

Repression or Concession: Explaining State Responses to Dissident Demands

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Motivation and Contribution

States consistently respond to challenges to the status quo with some form of repression (Davenport 2007), with violent challenges being especially likely to prompt repression (Carey 2010; Conrad and Moore 2010). Both violent and nonviolent dissident movements threaten to impose costs on the regime, although nonviolent movements do so differently than violent ones (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). However, states sometimes offer concessions to dissident groups, even those groups engaged in violence (Thomas 2014). When dissident groups make major demands on a state, what factors influence whether state actors respond with repression or offer concessions?

While the literature has examined how repression and the provision of concessions varies by regime type (Lake and Baum 2001, Carey 2006), regime goals (Ryckman 2016, Sokphea 2016), financial circumstances (Conrad 2011, Kuhn 2009), group demands (Franklin 2009, O'Keefe & Schumaker 1983), and policy combinations (Inclan 2008), few studies examine how the nature of the opposition itself, beyond use of tactics, influences state decision-making. We assume state actors want to minimize costs to the regime while maximizing the benefits derived from policy choices. Thus, we expect state decision-makers to seek out information about the group's ability to inflict costs on the state (what we refer to as the group's threat potential).

We suggest that two group-level attributes—educational attainment and economic capacity—reveal information to state actors about the group's true threat potential and thereby influence subsequent policy choices. These two characteristics provide information to leaders about how resilient these groups are likely to be in the face of repression and how much leverage these groups have for undermining support for the regime (Schock 2005). Consequently, we expect that leaders consider these attributes when determining how to respond to dissident demands: those groups with more resiliency and leverage should face less repression and should be more likely to achieve their stated goals.

Theory

How do educational attainment and economic capacity affect a group's resiliency and leverage? Why do state actors care about resiliency and leverage?

- **Resiliency:** Well-educated and economically strong groups will be more likely to wrest concessions from the state, as the costs of repression or toleration are likely to be higher.
 - Educational attainment suggests that dissidents will be able to tactically innovate and more easily adapt to or counter government efforts to weaken the group, thereby increasing the benefits of concessions relative to repression.
 - Economic strength signals that the group is able to sustain violent or nonviolent disruption for longer, thereby inflicting more costs on the state.
- **Leverage:** Well-educated and economically powerful dissident groups are more likely to have access to or connections within those institutions that the regime relies on for support, and repressing these dissident groups is potentially more costly to the regime given these valuable connections and the potential for repression to backfire.

Hypotheses and Data

Hypothesis 1 States will be less likely to repress groups with higher educational attainment.

Hypothesis 2 States will be less likely to repress groups with higher economic capacity.

Hypothesis 3 States will be more likely to offer concessions to groups with higher economic capacity.

Hypothesis 4 States will be more likely to offer concessions to groups with higher educational attainment.

Dependent Variable: Repression

- Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) Dataset Version 1.1 (Chenoweth 2011)

Explanatory Variables: Educational Attainment and Economic Capacity

- Original dataset with campaigns classified as educationally or economically "high", "medium", or "low" relative to the country as a whole; coding based on several sources, including the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Themner and Wallensteen 2012), Minorities at Risk Project 2009, and Global Nonviolent Action Database (Lakey 2011)

Results

Table 1: Multi-level logistic regression (Repression)

	Model 1 (H1)	Model 2 (H2)
Education	-1.49** (0.57)	—
Economic	—	-1.55*** (0.42)
Violence	-0.15 (0.60)	-0.18 (0.60)
GDP	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Population	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Democracy	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
CINC	-61.59 (47.42)	-56.82 (46.00)
n	130	150
χ^2	10.62	17.08

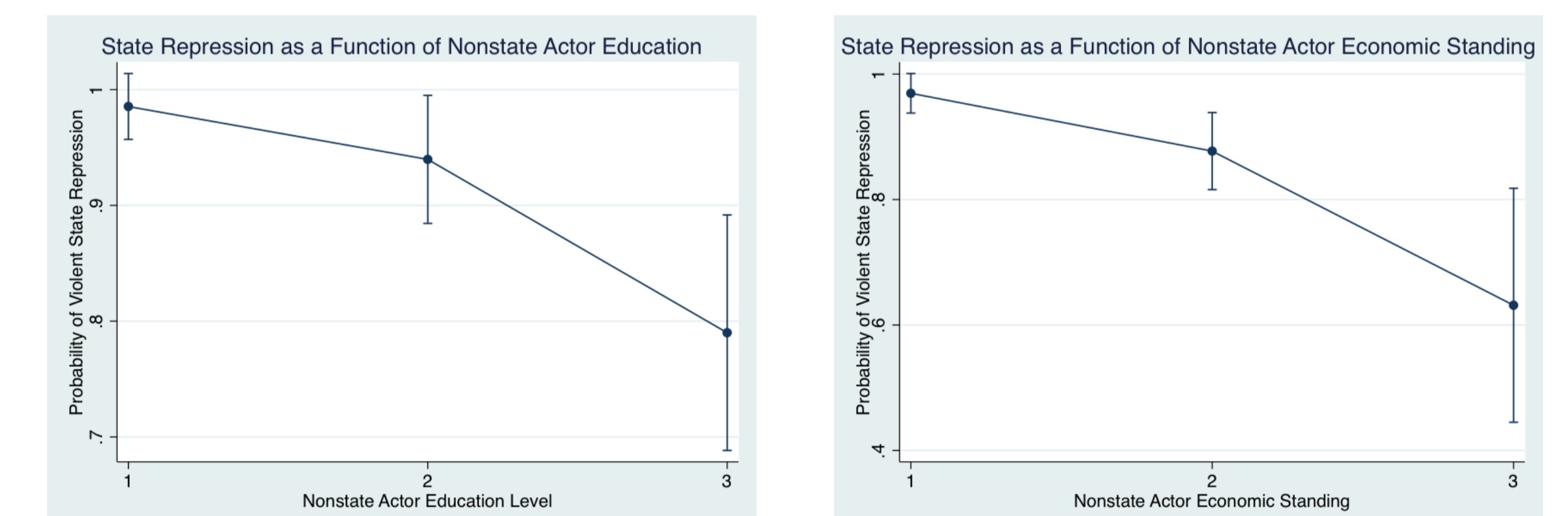
Clustered standard errors in parentheses
* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 2: Multi-level logistic regression (Concessions)

	Model 3 (H3)	Model 4 (H4)
Education	-0.09 (0.27)	—
Economic	—	0.56* (0.29)
Violence	-1.58*** (0.46)	-1.24*** (0.42)
GDP	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Population	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Democracy	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
CINC	-96.56 (67.46)	-78.06 (62.08)
n	130	150
χ^2	16.13	22.47

Clustered standard errors in parentheses
* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Figure 1: Marginal Effects for Multi-level Models (H1 & H2)



Discussion and Conclusions

- Higher educational attainment and economic capacity both decrease the likelihood of repression, even when controlling for the use of violent dissent.
- Higher educational attainment does not affect whether a campaign successfully achieved its goals, but higher economic capacity increases the likelihood of campaign success.
- Consistent with Chenoweth and Stephan's (2011) finding that nonviolent campaigns are more successful than violent ones, the use of violence decreases the likelihood of concessions for groups with both high educational attainment and economic capacity.