have with repression? What political-economic characteristics affect the identification of threatening behavior and the government's repressive responses to it? Using 53 countries for the time period 1948 to 1982, the present study addresses these questions. The analysis itself is made up of several components.

To begin, I identify four attributes of political conflict possibly considered by regimes: 1) *basic frequency counts of events*, 2) *the presence of violence*, 3) *the variety of strategies employed by dissidents* and 4) *current behavior relative to the cultural norm*.<sup>5</sup> This approach encompasses the most often examined dimension of conflict (frequency) as well as three additional attributes. The second component of the study addresses the determinants of "repressive propensity," i.e., the degree to which a given regime classifies behavior as threatening and responds with repression. Drawn from the literature, these contextual factors include system type (i.e., democracy), coercive capacity, economic development and dependency. The third component of the study is an empirical investigation with a pooled cross-sectional time-series design. Here, in the context of a multivariate model, I analyze two relationships: 1) the impact different aspects of political conflict have on repressive behavior, and 2) the contribution of various state characteristics to the application of repression. The conclusion summarizes the relevant findings of both of these analyses and identifies the practical implications that follow from them. Specifically, I address the importance of the study for future investigations of repression and also how these results improve our understanding of domestic political processes in general.

### **Political Conflict and Domestic Threat Perception**

Mass political behavior directed against the state, its policies and its practices is generally viewed as being a threat to those in authority. Its manifestation can disrupt society, and it can undermine the position of those within power. In an effort to regulate this threat and reduce the possibility that these outcomes might take place, governments often use political repression: e.g., censorship, political restrictions. This behavior is expected to neutralize political opponents and/or increase the costs of the behavior to such a large extent that it is no longer deemed a worthwhile strategy of protest. There has been a great deal of theoretical discussion about this causal linkage (Gurr 1986a, 1986b, 1989; Tilly 1978; Oommen 1990; Hoover and Kowalewski 1992; Eberwein 1987; Lopez 1986) as well as empirical support (Markus and Nesvold 1972; Hibbs 1973; Goldstein 1978; 1983;

<sup>5</sup>Deaths by collective protest are not used here because of the possible contamination of political repression.

Muller 1985; Davis and Ward 1990; Davenport 1991; Alfatooni and Allen 1991).<sup>6</sup>

Although this relationship is widely accepted in the literature, the analyses conducted on it have been somewhat limited in terms of scope. Generally, the focus of past research has been on the number of conflict events that take place, and, as a result, empirical analyses of domestic threat and repressive response are usually based on measures of frequency (alternatively referred to as intensity). Carefully considering this practice, however, one sees the use of this measure may be more a reflection of poor conceptualization than plausible alternatives. Regimes may identify the seriousness of domestic threats not simply in accordance with the frequency of conflict events identified but rather in terms of several different aspects of conflict viewed simultaneously (Sorokin 1957; Chadwick and Firestone 1972; Ziegenhagen 1986; Lichbach 1987). When particular combinations of these attributes are apparent, the magnitude of threat perceived and the likelihood that repression will be applied is increased. Correspondingly, when another combination of these attributes is apparent, the magnitude of threat perceived is deemed minimal and the use of repressive behavior is less likely.

Considering this multidimensional alternative, I address three aspects of conflict in addition to frequency: 1) the presence of violence, 2) the variety of strategies used by dissidents and 3) deviations from culturally accepted levels of dissent.<sup>7</sup> Each of these measures is important to the study of political repression because they enhance our understanding of what might actually constitute a threat to a regime. Consideration of these factors might shed additional light upon why repression is applied, for our attention is directed towards the number of acts that challenge those in authority as well as the overall level of aggression manifested within these acts, the number of different strategies that are applied by political opponents, and the diverse processes of dissident mobilization involved.

<sup>6</sup>There are those who find that repression increases political conflict (For example, Ziegenhagen 1986). This does not mean repression is not intended to regulate political challenges. On the contrary, it simply means that it is not always effective.

<sup>7</sup>I do not identify dissident behavior that is simply "out of vogue," i.e., threats that do not pose a threat, but are ideologically not advocated by the regime. Primarily this is because of the difficulty in identifying this with the existing data. On the contrary, I maintain the more constraining assumption that governments pay attention to numerous logistical factors identified with antisystemic behavior. This accepts that even if particular ideologies advocated by dissidents are acceptable to the regime, it is still possible for those challenging the government to overstep the governments tolerance for antisystemic behavior. These "politically correct" groups may simply have a wider berth than one that espouses ideologies that are not acceptable, but the point on state responsiveness still remains.

*Identifying Different Aspects of Conflict Behavior*

The first conflict attribute I consider is the presence of violence. This characteristic is important because many authors have identified substantive differences between violent and nonviolent conflict behavior with regard to its effect on negative sanctions (Hibbs 1973; Duvall and Shamir 1980; Gupta et al. 1993). Generally, the results of these analyses find that violent strategies of conflict provoke a greater repressive response from the regime. Two reasons are consistently offered for this.

First, violent strategies of dissent usually entail the greatest amount of threat to the political system. Using these strategies, dissidents might kill members of the citizenry, create a situation of social chaos or provoke those who are not already participating in the antisystemic behavior to move against the government because it can no longer provide safety from non-state actors (Mason and Krane 1989). In an attempt to deter these possible outcomes, the regime would be expected to increase the use of repression.

The second reason why repressive behavior is more likely when conflict is violent concerns the perceived legitimacy of using repression. When dissidents are portrayed as being dangerous and threatening to other citizens' lives, the regime is in a better position to attempt behavioral regulation. The citizenry would be more likely to see the government's behavior as legitimate, and they may even call for it themselves. This would tend to increase the likelihood of its application because less resistance to the particular government policy would be apparent.

When conflict is not violent, on the other hand, the situation is much different. In this context, perhaps unable to see the threat posed by those challenging the regime, citizens may respond negatively to repression being applied to nonviolent protest behavior: i.e., they may join the protestors or lose faith in the political system.<sup>8</sup> This resistance would tend to decrease the likelihood of negative sanctions because the overall legitimacy of the government might come into question. As a consequence, we would expect the use of repression to be much lower when conflict was nonviolent (if it would be applied at all).

Concerning the second conflict attribute, strategic variety, regimes should pay attention to the number of different strategies employed by those challenging it.<sup>9</sup> As opposed to simply paying attention to the number of times particular events occur or the presence of violence within conflict behavior, the focus of the regime is directed towards the numerous means

<sup>8</sup>Some social movements even count on this response to further their objectives (i.e., the civil rights movement).

<sup>9</sup>There may be some weighting scheme employed by governments where certain types of events are given more attention than others. This possibility is not examined here.

of dissent used by the opposition. Several authors, under different labels, discuss this general concern: Tilly's (1978) "repertoire" of dissident behavior, Eckstein's (1980) "alternative channels" of political participation, Ziegenhagen's (1986) "dominant" and "general" variety, Lichbach's (1987) "tactical choices" and Morris' (1993) "multiple tactics."

As conceived, the relationship of strategic variety to repression is straightforward. If the number of strategies brought against the regime is low, then the magnitude of the threat perceived is minimal. If only one or a few strategies of conflict are being used by dissidents, the regime would be able to bring all of its coercive expertise to bear on this limited activity. This diminishes the overall amount of repressive behavior necessary to protect the status quo and decreases the amount of repression that would be applied.

If the number of strategies brought against the regime is high, on the other hand, then the magnitude of perceived threat is increased.<sup>10</sup> Here, the government is confronted with a diversity of antisystemic behavior, each with its own impact upon the domestic political-economy. For example, general strikes may paralyze industrial production while guerrilla warfare may terrorize the populace. Under these conditions, the process of behavioral regulation is "stretched thin" because different strategies of dissent, different targets, and different outcomes must be addressed simultaneously. In an effort to counter this increased variety, political repression should increase as well.<sup>11</sup> Analyzed within two empirical studies (Tilly 1978; Ziegenhagen 1986), these causal linkages have generally been supported quite well.

The final attribute of political conflict addressed here concerns cultural limits of dissident behavior. "Cultural limits" refer to the particular amount of political conflict that the regime will allow to take place before it applies repressive behavior.<sup>12</sup> The parameters of this code could be communicated by numerous means: i.e., explicit enumeration within the constitution (Volgyes 1978; Franks 1989, 6 and 147), mass perception of political/civil liber-

<sup>10</sup>Generally this relationship is conceived of as being linear in form although different responses (i.e., nonlinear relationships) have been identified (Jackson et al. 1978; Duvall and Shamir 1980).

<sup>11</sup>Frequency in repression is thus equated with regulatory effort (Duvall and Shamir 1980; Ziegenhagen 1986; Eberwein 1987; Hoover and Kowalewski 1992).

<sup>12</sup>Normal political behavior and dissent (or antisystemic behavior) is thus not determined by some objective criteria (as suggested by Dogenharat and Day [1983]), but rather by an interplay of those challenging and those protecting the status quo. For useful discussion of the process by which different components of the political economy establish normal/acceptable and deviant/unacceptable behavior, see Wilkens (1964) for the impact of culture and Franks (1989) for the impact of the legal system, regime type and ideology.



ties (Gibbs 1981) or past experiences with dissent and repressive response (Dedrick 1978; Liska 1992). Regardless of how the code is communicated, however, as long as conflict stays within this realm of acceptability, the government does not respond with repression. Indeed, given the acceptance of manifested conflict, the regime does not even perceive that it is being threatened.

If, however, the cultural limit is violated, i.e., an event (or group of events) is above the cultural norm of behavioral deviance, then the situation changes markedly.<sup>13</sup> In this context, manifest conflict sends a message to the regime that it is directly being challenged and political repression would likely be increased as a means of reestablishing the culturally defined parameters of acceptable behavior.<sup>14</sup>

Addressed implicitly within numerous studies (Lichbach and Gurr 1981; Muller 1985; Blalock 1989) and explicitly within one (Franks 1989), the relationships described above have not been investigated systematically in any empirical sense. Consequently, I have no statistical support for the relationship identified above. The literature has provided enough information for at least a tentative analysis to be conducted of this relationship.

Summarizing the previous discussion, I propose that domestic threats are composed of four elements: frequency, the presence of violence, strategic variety and cultural deviance. The greatest amount of threat to the regime and the most likely use of repression is expected when conflict frequency and variety are high, behavior is violent and conflict rates are above the cultural norm. Within this situation, the greatest measure of domestic threat is noted because each variable is approaching its highest value on the attribute scale. When conflict frequency and variety are low, on the other hand, behavior is nonviolent and existing conflict is below the culturally defined boundary of acceptable deviance, then the amount of domestic threat perceived and the use of repression expected is low. Domestic threats are minimal because each variable is approaching its lowest value on the attribute scale.

<sup>13</sup>For an interesting discussion see Pfuhl (1986).

<sup>14</sup>In justifying this government response, the remarks of one Chilean leader are particularly informative: "Social environment and a correct judicial order require certain restrictions on individual liberties, not only to preserve the personal freedom of others, but for the common good . . . Nor are all rights of the same hierarchy. Even among natural rights, some are more fundamentally important than others. They may usually all be exercised simultaneously, but this is impossible when society becomes sick. The latter situation is precisely a symptom of political abnormality requiring an exceptional juridical regime in which the exercise of some rights is limited or can be suspended in order to ensure the free exercise of other important ones" (Lopez 1986, 84).



### Explaining Variance in Domestic Threat Perception and the Use of State Repression

Understanding the causal linkage identified above, one should not assume that the application of repressive behavior in response to domestic threats would be comparable across all regimes. As Duvall and Shamir (1980, 160) suggest, “the repressive character of the government (i.e., the likelihood that repression would be applied) is greater accordingly as the government perceives more situations as threats, or when it views threats as more seriously threatening, and hence is disposed to respond more coercively.”<sup>15</sup> What causes the perception of domestic threats to vary, however, predisposing the regime towards the use of political repression?<sup>16</sup> Fundamentally, I would argue the difference is determined by four state characteristics: system type, coercive capacity, economic development and dependency. Drawn from the literature, each of these factors is important because they facilitate the identification of different contextual elements that impact the government perceptions of domestic threats as well as the likelihood that repressive behavior would be applied. By examining each of these in turn and its relationship to repressive propensity, the significance of these various characteristics should become clearer.

#### *Political-Economic Contexts, Threat Perception and Political Repression*

When the presence of democracy increases within a nation-state, the likelihood of threats being perceived by the government and repression being applied is decreased. Supported by numerous empirical studies (Hibbs 1973; Ziegenhagen 1986; Henderson 1991), this relationship is usually attributed to the fact that democracies are generally more legitimate forms of government as well as more tolerant of dissident behavior. These factors make the government less likely to perceive threats from conflict (however conceived) because they enjoy relatively high levels of “diffuse support” (Easton 1975).<sup>17</sup> Additionally, they would be less likely to use repression because the regime would be prepared to allow certain levels

<sup>15</sup>This argument about perception and repression is shared in many different contexts: Buzan (1983) in both the international and domestic realms, Herman and Herman (1989) in the international realm and Oommen (1990) in the domestic realm.

<sup>16</sup>As Lopez (1986, 75) suggests, “[the repressive] policy of government unfolds in circumstances far more complex than [simply] challenges to rule . . . Rather, such an action would appear to be a ‘full decision,’ in that it occurs as a choice within a particular setting and one weighted in light of other available choices.”

<sup>17</sup>This would also tend to decrease the likelihood that the regime would be challenged in any substantive fashion.

of domestic unrest to take place, thus relaxing the natural tension that exists when mass protest behavior does occur.<sup>18</sup>

The second factor considered, coercive capacity, is also important to the regime's perception of domestic threats and their use of repressive behavior. Two explanations in particular have been supported within numerous case studies (Dallin and Breslauer 1970; Walker and Lang 1988; Zwick 1984) and empirical analyses (Hibbs, 1973; Ziegenhagen 1986; Davenport 1991). The first addresses a more strategic issue while the second addresses an organizational matter.

Concerning the first explanation, by providing the regime with the resources for repression, the costs of its implementation were decreased (Laswell, 1941; Randle 1981; Goldstein 1983; Gurr 1986a; Davis and Ward 1990; Walker and Lang 1988).<sup>19</sup> This reduced cost made repressive strategies more attractive to those in authority because more areas and more individuals could be subject to the regulatory efforts of the regime. This in turn increased the likelihood that repression would be applied against political dissidents because the application of repression itself was deemed more feasible.

With reference to the second explanation, once repression was applied and coercive structures were put in place, some form of bureaucratic "law of instrument" would go into effect (Gurr 1986a, 1986b, 1989; Seligson 1987; Mitchell and McCormick 1988). In the midst of this law, the coercive apparatus seeks to justify its continued existence and increase its access to resources (social status, monetary allocations, political influence and technological equipment). As a result of this pursuit, the organization would become more attentive to different aspects of antisystemic behavior (i.e., frequency, variety, etc.), and it would consistently lobby the government to respond repressively. Both actions assist the organization in meeting its objectives (i.e., continued existence and access to resources) and also increase the likelihood that negative sanctions would be applied.

The third political-economic characteristic with an impact on repres-

<sup>18</sup>In this context, the situation is placed into somewhat of a "gray" area. As Franks (1989) suggests, there are two dimensions that regimes employ to understand political conflict and domestic threats. The dimensions of concern are: legal-illegal and legitimate-illegitimate. The situation addressed by Easton refers to the legal-legitimate category. When conflict is in this category, it is unclear when a threat exists and when a regime would be justified in applying repression. As opposed to this situation, however, within the illegal-illegitimate quadrant all behavior is unacceptable to the regime and repression is "justifiable" in every case. Here, the perception of threat and the justification for applying repressive behavior is more straightforward.

<sup>19</sup>This diminishes the overall price of its implementation, as it becomes cheap relative to other options.

sive propensity is economic development (Banks 1985; Henderson 1991; Mitchell and McCormick 1988). When development of the economy is high, threats are less likely to be perceived and repression is less likely to be used (Goldstein 1983). Since basic human needs (including health care, housing, food, economic opportunity, etc.) have a greater likelihood of being met within this context, important elements of society are probably not called into question. Repression is not expected because existing power relations are not directly threatened. Indeed, despite the presence of antisystemic behavior, high levels of economic development should have a negative effect on threat perception and repressive response because the regime does not wish to antagonize dissidents.

Lower levels of economic development, on the other hand, present a different situation entirely. As underdeveloped economies have a much more difficult time providing basic human needs, if conflict does take place, then the latent hostility felt towards the regime has a potential for escalating. In an effort to deter this possibility, all aspects of antisystemic behavior should increase repression (Sloan 1984; Gurr 1986a, 1986b). The response of the government would then dissuade any movements being taken against it and, furthermore, would maintain the political-economic system that allowed the underdevelopment to exist in the first place.<sup>20</sup>

The last factor considered is dependency. A major premise in the literature is that domestic penetration by the global economy increases the need (and desire) for protection of certain political-economic relationships within the state (Jackson et al., 1978; Herman 1982; Petras 1986; Alfatooni and Allen 1991). Since, independently or in conjunction, labor could strike, political opponents could revolt or disenfranchised capitalists could rebel, all political conflict must be prevented here for it could deleteriously affect both production as well as extracted profit. These are both outcomes unacceptable to those who benefit from the relationship.

In an effort to deter these activities from taking place and allow the benefits of dependency to be maintained, the use of repressive behavior would likely be enhanced when dependency is high. Responding to even the smallest amount of conflict, however conceived, such a position not only protects international and domestic capital, but it also protects an oppressive political-military elite that often controls the government (Herman 1982; Petras 1986). Met with varying levels of statistical significance, these relationships have been supported by several authors (Timberlake and Wil-

<sup>20</sup>The inverted "U" variant of this argument is not addressed here as it was refuted convincingly by Mitchell and McCormick (1988). As a consequence, only the linear relationship is addressed.

liams 1984; Alfatooni and Allen 1991; Davenport 1991).<sup>21</sup> While the meaning and accuracy of these results have recently been brought into question (Lopez and Stohl 1989), the basic formulation of the hypothesis is still believed to be legitimate.

### **What Do We Know about the Relationship between Domestic Threats and Political Repression?**

From the available literature, I have identified two important and related issues. First, different conceptions of domestic threat may be maintained by regimes, causing them to consider certain aspects of conflict more worthy of repression than others. Second, numerous factors may alter government perception of domestic threats directly affecting the likelihood that the regime would use repressive behavior. Although both of these issues are essential to any comprehensive understanding of negative sanctions, the literature has addressed each issue in only a limited sense. Specifically, I identify three limitations with existing studies.

The first problem concerns the assumption of unidimensional threat perception. As mentioned earlier, generally only one aspect of conflict (frequency) is used as a determinate of state repression (Hibbs 1973; Alfatooni and Allen 1991; Cingranelli 1992; Poe and Tate 1992). This constrains our conception of domestic threats and eliminates the possibility that other aspects of political conflict would be considered by regimes when they decide to use repressive behavior.

The second problem concerns the omission of important explanatory variables. For example, three studies ignore the effects of system type while accounting for other variables (Duff and McCamant 1976; Davis and Ward 1990; Alfatooni and Allen 1991), three ignore coercive capacity (Davis and Ward 1990; Alfatooni and Allen 1991; Henderson 1991), three ignore economic development (Hibbs 1973; Ziegenhagen 1986; Alfatooni and Allen 1991), four do not include dependency (Hibbs 1973; Davis and Ward 1990; Henderson 1991; Poe and Tate 1992), and one study does not even address political conflict (Henderson 1991).<sup>22</sup> As a consequence of the diversity in empirical treatment, the models previously examined are left misspecified, and I am unable to systematically compare results across examinations or even reach a consensus as to what should be given attention.

<sup>21</sup>Some empirical analyses found no relationship at all (Mitchell and McCormick 1988). The nonempirical work relevant to these causal relationships has been far more extensive (Herman 1982; Stohl and Lopez 1984; Petras 1986). My presentation has directly followed their suggestions.

<sup>22</sup>Within the studies considered, the number of countries and the number of years examined were also subject to extensive variation.

The third, and last, problem with the literature is that the effects of the explanatory variables are generally not examined interactively with conflict, i.e., they do not analyze repressive behavior within situations of domestic threat.<sup>23</sup> The effects examined are usually additive in nature with various state characteristics and conflict each contributing to repression independent of the possible confounding effects of dissent on the other variables. This is a major shortcoming because researchers are left unable to determine what conditions enhance or diminish the application of repressive behavior when a regime is directly being threatened by mass protest. On the contrary, we are left inferring particular relationships from derived results.

The main purpose of the present analysis is to add to this literature by correcting for these deficiencies. I put forth a comprehensive examination of the relationship between four different aspects of political conflict and state repression. I also assess the impact of the most often cited attributes of the domestic political economy. These attributes are initially used as controls in the examination of direct effects for comparison with previous results. These attributes are then used interactively when I investigate government behavior within periods of domestic unrest.

### Data and Research Design

My analyses are based on yearly country-level data for 53 countries from 1948 to 1982. The data are taken from two primary sources: Taylor and Jodice's *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (1983) and Banks' *Cross-National Time Series Data Archive* (1992). Each measure is addressed below.

The dependent variable, repression, is operationalized by Taylor and Jodice's (1983) indicator of negative sanctions. Negative sanctions include censorship, defined as limitations and/or intimidation of the popular media, as well as political restrictions, defined as limitations and/or intimidation of individuals and political parties. The events have been coded annually from 1948 to 1982 by consulting the *New York Times* index as well as various regional publications.<sup>24</sup> The variable itself is expressed as a natural log after adding one to the base value.

<sup>23</sup>The one exception here is Hibbs (1973). He examined one interactive relationship between social mobilization and institutionalization.

<sup>24</sup>Although numerous problems have been found with this data (Goldstein 1986), it is still heralded as the best measure available for representing attempts at behavioral control cross-nationally overtime (see Goldstein [1986] and Taylor and Jodice [1983] for comments). This acceptability is also identified by the pervasive use of this data within numerous analyses of repression and political conflict (Hibbs 1973; Duvall and Shamir 1980; Muller 1985; Ziegenhagen 1986; Davis and Ward 1990; Alfatooni and Allen 1991).

To capture different aspects of political conflict four measurements are used.<sup>25</sup> Three represent a variant of the first measure which is a basic frequency count of four conflict events: antigovernment demonstrations, guerrilla warfare, general strikes and riots. Collected from Banks (1992), these are presented on a yearly basis.

The second measure of political conflict concerns the presence of violence. To operationalize this particular attribute, I employ the use of a dichotomous variable. The actual coding scheme itself is quite simple. When guerrilla warfare or riots occur (both instances of violent dissident behavior), violence is coded as one. When these particular strategies are not being employed, however, violence is coded as zero. This follows in the tradition of Rummel (1963), Tanter (1966), Hibbs (1973), Zimmerman (1980) and Gupta et al. (1993).<sup>26</sup>

The third measure addresses strategic variety: i.e., the number of strategies used by dissidents. The values for this variable are derived from observing the number of different conflict events (antigovernment demonstrations, general strikes, guerrilla warfare, riots) that occur within a given year. Here, I count the different types of conflict present within 1948, 1949 and so forth. What results is a variety score in each year varying between zero (where no strategies were applied) and four (where all strategies were applied).

The fourth measure of political conflict addresses deviance from the cultural norm. To operationalize this variable two steps are taken. First, the mean of the whole time period (1948 through 1982) is identified for each country. Second, this mean score is compared to conflict in any given year, deriving a dichotomous variable of conflict above and below the mean. If

<sup>25</sup>Pearson correlations between the various measures are all provided below.

Variable	1	2	3	4
1) Frequency	1.0			
2) Violence	.42	1.0		
3) Strategic Variety	.57	.80	1.0	
4) Cultural Deviance	.45	.62	.70	1.0

<sup>26</sup>Many authors have identified two dimensions of conflict behavior (Rummel 1963; Tanter 1966; Hibbs 1973; Zimmerman 1980; Gupta et al. 1993): some have labeled these dimensions "violent" and "non-violent" (Gupta et al. 1993), others have preferred to label them "rebellion" and "turmoil" (Hibbs 1973; Lichbach and Gurr 1981). Regardless of the particular name provided, however, the expectations are the same with regards to the effect on political repression.

conflict is above the mean, then a score of one is designated and conflict is considered threatening. If conflict is below the mean, however, then a score of zero is designated and conflict is deemed acceptable.

To identify what factors influence repressive propensity, four components of the domestic political-economy are also examined. These include democracy, coercive capacity, economic development and dependency. Each is discussed below.

To operationalize democracy, Banks' (1992) political polyarchy and pluralism variable is used. The measure itself encompasses several factors including the effectiveness of the legislature, the competitiveness of the nominating procedure, the number of political parties and the degree that political parties are excluded from the nominating procedure (Banks 1992, 15).<sup>27</sup> This follows in the tradition of Cutright (1963), Bollen (1983) and Gurr (1989).

Coercive capacity is measured by each country's defense expenditures relative to total expenditures. Capturing the overall significance and preparedness of the coercive apparatus to enact designated policies, this particular attribute has received a great deal of attention from numerous scholars addressing the military's effect on state repression (Laswell 1941, 1962; Huntington 1964; Thee 1977; Randle 1981; Walker and Lang 1988).<sup>28</sup>

Energy consumption per capita is used as the indicator for economic development. Although GNP per capita has been employed in numerous studies (Alker and Russett 1964; Hibbs 1973; Dye and Ziegler 1988), I have opted to use an alternative strategy given the analysis of Summers and Heston (1988) that identified this variable as being highly unreliable. This practice has been employed in several recent examinations of repressive behavior (Henderson 1991; Poe and Tate 1992, 1994).

To conclude our discussion of the explanatory variables, the last characteristic of the political economy to be measured concerns dependency. Amidst several different possibilities,<sup>29</sup> I use Taylor and Jodice's (1983) indicator of export specialization to represent this variable. Specialization

<sup>27</sup>Each of these components is measured on a yearly basis.

<sup>28</sup>Previously, I have used the size of the military as a percentage of the total population additively with the measure of defense expenditures. Considering Hanneman and Steinbeck (1990) as well as further exploring some work of my own, I found that the former was not significant while the latter was. On the basis of this information, I use defense expenditures relative to total expenditures.

<sup>29</sup>For example, OECD investment has been applied (Timberlake and Williams 1984) as well as Snyder and Kick's (1979) "block model" which combines trade flows, treaty memberships, military intervention and diplomatic relations. These are not used because they disregard important aspects of the domestic economy and because they were only available for a few years.



**Table 1. Equations Investigated****EQUATION 1. Unidimensional Threat Perception and Response**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Repression} = & \alpha + B1 \text{ Democracy} + B2 \text{ Coercive capacity} \\ & + B3 \text{ Economic development} + B4 \text{ Dependency} \\ & + B5 \text{ Lagged Repression} + B6 \text{ Conflict frequency} + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

**EQUATION 2. Multidimensional Threat Perception and Response**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Repression} = & \alpha + B1 \text{ Democracy} + B2 \text{ Coercive capacity} \\ & + B3 \text{ Economic development} + B4 \text{ Dependency} \\ & + B5 \text{ Lagged Repression} + B6 \text{ Conflict frequency} \\ & + B7 \text{ Presence of violence} + B8 \text{ Strategic Variety} \\ & + B9 \text{ Deviance from cultural norm} + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

is calculated by examining the degree that export commodities fall within a comparatively small number of categories.<sup>30</sup> As these categories decrease, dependency is said to increase.

Concerning the empirical questions investigated, two different effects are analyzed with a pooled cross-sectional time series design. First, addressing the possibility that the various aspects of political conflict have different effects on repression, direct effects between the four characteristics of domestic threat and negative sanctions are examined, controlling for four state characteristics. Two equations are analyzed, and are provided in Table 1. The first equation investigates the relationship between the frequency of conflict and the use of repression, controlling for democracy, economic development, coercive capacity and dependency. This addresses the basic unidimensional threat perception/response hypothesis. The second equation investigates the relationship between the four attributes of political conflict (i.e., frequency of conflict, the presence of violence within dissident behavior, "strategic variety" and deviance from the cultural norm) and the use of repression, controlling for the same four state characteristics used above. This addresses the hypothesis of multidimensional threat perception and response.

In terms of the second relationship examined, I hypothesized that government responses to conflict are determined by the particular configuration of the political economy in question. To investigate this relationship I employ a three-step process. First, I identify those state characteristics that

<sup>30</sup>As data existed for the years 1950 to 1975, by five year intervals, missing years had to be interpolated.

have statistically significant and theoretically substantive effects on political repression. This information is provided from the empirical analysis conducted within the first part of the examination, noted above. Second, I divide the sample into three categories (high, medium, and low), representing different values of the particular characteristic(s) found significant. Third, the relationship between the significant conflict variable(s) and repression is reestimated for each category. This allows me to compare and contrast different state responses to domestic threats determined by the particular structure of the political economy being considered.

A final point must be made about the specific research design employed. As pooled time series designs have been found to suffer from heteroscedasticity as well as autocorrelation (Stimson 1985; Ostrom 1990), I must concern myself directly with proper estimation in the face of these problems. To address these difficulties, I have employed two remedial strategies. First, country dummies are incorporated into all equations to control for case specific error (heteroscedasticity). Second, I use a lagged dependent variable to control for theoretical reasons (see below). This frequently eliminates problems with autocorrelation (Beck 1992; Poe and Tate 1994).<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the theoretical justification, several authors have maintained that there is a high degree of bureaucratic inertia involved with the application of negative sanctions (Gurr 1986a; Poe and Tate 1994). Once repressive behavior is used, the argument goes, regimes become habituated to it through the processes of resource mobilization (allocations to the coercive apparatus) and behavioral disposition (the willingness to use negative sanctions). The rate of repressive behavior experienced one year (i.e., at time  $t-1$ ) is expected to have an effect on this behavior the following year (i.e., at time  $t$ ).<sup>32</sup> Acknowledging this delay, the use of a lagged variable works quite well in modeling the repressive decision-making process.

Gauging the empirical validity of the two remedial strategies, postcorrection diagnostics will be conducted on each equation estimated. To address heteroscedasticity, I plot the estimated squared residuals against the estimated dependent variable from the regression lines obtained within the equations provided above. This follows the suggestions of Gujarati (1978). To address autocorrelation, I calculate the Durbin  $h$ -statistic, a variant of the Lagrange Multiplier, and follow the decision rule that a statistically

<sup>31</sup>The raw data generally follow an AR1 process. This particular conclusion was reached after Equations 1 through 4 were estimated with an ARIMA model and then diagnosed with the strategy detailed in McCleary and Hay (1980).

<sup>32</sup>Understanding that this lagged effect may be arbitrary, I am subjecting this causal relationship to more rigorous investigation in another study. For this analysis, however, I believe the assumption to be more than acceptable.

**Table 2. Examining the Unidimensional Threat Perception and Response Hypothesis**

Independent Variables	Political Repression	
	Equation 1	Equation 2
Constant	1.78(.14)**	1.40(.10)**
Democracy	-.07(.01)**	-.08(.01)**
Coercive capacity	.02(.25)	—
Economic development	-.00(.00)**	-.00(.00)**
Dependency	.03(.00)**	.03(.00)**
Conflict frequency	.04(.00)**	.04(.00)**
Lagged repression	.45(.02)**	.48(.01)**
Number of cases	1785	1801
$R^2$	.63	.63
Durbin $h$ -statistic	-.81	-.60
Standard error for the equation	.72	.74

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Standard errors are in parentheses.

significant number indicates that the presence of autocorrelation cannot be rejected as a strong possibility. Particularly recommended to detect first-order serial correlation with a lagged dependent variable (Beck 1992, 56; Harvey 1990, 275), the value for this statistic will be provided with each equation estimated. I now move to the empirical investigation itself.

### Findings

Observing the results provided in Table 2 and conducting the various diagnostics, I find that the first model examined (Equations 1 and 2) is not deleteriously affected by either heteroschedasticity (i.e., no outliers are identified) or autocorrelation (i.e., the Durbin  $h$ -statistic is not significant). The results from this model are generally supportive of the existing literature, except that the relationship between coercive capacity and political repression is not found to be significant. This I believe is generally attributed to the fact the decision to use negative sanction is more political than military or strategic.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>I do not view this finding as a definitive refutation of the coercive capacity-repression hypothesis. As anyone who is familiar with the literature would attest, the issue is far from resolved. First, a great many theoretical (Laswell 1941; Walker and Lang 1988) as well as historical case studies (Thee 1977; Randle 1981) have been conducted that support the relationship. At the same time, few empirical studies have been conducted (Hibbs 1973; Ziegenhagen 1986). Second, measurements of this concept vary significantly: Hibbs (1973) considered internal security forces per square kilometer, while Ziegenhagen (1986) consid-

**Table 3. Examining the Multi-dimensional Threat Perception and Response Hypothesis**

Independent Variables	Political Repression	
	Equation 3	Equation 4
Constant	1.26(.10)**	1.27(.10)**
Democracy	-.07(.01)**	-.07(.01)**
Economic development	-.00(.00)**	-.00(.00)**
Dependency	.03(.00)**	.03(.00)**
Conflict frequency	.01(.00)**	.01(.00)**
Presence of violence	.06(.05)	—
Strategic variety	.12(.03)**	.14(.02)**
Deviance from cultural norm	.21(.05)**	.22(.05)**
Lagged repression	.46(.01)**	.46(.01)**
Number of cases	1732	1797
R <sup>2</sup>	.66	.65
Durbin <i>h</i> -statistic	-.72	-.58
Standard error for the equation	.70	.70

\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01.

Standard errors are in parentheses.

Dropping this variable and re-estimating a reduced form of the equation (Equation 2), four variables are statistically significant in their effects on repressive behavior and explain 63% of the variance. Commensurate with previous expectations, the level of democracy and economic development are found to decrease the use of repression while dependency, lagged repression and political conflict are found to increase its application. This last variable is particularly important to the present analysis because it directly supports the hypothesis of unidimensional threat perception and response. Noted earlier, this is by far one of the most often cited relationships identified within the literature.

Is a multidimensional representation of domestic threats, however, more useful in explaining variance in negative sanctions? Including the other three attributes of political conflict into the basic equation some very interesting results are found (Equations 3 and 4 see Table 3).

ered the size of the military relative to the total population, military representation in government as well as the variable employed within this analysis (military sector allocations). Third, the empirical examinations that have been conducted do not utilize the same control variables. As one of the few empirical attempts to investigate this relationship, therefore, I would suggest that my results are merely tentative.

Again, the model is not deleteriously affected by either heteroscedasticity or autocorrelation. All of the control variables (i.e., democracy, economic development and dependency) are still statistically significant, in the expected direction and roughly comparable to the previous equation in terms of their impact on the dependent variable. This increases our confidence in the results, as one can see that the various characteristics of the political-economy exhibit relatively consistent and stable effects.

The  $R^2$  of this equation has only marginally increased from the previous one (Equation 2), i.e., from 63% to 65%. This causes me to be a little skeptical about the importance of the other attributes of conflict. Conducting a joint  $F$ -test to determine whether or not the inclusion of these variables is statistically significant, I find that the critical value of 3.0 (at the .05 level) is exceeded by the derived value of the test. Inclusion of the additional conflict variables, therefore, is found to add significantly to the explanation of political repression and thus will be retained within the model.

Following up on this last point and addressing the most important result for this discussion, I find that three attributes of political conflict are statistically significant in their relationship to repressive behavior and that their effect on the dependent variable is in the expected direction (Equation 4). Specifically, conflict frequency, strategic variety and cultural deviance are all positively related to negative sanctions. From this, we can conclude that censorship and political restrictions will be directly enhanced when the intensity of conflict increases, when the number of different strategies applied by dissidents are diverse and when deviance from culturally accepted boundaries of dissent is manifest. These findings directly support the hypothesis of multi-dimensional threat perception and response.

One conflict attribute is not significantly related to political repression (in Equation 3), the presence of violence. The insignificance of this variable is probably attributed to the fact that its presence generally leads to the implementation of other strategies of behavioral control including state-sponsored terrorism, armed attacks and political executions. These strategies would be relied upon in confronting this particular attribute because they more appropriately counter the threat dimension being addressed. As a consequence of this "logistical correspondence," the presence of violence would not be related to negative sanctions as measured here, but it would be related to other forms of state regulation.

At the same time that the manifested uniformity in positive effects is observed across the different conflict attributes, however, I must additionally pay attention to some important diversity. Each conflict variable differentially effects repression as determined by the value of its slope coefficient.

cient.<sup>34</sup> This suggests that regimes, although similarly affected by different aspects of conflict, are more sensitized to the presence of certain attributes than others in its application of repressive behavior.

From the results of Equation 4, cultural deviance is shown to have the largest impact on political repression at  $+.22$ , followed by strategic variety ( $+.14$ ) and then conflict frequency ( $+.01$ ). These different effects are important because they identify that regimes are more inclined to respond repressively to deviance from the cultural norm and multiple strategies of mass political behavior. In these situations, the regime has to confront conflict that is in violation of its code of acceptable dissent as well as confront different strategies of political conflict, each with its own method of recruitment and impact upon the domestic political economy.

Conflict frequency exhibits much less of an effect on negative sanctions. One interpretation of this finding is that this measure does not capture enough information about the particular threat being confronted. In fact, the more significant aspects of political conflict appear to place the designation of threatening behavior within the realm of more strategic issues: i.e., strategic variety and cultural deviance. Commensurate with previous results, therefore, political repression will still be applied in response to an increased number of conflict events. This response, however, occurs at almost negligible levels relative to other aspects of political conflict. These findings are crucial in that they begin to highlight the inner workings of the repressive decision-making process. Indeed, they identify that regimes are much more discriminating than originally believed with regard to what they consider a threat and also to what they will respond to with repressive action.

Addressing the second relationship of interest, I now consider the effects of democracy on repressive propensity, while controlling for the domestic threats encountered. There are two reasons for this singular attention on system type. First, from Equations 1 through 4 democracy is consistently found to exhibit the greatest impact on repression of all the state characteristics identified. While both economic development and dependency are significant, their substantive effects are quite small.<sup>35</sup> We would thus be most informed about the relevance of political-economic context by exclusively paying attention to democracy. The second reason for concentrating on this particular characteristic concerns the overall amount of attention given to it

<sup>34</sup>Utilizing betas the same results were derived. These can be obtained from the author upon request.

<sup>35</sup>Indeed, given the effects of these variables, the degree to which their values would have to be changed before a meaningful impact on political repression would be revealed is somewhat unrealistic to expect.

by those who study political repression and human rights. As most authors suggest that repressive behavior would be reduced significantly by increasing the general openness of the political system, examining how this particular relationship functions when the regime is directly being challenged would be useful. This would allow us to clearly identify how regime openness and tolerance function within moments of domestic stress, an extremely likely occurrence within the present historical context as well as one that has been previously unexamined.

To investigate this mediating effect, I estimate three equations, each derived from the basic model used above.<sup>36</sup> The first equation concerns only those regimes that are not democratic. This category is made up of those governments that have no legislature and no opposition parties for the full-time period under examination. Illustrative examples include Afghanistan, Bulgaria and Jordan. The second equation addresses those regimes that I have labeled transitional. Transitional regimes are those that vacillate between the democratic and nondemocratic categories. These regimes are sometimes full democracies, sometimes nondemocracies and sometimes between the two. Examples of this category include Argentina, Ghana and Nepal. The third equation concerns those regimes that are full democracies. These regimes have effective legislatures for the full-time period, a competitive nominating procedure and no exclusion of opposition parties. Examples here include Australia, Costa Rica and the United States.

The results from the three equations are very revealing with regard to how different political systems respond to domestic threats. As found, nondemocracies (Equation 5 see Table 4) consider only two aspects of political conflict when they decide to use political repression. Note that these rates of application are higher than that reached by either of the other two regimes. This supports the claim made earlier that these political systems are highly concerned with threats to their security and more likely to use repression, regardless of how these threats are conceptualized.

Within a model that accounts for 75% of the variance in repressive behavior (Equation 5), strategic variety is found to be the most important variable in provoking the use of censorship and political restrictions in nondemocracies at +.25. The effect of conflict frequency is increased from that identified within the basic equation (i.e., from .01 to .05), but it is still less than either of the other attributes of conflict identified. The regime's response here is quite understandable considering that strategic variety en-

<sup>36</sup>I could not estimate interactive variables because of a high degree of multicollinearity between the interactive measures and their components. I thus opted to divide the dataset into three categories and estimate each independently. This allowed me to identify interactive effects and at the same time avoid the problem of multicollinearity.



**Table 4. Examining Repressive Responses within Different Regime Types**

Independent Variables	Political Repression		
	Equation 5 (Nondemocratic Regimes)	Equation 6 (Transitional Regimes)	Equation 7 (Full Democratic Regimes)
Constant	1.75(.24)**	1.83(.21)**	2.65(.25)**
Economic development	-.00(.01)**	-.00(.00)**	-.00(.00)**
Dependency	.01(.01)	.03(.00)**	.05(.02)**
Conflict frequency	.05(.02)**	.03(.00)**	.01(.00)**
Strategic variety	.25(.08)**	.09(.03)**	.09(.04)**
Deviance from cultural norm	.11(.13)	.24(.07)**	.22(.08)**
Lagged repression	.45(.03)**	.48(.02)**	.25(.03)**
Number of cases	423	687	687
R <sup>2</sup>	.75	.57	.73
Durbin <i>h</i> -statistic	1.59	-1.73	-.11
Standard error for the equation	.51	.64	.55

\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01.

Standard errors are in parentheses.

tails a significant amount of coordination between different components of the opposition. This threat is especially potent given the fact that the government has basically eliminated all other forms of popular participation and has claimed a monopolization on legitimate political expression.

Deviance from the cultural norm is not significant within nondemocratic regimes. One explanation for this finding might be that the overall repressiveness of these regimes is too high to facilitate large-scale challenges from the populace. Indeed, of all the regime types this one has the lowest number of deviations from the cultural norm. Within this context, dissidents would probably not use this strategy, dramatically increasing the intensity of their conflict behavior, so as not to incur the full wrath of the government. Instead, they would more likely increase the diversity of strategies used against the regime. This would allow them to decrease the impact of repression experienced by any one strategy, and, at the same time, allow them to challenge the regime in a substantive manner.

With regard to the control variables of this equation, lagged effects of repression are still found to be statistically significant. This reveals the importance given to bureaucratic inertia and the role played by the coercive apparatus in maintaining the use of political repression after it has already been applied. The effects of economic development also remain significant. Even more interesting, however, is that dependency is not related to repres-

sive behavior in any statistical sense.<sup>37</sup> Initially appearing at odds with the existing literature, there are two explanations for this finding. First, the measurement of dependency may inaccurately capture the relationship between external factors and the domestic political economy. Second, the use of repression may be so institutionalized within nondemocratic regimes that it no longer responds to changes within the global market. Both of these possibilities would need to be explored further.

The pattern of relationships just identified is somewhat different from those we obtain within the transitional category (Equation 6). Here, explaining 57% of the variance in political repression, we find that all attributes of conflict are significant in their effects on the dependent variable. This reveals the overall sensitivity that these regimes have to political dissent. The most important attribute of conflict identified here is cultural deviance, impacting the dependent variable at  $+.24$ . Strategic variety is the second most important variable, at  $+.09$ , and conflict frequency is again the least important factor to the regime, at  $+.03$ . When dissent exceeds the government's level of acceptability, therefore, transitional regimes increase their use of censorship and political restrictions to a far greater extent than any of the other conflict attributes considered. This relatively conservative strategy prevents the coercive apparatus from overextending itself while at the same time allowing it to confront the particular challenge being confronted.

Considering the control variables for this equation, past repression is found to be statistically significant, the largest impact of all three regime types. One can interpret this to mean that inertia plays an extremely important role in these regimes with regard to the amount of repressive behavior that is applied. As these systems are rent with uncertainty, it is quite logical that they become habituated to the use of negative sanctions. Indeed, this is even more the case given the fact that the coercive apparatus is probably one of the only political organizations around. The rest of the control variables are again statistically significant. Supporting previous expectations, economic development is found to diminish the use of repression and dependency is found to increase its application.

To conclude the empirical investigation, the results for full democracies are derived (Equation 7). Easily identifiable from Table 4, these results are quite similar to those of the transitional category. The most noticeable difference between the two is the increased amount of explained variance within the latter. The transitional model accounts for 57% of the variance

<sup>37</sup>Dropping this variable and re-estimating the equation, the same results are obtained. Deleted for purposes of parsimony, the results from this equation are available from the author upon request.

in repression whereas 73% of the variance was explained within the democratic equation. From the results, cultural deviance is found to manifest the greatest impact on repression at  $+ .22$ . This makes sense because we would expect that democracies would respond to political conflict at a significant rate only when there is a "clear and present danger." This situation would almost be essential to the regime so that it could maintain political legitimacy, and, at the same time, deal with the domestic threat itself. Strategic variety is again the second most important variable, increasing repression at  $+ .09$ , and conflict frequency is the least important factor to the regime, impacting the dependent variable at  $+ .01$ .

Lagged repressive behavior is still significantly related to current political repression, although its effect is a great deal smaller than that identified within the other political systems. This suggests that democratic regimes are less responsive to bureaucratic inertia and less likely to be caught within the throngs of habitually applied repressive behavior. As these governments are expected to be less responsive to the coercive apparatus and more concerned with political legitimacy, this reflects well upon the ability of these regimes to curtail repressive policies once they have been applied and reduce the impact of the law of instrument. Economic development is also statistically significant in its effect on repression and in the expected direction, but the impact itself is still relatively negligible. With regard to dependency, the degree of trade concentration directly increases the likelihood that political repression would be applied. This is in fact the largest effect exhibited within all of the different political systems examined. Supporting numerous arguments about the relationship between free-trade liberalism and the use of political repression (Herman 1982; Petras 1986; Pion-Berlin 1989), full democracies are more interested in establishing and protecting certain economic relationships than those regimes that are less open. With this result, we thus find an interesting spin on a commonly explored hypothesis. As this appears to go against a great deal of literature, I would suggest that additional investigation be conducted.

### **Conclusion**

The present study has investigated two distinct and important relationships. First, it compared a unidimensional characterization of domestic threats to a multidimensional one and assessed the impact of both on political repression. Second, it examined how one state characteristic (democracy) mediated the impact of domestic threats on repressive behavior. Both are discussed below.

From the results of the empirical analysis, I found that a multidimensional representation of domestic threats was more comprehensive in accounting for repressive behavior. When this representation of threats was

employed the amount of variance explained increased, three aspects of political conflict (conflict frequency, strategic variety and deviance from cultural norm) were found to be statistically significant, and the derived causal effects were all in the expected direction. Upon examination, each variable was found to exhibit a different effect on the dependent variable. Cultural deviance and strategic variety were found to manifest the greatest impact on political repression, while conflict frequency exhibited only a marginal effect. On the basis of this finding, I conclude that regimes not only observe different aspects of political conflict with regard to the degree of threat perceived, but that they also recognize the need to apply political repression at different rates to counter these threats.

One important implication that follows from this finding is that investigations of repression should no longer maintain exclusive reliance upon basic frequency counts to measure political conflict. On the contrary, researchers should employ a multidimensional representation of domestic threats. This would better enable them to understand the repressive decision-making process and more comprehensively model the relationship between dissident behavior and political repression.

Moving to the second relationship investigated, I found it erroneous to assume that the issue of multidimensional threat perception and response was a universal one, applied equally across different types of political-economic contexts. As found, all regimes do not respond to domestic threats in the same manner. The most important characteristic observed was system type, i.e., democracy.<sup>38</sup>

To investigate this relationship the sample was divided into three different categories of this particular variable: i.e., nondemocratic, transitional and democratic regimes. The causal relationship between conflict and repression was then re-estimated for each category, revealing several important differences across these different system types. Nondemocratic governments were found to be threatened by strategic variety and deviance from the cultural norm. Responding to both attributes, these regimes increased political repression at relatively high rates of application. Transitional regimes, on the other hand, were found to be threatened by all three attributes of political conflict. Only deviance from the cultural norm yielded a high repressive response rate from the government, while strategic variety and conflict frequency increased repression at relatively small rates of application. Democratic regimes generally followed a similar pattern of threat per-

<sup>38</sup>Recall, the empirical results showed that democracy, economic development and dependency were statistically significant. In terms of the magnitude of the slope coefficient, however, only democracy was found to be substantively important. I thus opted to concentrate on this particular characteristic for further investigation.

ception and response to that identified within the transitional category. There are, however, two important differences between these two regimes with respect to this finding.

First, the amount of explained variance by the democratic model was significantly higher. Within the equation for these regimes, 73% of the variance was accounted for while in the equation for transitional regimes only 57% of the variance was explained. This difference I believe reflects the general uncertainty within which transitional political systems exist. Since the objectives and capabilities of these regimes are constantly being altered overtime (in some cases several times in different directions), a great deal is left to chance. As a result of this indeterminacy, there is less of an opportunity to estimate causal relationships properly because the empirical strategies themselves generally assume that some consistency within the particular units being examined. The opposite situation exists, however, when the regime is consistently democratic. In this context, I believe it is much easier to estimate state-societal relationships.

The second difference between the two regimes concerns the explanation behind the low repressive response to different aspects of dissent. Within democracies, I believe that the low repressive response to strategic variety and conflict frequency is determined by the commitment of these regimes to tolerate certain aspects of dissident behavior. As long as conflict stays within these boundaries, it will not substantively provoke a reaction from the government. In transitional political systems, however, I believe the situation to be much different. Within this context, I do not believe that the relatively low rate of response is determined by political tolerance. On the contrary, the repressive response of the regime is probably attributed to their low level of regulatory capacity: i.e., the capacity of the regime to monitor acts of political conflict and respond to these acts in an efficient manner. Accepting these limitations, the regime would generally allow certain attributes of political conflict to manifest themselves without responding to it with repression. When these conflict attributes reached extremely high values (when the culturally defined parameters of acceptable dissent had been violated), however, then censorship and political restrictions would be applied at relatively high rates. This strategy would allow the regime to protect the status quo, and, at the same time, prevent the regulatory apparatus from overextending itself until it *had* to do so.

As a consequence, we thus find that the consideration of system type serves a crucial role in the process of domestic threat perception and repressive response. System type identifies the relative sensitivity that different governments will have to domestic threats. Nondemocratic governments are apparently the most sensitive to multidimensional threats (in terms of their response rates), and democratic as well as transitional governments

appear to be less sensitive (for entirely different reasons). Regime type also allows us to gauge how effective our predictions can be. As found, stable nondemocracies and stable democracies provide the most accurate results while transitional governments provide the least accurate. This should guide us significantly in understanding negative sanctions within different political-economic contexts.

The work on this issue is far from done. Although our conception of what constitutes a threat to a regime and our understanding of what contextual variables are important to these processes are clearer, numerous questions emerge. Are other attributes of political conflict important to the perception of domestic threats? Do other contextual factors affect repressive propensity? Does the direction of transition play a role in changing government perception of threats and the use of repression? How long does it take for the processes of threat perception and repressive response to stabilize, allowing better estimation? The list goes on. Understanding that these questions extend well beyond the objectives of the present study, I leave these for future analysis. The process of empirical investigation and model building continues.

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