

Tinder and Flame: The Strategic Logic of Mass Killing

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Main Theory

Incentive alone is not enough for a state to use mass violence as a repressive strategy. The use of mass killing by a state is driven by the interaction between the relative value of removing a sub-group of the population and the ability of the state to actually remove that sub-group. I call these two components tinder and flame:

- **Tinder:** Relative value to a state of removing a sub-group of the population.
 - Seizure of resources
 - Elimination of military or political rivals
 - Creation of an opposed identity
- **Flame:** State ability to commit mass killing.
 - Formal Capacity
 - Coordination with non-government killing forces
 - Opportunity

Hypothesis

Actors for whom both tinder and flame for mass killing are high will make greater use of mass killing strategies than will actors for whom tinder and flame are lower.

Data: 1970-2010

Dependent Variable

- Composite, binary indicator of mass killing presence
- Drawn from Rummel (1997), Harff and Gurr (1988), PITF (2016), Valentino (2004), and the UCDP one-sided violence dataset

Independent Variables

- Tinder Flame: Latent Variables
- GDP: World Bank
- Civil War: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset

Estimation Strategy

- Structural Equation Model with Interactive Latent Variables
- Two Factor Exploratory Factor Analysis to Generate Latent Variable Scores for Tinder and Flame
- Rare Events Logistic Regression

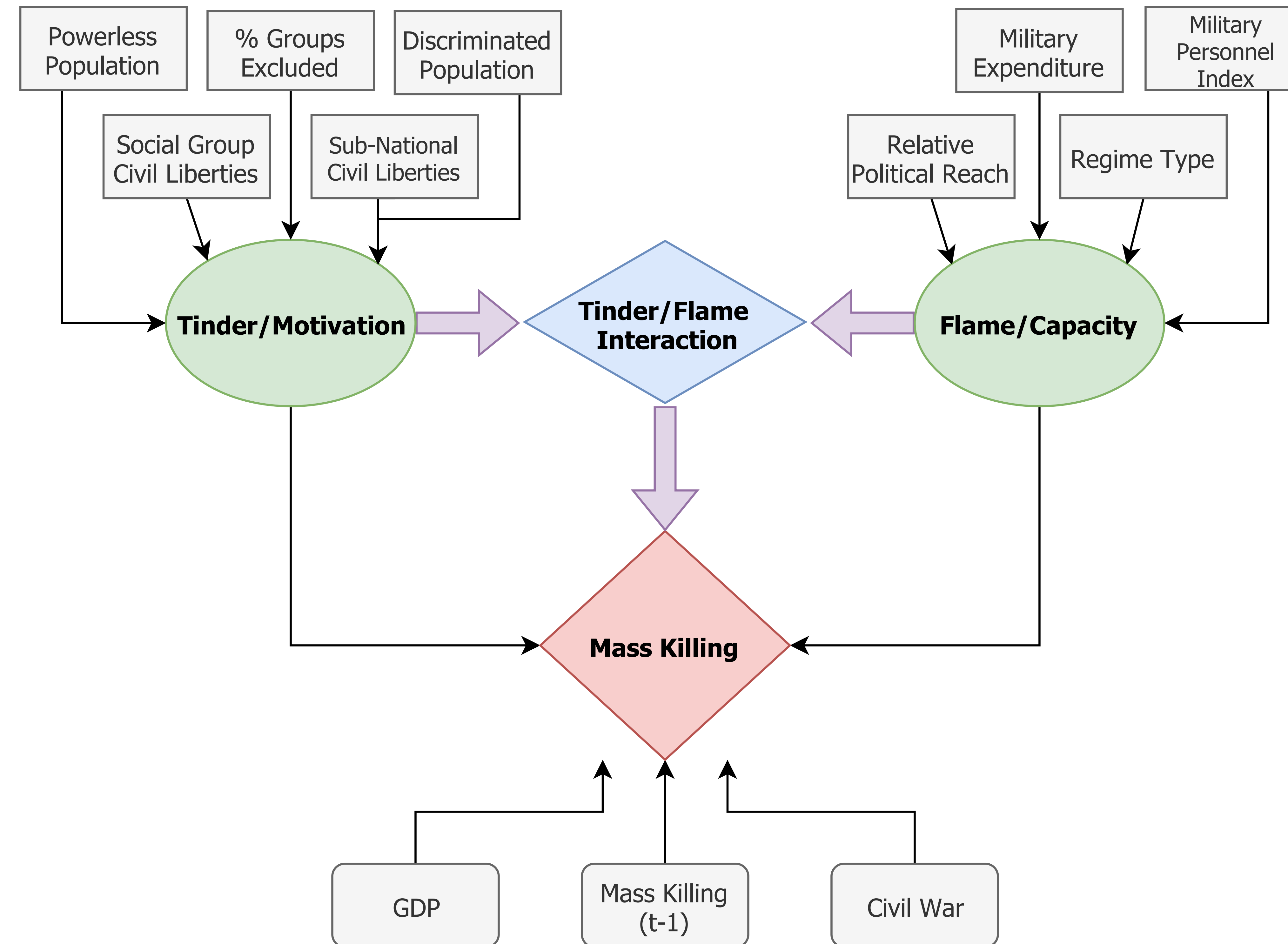


Figure 1: Illustrative Model Diagram

Latent Variable Components

Tinder

- Discriminated Population (EPR)
- Powerless Population (EPR)
- % Distinct Groups that are Excluded (EPR)
- Social Group Civil Liberties Inequity (V-Dem)
- Sub-National Civil Liberties Inequity (V-Dem)

Flame

- Relative Political Reach (Kugler et al. 2011)
- Electoral Democracy Index (V-Dem)
- Military Expenditure (World Bank)
- Military Personnel Index (BICC 2017)

Results

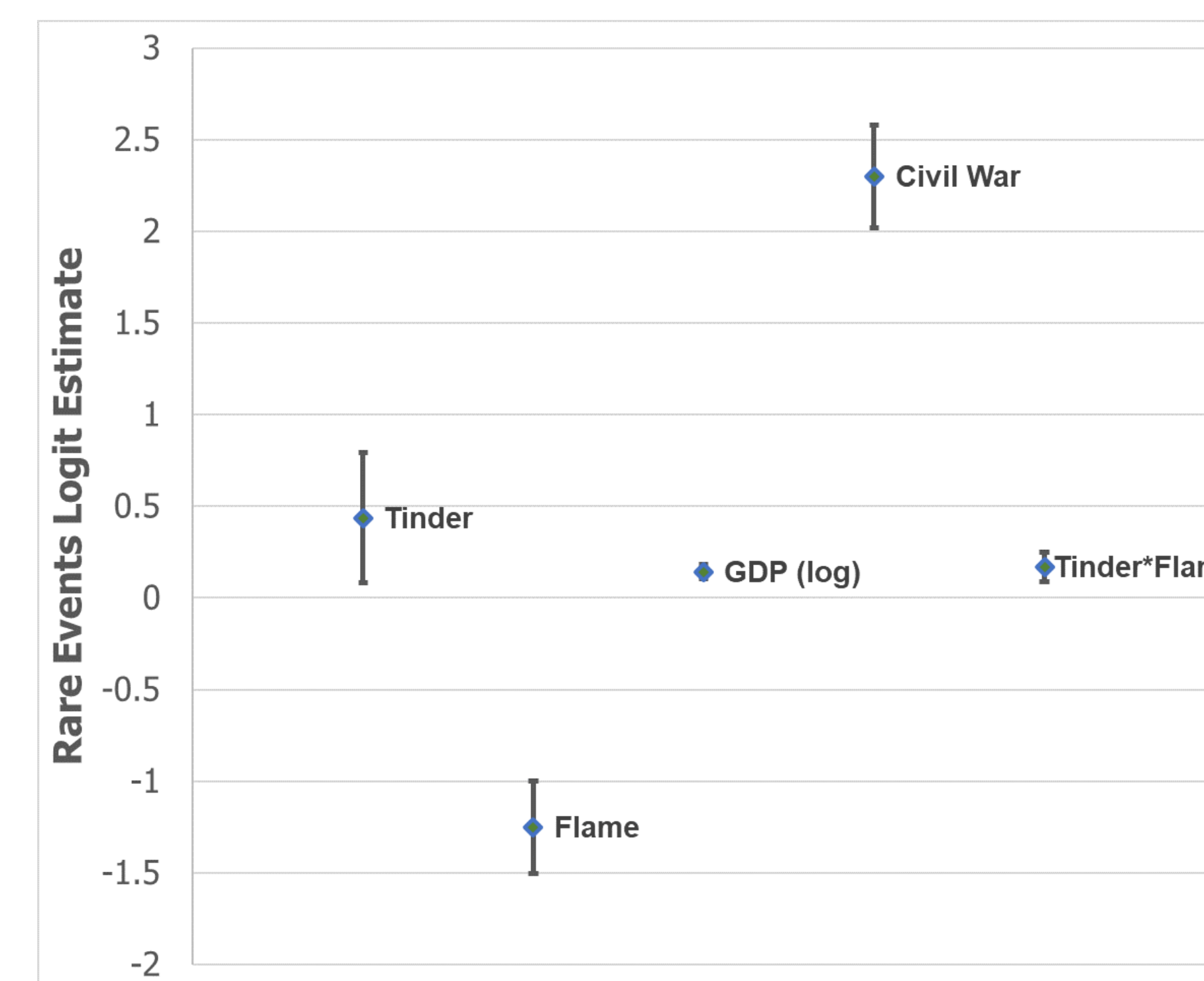


Figure 2: Interaction Model Coefficient Plot

Marginal Effects

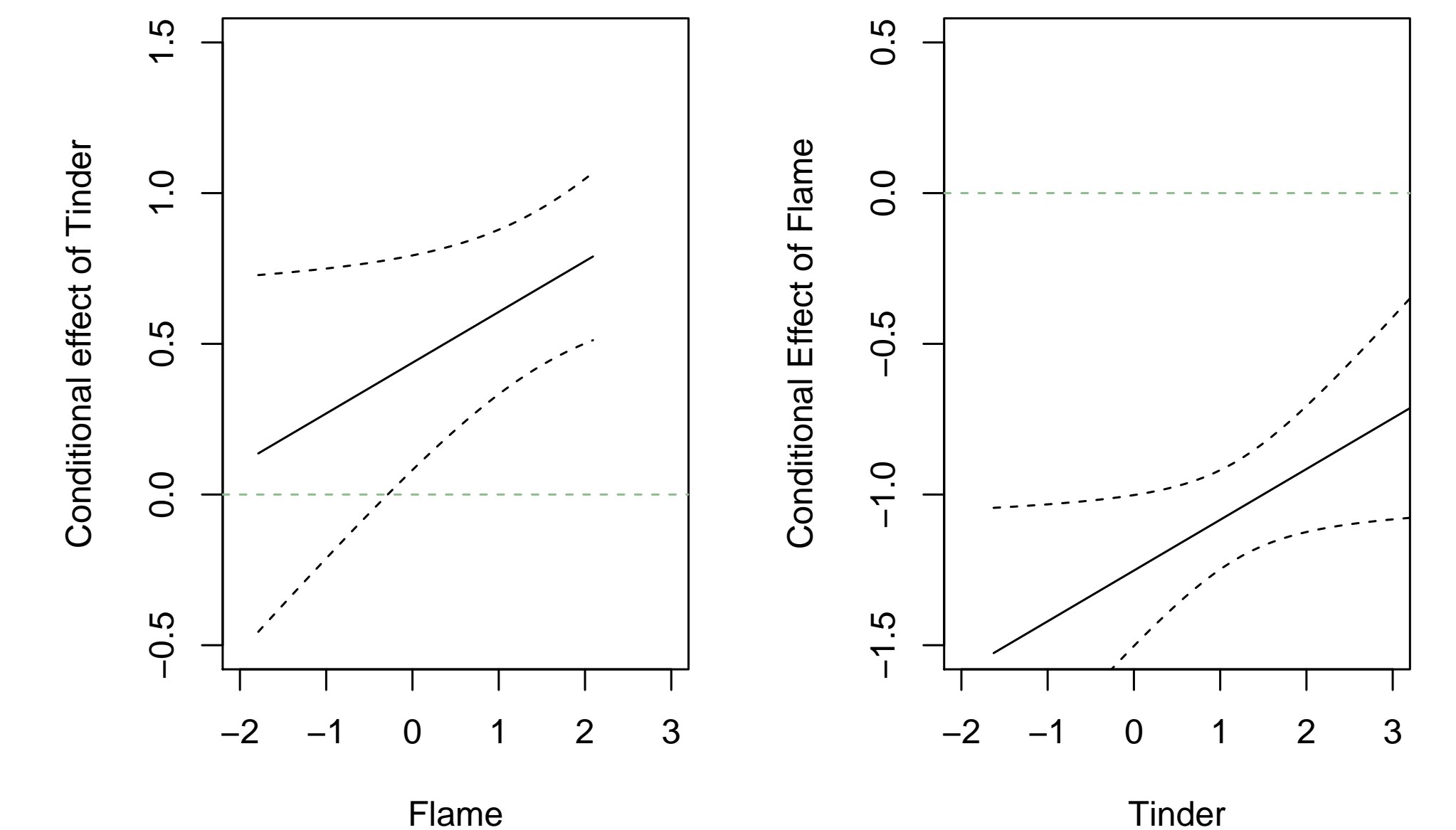


Figure 3: Marginal Effects of Motivation/Tinder and Capacity/Flame on Mass Killing

Conclusion

These results suggest that explanations of mass killing that focus on the benefit/grievance or capacity components alone are missing out on the full story. Mass killing is an extreme political choice made by governments that is shaped by their broader position internationally and domestically.

Considering the interaction of motivation and capacity provides a better way of understanding the non-linear effect of capacity and development on government repression. It also helps us to conceptually shift our consideration of mass killing from that of an independent event to a more nuanced approach where mass killing is viewed as a policy option that states will use when it is the most beneficial.

Next Steps

- Expand measurement model to incorporate indicators of opportunity and informal capacity
- Fit a latent growth curve structural model to explore how the effect of Tinder and Flame changes over time
- Explore the robustness of these results to alternative DV coding strategies