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To cite this article: Joseph K. Young (2009) State Capacity, Democracy, and the Violation of Personal Integrity Rights, *Journal of Human Rights*, 8:4, 283-300, DOI: [10.1080/14754830903324712](https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830903324712)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754830903324712>



Published online: 11 Nov 2009.



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State Capacity, Democracy, and the Violation of Personal Integrity Rights

JOSEPH K. YOUNG

While a large literature explores the effect that regime type has on personal integrity rights violations, few studies have explored a state-centric approach to understanding these violations. I develop an argument that focuses on the leaders of the state and the incentives that they have to protect or violate rights. Moving beyond the democracy-autocracy debate, I claim that state leaders who are more secure, face fewer costs in producing their desired policies, and have more bargaining power vis-à-vis their domestic opponents are less likely to violate their citizen's personal integrity rights. Using a series of econometric models, I find support for many of the hypotheses derived from the argument. Based on the results of the models, I offer some potential policy implications.

Why do states violate personal integrity rights? One of the most robust empirical observations is that democratic states do not repress or violate these rights (Poe and Tate 1994; Poe, Tate, and Keith 1999). Democracy is credited with many other kinds of positive social outcomes. Hegre et al. (2001) find that democracy is associated with a lower likelihood of civil war, Olson (1993) claims a democratic regime provides more public goods, Przeworski et al. (2000) credit democracy with higher life spans, Maoz and Russett (1993) show democracies do not fight each other, and Poe and Tate (1994) demonstrate that democracy is conducive to respect for human rights. While scholars who promote this notion offer various causal mechanisms that link democracy to protection of personal integrity rights, a consensus argument is that democracy reduces state violations of human rights.¹ Countries like Haiti, Colombia, Pakistan, and others, however, defy this conventional wisdom. Violations of personal integrity rights are often commonplace in these states and have been worse than most authoritarian states depending upon the time period under study. All by most conventional measures are democratic.² This begs the question: Why do some democracies respect human rights while others do not?

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I would like to thank Will Moore and Chris Reenock for their invaluable suggestions on previous drafts. I also would like to thank Richard Hiskes and the anonymous reviewers for providing detailed suggestions that made this project exponentially better. All errors are, of course, my own.

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While the scholarly proponents of democracy's pacifying effects offer convincing theoretical explanations and empirical results, none help us resolve this puzzle. Although most of these studies identify the effects of high levels of development on reducing violations of human rights, they overlook the role *state capacity* plays in explaining the state's decision to repress its citizens. In the paper that follows, I argue that strong states are less likely to repress based on the incentives faced by the leaders of these states. A state-centric approach to the study of human rights needs to be embedded in a particular argument that outlines the choices available to state actors. After identifying the logic of repression for state leaders, I claim that state leaders who are more secure face fewer costs in producing their desired policies and have more bargaining power vis-à-vis their domestic opponents are less likely to violate their citizen's personal integrity rights. Like previous work, I also demonstrate that violent challenges to the state are met with state repression. In the conclusion, I offer some policy recommendations for promoting human rights and suggest ways to extend these findings.

Democracies and Human Rights

Previous studies have identified a number of factors that increase a state's propensity to violate human rights. Human rights violations, or repression, are the violation of personal integrity rights including torture, extrajudicial killing, political imprisonment, and disappearance (Poe and Tate 1994; Cingranelli and Richards 1999).³

Democracy is asserted to be one of the most important structural factors that reduce human rights violations. Most quantitative studies find a strong association between democracy and respect for human rights. Several causal mechanisms are offered to explain this relationship. First, democratic regimes perceive fewer threats to their survival than their autocratic counterparts (Henderson 1991; Davenport 1995). Davenport (1995: 690) claims that "[w]hen the presence of democracy increases within a nation-state, the likelihood of threats being perceived by the government and repression being applied is decreased." Because democratic regimes base their support on a negotiated consent, dissident events that may bring repression by an autocrat can be ignored in a democracy. Second, since the masses can participate in the political system, repression can alienate potential political support. A functioning democracy then can potentially provide the mechanisms to remove repressive rulers that harshly apply the coercive capacity of the state (Henderson 1991; Poe and Tate 1994; Davenport 1999; Poe et al. 1999). As Poe and Tate (1994: 855) argue, "[e]ffective democracy also provides citizens . . . the tools to oust potentially abusive leaders from office before they are able to become a serious threat." Similar to the democratic peace propositions,⁴ democracies are thought to repress their citizens less than autocracies because of democratic norms and structures. Norms such as nonviolent conflict resolution, voting to resolve differences, and formal political participation make the stakes of the game lower thus reducing the incentives for either side to use violence. These norms and structures that constrain the leaders repressive behavior make it costly to choose coercion relative to other choices such as providing public goods to pacify the public. Third, agents of the state charged with coercion are less powerful in democracies and thus are less able to influence policy. As Gurr (1988) maintains, once states develop a coercive state apparatus and this organization is used, its subsequent use becomes more likely. Another line of research suggests that the effect of democracy on reducing human rights violations is nonlinear (Davenport and Armstrong 2004). Davenport and Armstrong

(2004: 551) suggest that “[b]elow certain values, the level of democracy has no discernible impact on human rights violations, but after a threshold has been passed. . . democracy decreases state repression.” Using a combination of statistical techniques they find support for their threshold argument rather than other nonlinear explanations such as Fein’s (1995) “Murder in the Middle” claim or that there is an inverted relationship between democracy and human rights violations.

These findings reveal a consensus over the degree to which democracies respect human rights but differ according to the mechanisms they offer and the functional relationship that they posit. None explicitly discusses the role that state capacity plays in increasing or decreasing the likelihood of repression nor do they discuss the interaction of democracy and state capacity. The democratic regime findings are consistent empirically but lack an attention to the incentives of state actors. In the next section, I discuss how state capacity relates to repression and show state capacity coupled with democracy explains respect for human rights.

Bringing the State Back Into Human Rights

Many Political Scientists before the 1980s conceived of the state as merely a tool of the elites in power. Borrowing from pluralism or Marxism, the dominant way of modeling state action was to infer preferences from the strength of privileged actors in society. Skocpol (1985) and others worked to “bring the state back in” to the center of theories related to state action. This perspective argues that the state should be treated as an independent variable in social scientific research and has interests that are autonomous from the groups composing society. Levi (1988), in this tradition, constructs a model of state revenue extraction based on the preferences of the state actors in a polity. Levi assumes that all state actors are rational and self-interested.⁵ Their main interest is to maximize revenue given constraints. Leaders have different ends, such as accumulation of personal wealth or religious indoctrination or money for conquest, but all need revenue to pursue these ends. In the discussion that follows, I apply Levi’s model of state revenue accumulation, or a state’s path to building capacity, to generate hypotheses concerning which states are most likely to violate personal integrity rights.

Starting with these basic assumptions, Levi contends that states are strong or weak depending on three factors that influence a leader’s ability to accumulate revenue.⁶ These constraints on state actor’s preferences for high revenues include: the job insecurity of the leaders,⁷ the transaction costs associated with revenue extraction, and the relative bargaining power of the state vis-à-vis other actors. A strong state faces fewer of these constraints than a weak state. I conceive of state capacity as Skocpol (1985: 9) defines it, or whether a state is able “to implement official goals, especially over the actual or potential opposition of powerful social groups or in the face of recalcitrant socioeconomic circumstances.” In addition to the assumptions of Levi’s model, I assume that to pacify a restive group in society, a state needs to either provide some economic concession or use force. Weak states lack the resources for the first option and often use the latter as it is relatively less costly. Since weak states have difficulty implementing their goals vis-à-vis other groups in society (Migdal 1988), they must use coercion rather than relying on voluntary or quasi-voluntary compliance by the citizenry that might be induced through some type of economic reform or growth. This is the case as monitoring and ensuring compliance with state policies is costly relative to repression for the weak state.

Leaders who feel insecure about their future are more willing to implement policies that have an immediate pacifying effect, such as violation of personal integrity rights. Rulers that have a high degree of job insecurity are not as concerned with the future as immediate concerns take precedence. As Levi (1988: 32) notes these leaders “will be less concerned with promoting the conditions of economic growth and increased revenue over time than extracting available revenue even at the risk of discouraging output.” In short, rulers who are insecure will do whatever is necessary to stay in power—even if it means violating citizen rights or doing other actions that alienate members of the population. Previous research (Gurr 1986; Davenport 1995; Gartner and Reagan 1996) argues that the threat perception by the state leads to repression. Whereas some of the initial research investigating state repression focused on the state’s response to violence (Hibbs 1973), Davenport (1995) shows that threats from dissidents do not need to be violent to instigate repression. Gartner and Reagan (1996: 284) claim that understanding state repression “can be conceived of as an expected utility calculation much to the same degree that international conflict can be modeled in this way.” While there is debate as to whether these effects are increasing/decreasing, linear/nonlinear, unidimensional/multidimensional, these studies suggest that states change their repressive strategies based on threat perception. While job security may be affected by behavioral threats, previous approaches to thinking about this factor have focused more on the political and economical contexts that might make a leader feel more or less secure in their position (Cheibub 1998). In short, the job security of the leader may be affected by such factors as “the length of their tenure in office, the rate of economic growth, and the rate of past executive turnover in [their] country” (Cheibub 1998: 360). Leaders may feel more or less secure in their positions depending upon the history of executive turnover in the state, whether the current economic climate is dim, and how long they have held office.

These policies of violating rights, however, may have a deleterious long-term effect on the prospects for job security.⁸ I expect that

Hypothesis 1: *Leaders who feel insecure about their jobs use repression more than leaders who do not.*

As Cheibub (1998: 360) notes, “the government’s relative bargaining power is, according to Levi, a function of the resources it controls.” As the resources that state actors control increases, their power vis-à-vis their domestic opponents also increases. Levi (1988: 12) places the leaders at the center of the analysis and argues that “[r]ulers will have more bargaining power the more they monopolize coercive, economic, and political resources.” As scholars of civil war attest, when states and opponents reach power parity, this is the most volatile situation (Fearon and Laitin 2003). When a state has a preponderance of power, it can buy off citizens and avoid violent contention. As Henderson (1991: 1226) claims, “[i]t is only logical to think that, with a higher level of development, people will be more satisfied and hence, less repression will be needed by the elites.” States that command a large share of the coercive, economical, and political resources should be stronger than states that lack this monopoly. This suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *Leaders with bargaining strength vis-à-vis other groups in society violate personal integrity rights less than leaders with weak bargaining power.*

States facing high transaction costs also find it more difficult to implement policies. Levi (1988: 23) identifies transaction costs as “the positive costs of bargaining policy and of implementing policy once it has been bargained.” State facing high transaction costs are weaker, all things equal, than states that do not face such high costs.

Having a large population is one potential factor that increases costs of implementing policy. Governments attempt to reduce these costs so that they can use these resources in pursuance of another goal. Furthermore, as Levi (1988: 23) notes, “[a] policy is not viable if the transaction costs are too high.” This suggests a third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *The more transaction costs leaders of the state incur, the more leaders will violate personal integrity rights.*

Previous studies looking at violations of human rights looked at structural characteristics and did not necessarily explain why some states are incentivized to use repression against their citizens. Weak states have leaders who are insecure and have low bargaining power and high transaction costs. In contrast, strong states have leaders who are secure and have high bargaining power and low transaction costs. Weak states therefore have a more difficult time implementing policy goals *ceteris paribus* than strong states. Because of this struggle, these states often rely on coercive means to govern and enforce policies.

As Mason (2004) argues, in weak states, social organizations other than the state, such as villages, ethnic groups, or clans, compete with the state for citizen loyalty. If the state can credibly restrain itself and provide economic incentives for loyalty, coercion becomes more costly relative to the revenue that the state can accrue from citizens participating in the formal economy. According to Davenport (2006), coercion for the state has two main purposes generally. First, coercion is used to establish limits within which citizens can act. When citizens step outside those limits, the state uses coercion. Second, states use coercion to eliminate challengers to their monopoly of violence.⁹ What can occur in a weak state is what Job (1992) calls the “insecurity dilemma.” In other words, weak states might use repression or economic reform to marginalize challengers. Since members of society revise their support downward for a repressive state, the state must rely on more repression to maintain control. Where economic incentives might break this downward spiral, the weak state is unable to provide them.

Above, I outlined an argument for why state strength is related to personal integrity rights. As the previous discussion of democracy asserted, the more democratic a state, the more likely it is to respect personal integrity rights. States that have both of these characteristics, democracy and capabilities should be the least likely to violate personal integrity rights. The answer to the puzzle of why some democracies violate citizen rights relates to the strength of the regime. Strong democratic regimes should be the least likely to repress their citizens. Not only can citizens hold repressive leaders accountable but the state can also use other means to implement their policies. They face fewer barriers to governing and thus do not need to rely on repression. This suggests an interactive or conditional relationship between democracy and state strength. The final hypothesis that I offer is:

Hypothesis 4: *The effect of democracy on reducing violations of personal integrity rights is increased when the state has more bargaining power.*

To summarize the above discussion, I offer an explanation for violations of personal integrity rights rooted in a state-based approach. Moreover, I root this explanation in the choice made by leaders that lead to repressive outcomes. Where states are strong or

where they have bargaining power, job security and face few transaction costs, we should expect them to respect human rights. Where these factors are absent, human rights are more likely to be violated. Democracy matters too, but this influence is magnified by the capacity of the state. In the next section, I discuss how to test the hypotheses identified above.

Research Design

The spatial and temporal domains of the analysis are 131 countries in the world from 1976–1999.¹⁰ The cross-sectional variation of the sample includes most countries in the world that have available data, but the time period is a bit more limited. This is not problematic for this study, however, as I attempt to explain variation in strong versus weak state behavior and the hypotheses imply comparison across countries rather than over time. Extending the data to before 1976 and after 1999 would control for time period effects such as the Cold War or post-Cold War periods, but I have no a priori reason to expect variation in these results given the temporal context. As Donnelly (1998: 3) suggests, “before World War II. . . most states violated human rights systematically.” Most scholars agree that human rights norms have changed in the post-World War II era. I expect that the inferences from this study would apply to the period from 1945 to 1976 but would hesitate to apply the results to the time period prior.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this study is a measure of personal integrity rights from The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Dataset. The personal integrity rights index ranges from 0 to 8 with low values indicating little respect for personal integrity rights within a state and high values indicating a good deal of respect for personal integrity rights. Disappearances, torture, political imprisonment, and extrajudicial killings make up the four components of the index and each component is scored from 0 to 2 with 0 being an absence of this type of violation and 2 indicating widespread use of this type of violation. Previous work demonstrates that the components can be summed to form a statistically valid cumulative scale (Cingranelli and Richards, 1999; Richards, Gelleny, and Sacko, 2001). To aid in interpretation of the results, I flip the scores so that higher values relate to more violations while lower values signify greater respect for human rights. Another measure the Political Terror Scale (PTS), developed by Gibney and Dalton (1996), is often used as an indicator of repression of human rights. This measure ranges from 1 to 5 and indicates the level of overall violations of personal integrity rights within a society. Unlike CIRI it is not an index, and thus it cannot be aggregated nor disaggregated. PTS and CIRI correlate in this study at .77 and results are very similar if PTS is used instead of CIRI. The PTS data begins five years earlier than the CIRI data so the sample using PTS is a bit larger. Poe and Tate (1994) use two different approaches to the PTS coding of violations of personal integrity rights—Amnesty International reports and State Department reports. I use both measure to make sure that potential political biases do not affect my results.

Independent Variables

The measure of democracy (DEMOC) that I use is from the Polity database. This measure varies from –10 to 10 with high values corresponding to more democratic states and lower values corresponding to authoritarian states. To operationalize the components of Levi’s

(1988) state capacity model, I use several indicators first developed by Cheibub (1998). First, the insecurity of the leader of the state (INSECURE) is the likelihood that the leader is to be removed from office based on the length of tenure in office, economic growth, and the rate of past executive removal. Leaders have high values for INSECURE when the likelihood that they will be removed from office is high and low values when the likelihood of being removed is fairly minimal. This variable is a continuous measure from 0 to 1. Cheibub's data are only available for a limited time period and for a small sample of countries. I replicated his data, then I extended it to other countries and time periods to increase my sample (see Young [2008] for a detailed discussion of how this is done).¹¹ Data on state leaders is available from Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) and Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009). I estimated models on leader survival using both sets of data. The results are consistent, and I report the results using the Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) data.

Second, transaction costs or costs of implementing policies are operationalized using a population indicator. The size of the population (POP) can have an effect on the costs of extracting resources.¹² As the population increases, the likelihood that the state incurs greater costs in attempting to implement policies increases.¹³ Another indicator for transaction costs is difficult terrain. Where the government incurs additional costs in attempting to control areas, its transaction costs will increase. A common indicator used in the conflict literature to proxy difficult terrain is the log of the percent of mountainous terrain in a state (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Where a state faces greater costs in overseeing its population (mountainous terrain), I expect there to be greater human rights violations. I also discuss another potential indicator in the robustness section.

Third, the government's relative bargaining power is a function of the resources it controls. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the most direct measure of the pool of resources available for a state to extract. Cheibub (1998) also uses elections (ELECT), or the year an election occurs, to measure when government's relative bargaining power is weakened. I use this measure in robustness checks, but it is never significant. I discuss this more below.

Finally to evaluate the interactive hypothesis that strong democracies (STRONG) provide the most incentives for states to respect personal integrity rights, I interact DEMOC with GDP and create STRONG.

Other Factors

My intent is not to create an exhaustive list of potential explanations for personal integrity rights violations. Rather, I am trying to unpack why some democracies respect rights while others do not. In this spirit, I include some factors that might correlate with both my independent variables and dependent variable thus making these associations spurious (Achen 2002; Ray 2005).

Violent Dissident Activity (DISSACT) is a measure of violent resistance to the state. This variable is taken from Banks Cross-Sectional Time-Series Data Archive. It is a count of the number of violent acts by dissidents including guerrilla tactics, riots, and assassinations occurring in a country in a specific year.¹⁴ I include this measure as states facing violent dissidents may respond with violations of personal integrity rights regardless of their strength or degree of democracy.¹⁵

While DISSACT relates to lower level challenges to the state, civil wars and external wars may also increase domestic repression of human rights. I use a measure from the Correlates of War project (WAR) that is coded as one if the country is involved in intrastate

or interstate conflict and zero otherwise. Similar to the logic for including violent dissident activity, internal and external threats may invalidate the relationship between democracy and rights violations as well as state capacity and rights violations. Table 1 includes a description of all the relevant variables, summary statistics, and the source for the data.

Table 1
Variable descriptions and summary statistics

Variable	Description	Coding/Scale	Source	Mean	Std. Dev.
PHSYINT	Government's violation of personal integrity rights	0 (Low Violations) 8 (High Violations)	Cingranelli and Richards (1999)	3.144	2.401
PTS	Government's violation of personal integrity rights	1 (Low Violations) 5 (High Violations)	Gibney and Dalton (1996)	2.548	1.154
REGIME	The degree to which a regime is a democracy or dictatorship	-10 to 10	Marshall and Jagers (2008)	0.419	7.790
INSECURE	The probability that a leader will be removed from office	0 (not likely) 1 (very likely)	Young (2008)	0.020	0.083
GDP	Gross Domestic Product per capita	196 to 35,674	Fearon and Laitin (2003)	4.506	4.607
MOUNTAINS	Log of the Estimated% of mountainous area	0-4.557	Fearon and Laitin (2003)	2.001	1.461
DISSACT	Violent activity by dissidents against the state	Logged Event Count 0-3.3	Banks (1999)	0.335	0.550
ELECT	An election occurred in the given year	0 (no) 1 (yes)	Regan and Clark (2008)	0.039	0.019
POP	The natural log of the population	5.666-13.980	Fearon and Laitin (2003)	9.201	1.484
STRONG	Interaction of GDP and DEMOC			18.886	57.020
WAR	Is the State involved in an interstate or intrastate war?	0 (no) 1 (yes)	Correlates of War Project (1997)	0.115	0.320

Table 2

Concepts, indicators, and expected relationships with violation of personal integrity rights

Concept	Component	Indicator	Relationship
Democracy		DEMOC	Negative
State Strength	Job Insecurity	INSECURE	Positive
	Transaction Costs	POP	Positive
		MOUNTAINS	Positive
	Relative Bargaining Power	GDP	Negative
Strong Democratic State		STRONG	Negative
Violent Dissident Action		DISSACT	Positive
Threats to the State		WAR	Positive
Past Violations		PAST	Positive

I also employ a lag of the dependent variable (PAST) as states that use repression in the past develop coercive bureaucracies that are more likely to use coercion in the future (Gurr 1986). Violation of today's rights may be more influenced by the past than other factors associated with the state's degree of democratization for their capabilities. Table 2 identifies the concepts of the state capacity model and relevant controls along with indicators that correspond with the concepts.

Since the dependent variables range from 0 to 8 and 1 to 5, many scholars use Ordinary Least-Squares (OLS) regression to estimate their statistical models. Ordered logit/probit is another alternative as the data are ordered across categories. While the norm among quantitative scholars is to use OLS when the data include at least five categories, I estimate an ordered logit to ensure that my results are not dependent upon the assumptions of the least squares model.¹⁶ If the results are consistent across these different models, it allows for more confidence in the results. In the main estimation results, I display the ordered logit models and interpret these results.¹⁷

Several threats to inference plague time series cross-sectional (TSCS) data. Serial correlation, heteroscedasticity, and spatial correlation can bias errors in these types of models. Beck and Katz (1995) argue for using a lagged dependent variable to correct for serial correlation.¹⁸ I use a lag in the ordered logit/probits with robust standard errors clustered on country to correct for heteroscedasticity.

Results

Table 3 displays the results for the ordered logit models. Model 1a is the base model using the CIRI index as the dependent variable without the interaction terms or conditional relationship, and Model 1b also uses CIRI but includes the interaction. Model 2a is the additive model using the coding of the PTS scale from the Amnesty International reports (PTS A). The interaction term is then included in Model 2b while still utilizing the Amnesty International coding of the PTS scale. Models 3a and 3b use the PTS variable from the coding of the State Department reports (PTS S). Model 3a excludes the interaction, while Model 3b includes the interaction. I discuss the differences among the models using PHYSINT, PTS A, and PTS S below.

The robust relationship between GDP and respect for human rights is supported in the additive models (1a, 2a, 3a). On average, a high GDP increases respect for human rights

Table 3
Ordered logit models with robust standard errors clustered on country and lagged dependent variables

Dep Var→ Type→	(1a)	(1b)	(2a)	(2b)	(3a)	(3b)
	PHYSINT (Additive)	PHYSINT (Interactive)	PTS (A) (Additive)	PTS (A) (Interactive)	PTS (S) (Additive)	PTS (S) (Interactive)
DEMOC	-0.054** (0.010)	-0.023* (0.011)	-0.062** (0.011)	-0.016 (0.013)	-0.064** (0.011)	-0.009 0.014
GDP	-0.100** (0.017)	-0.088** (0.018)	-0.121** (0.024)	-0.129** (0.021)	-0.137** (0.024)	-0.163** (0.027)
STRONG	— —	-0.008** (0.002)	— —	-0.011** (0.002)	— —	-0.015** (0.003)
INSECURE	0.080 (0.408)	0.372 (0.406)	1.630** (0.397)	2.466** (0.436)	0.832 (0.633)	1.886** (0.669)
POP	0.202** (0.037)	0.256** (0.040)	0.190** (0.052)	0.263** (0.050)	0.168** (0.047)	0.237** (0.048)
DISSACT	0.294** (0.111)	0.273* (0.113)	0.487** (0.077)	0.482** (0.080)	0.540** (0.101)	0.551** (0.103)
WAR	0.834** (0.210)	0.869** (0.203)	0.766** (0.181)	0.789** (0.171)	0.922** (0.243)	0.904** (0.239)
MOUNTAINS	0.076 (0.041)	0.089* (0.041)	0.112* (0.046)	0.125** (0.044)	0.067 (0.043)	0.072* (0.043)
PAST	0.919** (0.050)	0.886** (0.053)	2.086** (0.110)	1.978** (0.107)	2.319** (0.112)	2.204** (0.115)
Observations	1395	1395	1973	1973	1974	1974
No. of Countries	131	131	131	131	131	131
Pseudo R ²	0.30	0.31	0.43	0.43	0.47	0.48

Clustered robust standard errors are in parentheses below the coefficient estimates.

*Significant at 5%. **Significant at 1%.

holding other variables constant. This relationship holds regardless of the dependent variable and how GDP is specified (gross/per capita/natural log). Additionally, the relationship between a democratic regime and human rights is supported across the additive models. When holding other variables constant, DEMOC is consistently negatively associated with measures of human rights violation (PHYSINT, PTS A, PTS S). Since the measures are not unconditional marginal effects in the interactive models (1b, 2b, 3b), it is not appropriate to discuss democracy's impact on human rights violations without reference to values of GDP, the modifying variable (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006).

INSECURE is positive across the six models but only significant in Model 2a, 2b, and 3b. In other words, in three out of six models, we are confident that these results are different from zero. This suggests tentative support for the idea that the more insecurity felt by leaders of the state, the more likely they are to violate personal integrity rights. Since this result is not as consistent, these results are not as firm as for most of the other findings. The effect, however, is fairly large across the models.¹⁹

The first indicator of transaction costs, POP, increases violations of human rights. While the ordered logit coefficient ranges from 0.168 to 0.256 across the models, the effect is always positive and significant. The other measure of transaction costs, MOUNTAINS,

Table 4
Degree of support for hypotheses across the models

Hypothesis	Support in the Additive Model	Support in the Interactive Model
1. Leaders who feel insecure about their jobs use repression more than leaders who do not.	Rarely	Mostly
2. Leaders with bargaining strength vis-à-vis other groups in society violate personal integrity rights less than leaders with weak bargaining power.	Yes	N/A
3. The more transaction costs leaders of the state incur, the more leaders will violate personal integrity rights.	Yes	Yes
4. The effect of democracy on reducing violations of personal integrity rights is increased when the state has more bargaining power.	N/A	Yes

also is consistently positive and significant with the coefficient ranging from 0.067 to 0.125 across the six models but only significant in four of the six.²⁰ These results suggest that states facing greater costs implementing their policies are more likely to use repression.

Previous work touted the effects of democracy on promoting human rights. In additive models, this relationship proves to be robust. Wealth, or per capita GDP, is also associated with human rights protection in the quantitative literature on the subject. None of the work addressed the interactive effects of the two factors. Models 1b, 2b, and 3b estimate this conditional relationship. As I stated previously, the coefficients of DEMOC and GDP are no longer unconditional marginal effects, and thus cannot be interpreted absent the values of the modifying variable. In sum, the interaction of these variables generates even larger reductions in human rights violations than would occur by simply looking at their additive effects. I discuss the impact of these effects below.

Consistent with a body of previous work on this issue, the control variables perform as expected across the different models and specifications. DISSACT operates in the expected manner across all specifications and dependent variables. It has a large positive and significant effect on violations of human rights. Each additional increase in the logged activity of dissidents is expected to increase the PTS scores and the CIRI index. Dissident activity causes the government to fear removal and to lose revenue, thus the state always responds harshly to these attacks on its authority. Similarly, states respond with repression when facing internal or external war. The result for WAR is consistently positive and strong across Models 1a through 3b. PAST also has a strong positive effect across the models. The standard errors are also small suggesting a fairly precise estimate of the past effects of violation of human rights on the level of human rights violations in the present. Table 4 displays the four hypotheses discussed above and identifies their degree of support in the additive and interactive models.

Discussion

Table 5 offers some substantive effects for all of these variables. Since interpreting the ordered logit models differs from other models like OLS and simple logit models, I show how changes in key variables of interest lead to changes in the probability for the outcome

Table 5

Change in predicted probabilities from ordered logit model changing each variable from min to max holding other variables at the mean

Change from Min→Max	Change in Probability for Outcome Category					AVG $ \Delta $
	1 = lowest	2 = low	3 = med.	4 = high	5 = highest	
DEMOC	0.049	0.252	-0.251	-0.046	-0.003	0.120
GDP	0.503	0.061	-0.502	-0.058	-0.004	0.226
STRONG	0.163	0.624	-0.406	-0.341	-0.039	0.315
INSECURE	-0.045	-0.489	0.070	0.407	0.057	0.213
POP	-0.056	-0.319	0.303	0.067	0.005	0.150
DISSACT	-0.036	-0.327	0.248	0.107	0.009	0.145
WAR	-0.022	-0.166	0.149	0.036	0.003	0.075
MOUNTAINS	-0.019	-0.108	0.106	0.019	0.001	0.051
PAST	-0.502	-0.457	0.088	0.567	0.304	0.383

categories of the PTS scale (See Table 5).²¹ As the table shows, most of the change occurs in predictions between the second and third level of the scale. The fourth and fifth levels have the lowest probability of occurring. The column AVG $|\Delta|$ displays the absolute value of changes across the outcome categories induced by changing the variable from the minimum to its maximum (Long and Freese 2006).

As Table 5 shows, bargaining power, or a high GDP has a large impact on increasing the probability of being a state in the least repressive category (1). When GDP is changed from its minimum to maximum, the probability of being in this category is increased by 0.503, holding all other variables at their means. DEMOC's impact is smaller, but the probability of being in the two least repressive categories is increased by 0.301 when this measure is increased from its minimum to maximum. INSECURE has the opposite effect of GDP and DEMOC. When this measure is increased from its minimum to maximum, the probability that a state is in the lower levels (1 and 2) of repressive behavior decreases by 0.534. INSECURE also has a comparatively large effect on changes in being in the highest category of repression (5). Since this is a rare outcome in the data, an increase of 0.057 is large in comparison to most other variables. Only PAST has a larger impact on changing the probability of being in the most repressive category. PAST behavior has a large impact across the categories and on average (0.383). STRONG or the interaction of GDP and DEMOC further reduces the likelihood of being a more repressive state.

This suggests that although states like Pakistan and Haiti may decrease human rights violations as they become more democratic they will not further dampen these violations until they increase their GDP. Haiti, for example, has a per capita GDP that fluctuates between \$600 and \$1000. Pakistan's GDP fluctuates between \$900 and \$1500. Looking at Table 5, this suggests that Haiti and Pakistan's high scores on democracy are not having nearly the same impact on reducing the likelihood of repressive behavior than it would if GDP were increased.

My construction of a state capacity model for understanding human rights violations also leads to some interesting questions. INSECURE performs well in most of the models and has a strong substantive effect. Leaders facing removal, even though it weakens them, use repression to hold onto office. This leads to a somewhat counterintuitive policy suggestion: If the international community would like to incentivize repressive states to

Table 6
List of countries in estimation sample

Afghanistan	Denmark	Laos	Saudi Arabia
Albania	Dominican Republic	Lesotho	Senegal
Algeria	Ecuador	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Argentina	Egypt	Malawi	Singapore
Armenia	El Salvador	Malaysia	Somalia
Australia	Estonia	Mali	South Africa
Austria	Ethiopia	Mauritania	South Korea
Bahrain	Fiji	Mauritius	Spain
Bangladesh	Finland	Mexico	Sri Lanka
Belgium	France	Moldova	Sudan
Benin	Gabon	Mongolia	Swaziland
Bhutan	Gambia	Morocco	Sweden
Bolivia	Guatemala	Mozambique	Switzerland
Botswana	Germany	Namibia	Syria
Brazil	Ghana	Nepal	Tanzania
Bulgaria	Greece	Netherlands	Thailand
Burkina Faso	Guinea	New Zealand	Togo
Burundi	Guinea Bissau	Nicaragua	Trinidad & Tobago
Cambodia	Haiti	Niger	Tunisia
Cameroon	Honduras	Nigeria	Turkey
Canada	Hungary	North Korea	Uganda
Central African Republic	India	Norway	UK
Chad	Indonesia	Papua New Guinea	United Arab Emirates
Chile	Iran	Oman	
China	Iraq	Pakistan	Uruguay
Colombia	Ireland	Panama	USA
Congo	Israel	Paraguay	Uzbekistan
Costa Rica	Italy	Peru	Venezuela
Cuba	Ivory Coast	Philippines	Vietnam
Cyprus	Jamaica	Poland	Yugoslavia
Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic/Slovakia	Japan	Portugal	Zambia
Democratic Rep. of Congo	Jordan	Romania	Zimbabwe
	Kenya	Russia	
	Kuwait	Rwanda	

stop violating rights, increasing the security of the leaders may be one solution. Because the INSECURE result is the least stable, more research should be undertaken to explore this relationship before making drastic policy changes. Both results for the transaction costs indicators suggest that if governments can find ways to reduce the costs of monitoring and interactions with their citizens, then they will be less likely to resort to personal integrity rights violations.

Robustness Checks

As I mentioned above, I also estimated a series of ordered probit models and OLS models. These models are nearly identical to the ordered logit models with one important exception.

The result in the OLS models is more stable and generally significant. Of all the measures, this is one that is the least robust to different model specifications.

Another series of robustness checks relate to specifying the functional relationship between democracy and human rights violations. As I discussed above, there is debate as to whether this is a linear, curvilinear (inverted U), or threshold relationship (Davenport and Armstrong 2004). I used Loess, or localized regression, to examine the rough shape of the relationship between democracy and human rights violations. Using all three measures of violations, I find results consistent with Davenport and Armstrong (2004).²² That is, DEMOC has no effect on reducing PTS A, PTS S, or PHYSINT until after a particular threshold. Since I use the entire 21-point Polity scale, the number or exact threshold slightly differs, but the inference is the same: above a certain point democracy is linearly related to human rights violations, below that point, there is no significant difference. When I investigate this using Binary Decomposition, I find that the impact from all Polity values from -10 to 1 cannot be distinguished from each other. The same holds for values from 2 to 5 . These two sets of values, however, are different effects. As we move from the lower level to the higher level, there is a reduction in human rights violations, but it is simply a level shift rather than an additive change. Polity scores above from 6 to 10 have a linear impact on reductions in human rights. If I create a scale that collapses -10 to 1 into one category, 2 to 5 into another category, then add the 6 to 10 levels as more categories, I create a scale that best fits the data according to both Bayesian and Akaike information criteria.²³ This threshold democracy scale ranges from 0 to 6 . While this adjustment creates a better fitting measure, it does not change the inferences from the previous models. The only substantive impact is that the effect of democracy is a bit stronger and more significant as the relationship is better specified.

I also tried using a measure of whether a state was having an election or not (ELECT). Cheibub (1998) argues that this shows that the government has little bargaining power during this year. This variable was never significant. Even using different codings that included whether it was a legislative, executive, or both legislative and executive election showed that the measure had no effect.

Conclusions

Using a state-centric approach to understanding human rights violations rooted in the incentives of the leaders of the state, I demonstrate that capacity has a strong effect on violations of these rights. More importantly, I specify a theoretical argument that is based on the incentives of the state leaders to use repression. While previous work has investigated democracy, wealth and human rights extensively, little work has been done explicating the incentives of the leaders of the state to violate rights and how reductions in capacity can lead to increases in state violence. As I mentioned above, the results related to the job security of leaders are suggestive but not conclusive. More work, of course, needs to be done. The recent explosion of work on credible commitment and conflict (see Fearon 1995 and Lake 2003) suggests that where leaders are credibly restrained, we should expect less violence across different types of political violence such as war, civil war, terrorism, etc. If a leader's tenure is threatened then this might incentivize them from violating tacit agreements with citizens not violate their rights. Some of the solutions to this problem of lack of credible commitment offered by scholars in this area suggest developing institutional configurations that can ensure that both parties have an incentive to avoid future violence. This is one potential area for future work on how to restrain the state's violations of personal integrity rights.

Finally, I find that the *strong* democracies do the least to violate personal integrity rights even after controlling for violent dissent, war, and past repression. This result suggests some potential policy implications. A typical prescription hailed by policymakers and activists alike is that instituting democracy or achieving high levels of wealth within a society are two ways to promote human rights. I suggest that these relationships are both conditional and that democracy and wealth do not necessarily have independent effects on the protection of personal integrity rights. Instead, states need to do both to promote human rights. Democracies outperform authoritarian regimes in respect for human rights in most circumstances, but this effect is magnified as wealth increases.

Recent interest in democracy promotion in Iraq and Afghanistan has focused on developing legitimate institutions and incorporating the disparate groups in the political process (Byman and Pollack 2003). While this is likely important, these results suggest that human rights protections will not necessarily follow unless the state is also strengthened. This fits with recent suggestions made by scholars such as Diamond (2005).

Promoting democracy in places that are highly volatile may or may not lead to greater respect for human rights. Promoting wealth accumulation in developing societies may not work either. If these results are correct, then the international community, activists, governments, and nongovernmental organizations should not promote one without the other nor should they ignore strengthening the state.

Notes

1. Like Poe and Tate (1994), Poe, Tate, and Keith (1999) and others, I define human rights in terms of rights to “integrity of the person.” While this is a fairly minimalist definition of human rights, excluding social, cultural, or economical rights, there is still a great deal of variation among states who respect these rights suggesting that respect for personal integrity rights is far from universal. A more restrictive definition would likely further constrain the number of states that actually respect all these other potential components of a more complicated conceptualization of human rights. Throughout the rest of the paper, when I discuss human rights I refer to the more specific subset of personal integrity rights.
2. The polity scale measures democracy from –10 to 10 with high values representing democratic institutions and low values autocratic ones. Intermediate values suggest mixed or inconsistent regimes. Haiti averaged a 7 on the polity scale for much of the 1990s while Pakistan and Colombia averaged an 8. All three had high levels of state repression according to both the Political Terror Scale (PTS) and the Cingranelli and Richard Physical Integrity Rights scale (CIRI).
3. I use the terms repression, violation of human rights, and violation of personal integrity rights interchangeably.
4. See Davenport (2007) for a discussion of the “domestic democratic peace proposition.”
5. I treat the terms leader and state actor as synonymous. I assume that a state actor is part of the leadership and not a bureaucrat.
6. Levi offers a more general approach and looks at all type of state behavior, I focus more on coercive potential.
7. Levi (1988) calls this the *discount rate*. I refer to it as “job insecurity” to avoid any confusion with the way that game theorists use the term “discount.”
8. See Young (2008) for a discussion of how this relates to the potential onset of civil war.
9. A third reason offered by Davenport (2006) not discussed here is when repression is a policy tool. For example, Stalin’s collectivization attempts in Russia or Hitler’s final solution are examples of repression of personal integrity rights as a policy tool.

10. This domain slightly changes depending upon which dependent variable is used. The Political Terror Scale is available from 1976, but the CIRI data begin in 1981. The countries used in the estimation sample are listed in Table 6.
11. Briefly, this measure is created using parametric survival models to estimate the hazard rate of losing office for a leader in a given-country year given a set of covariates.
12. A widely dispersed population, such as in Sub-Saharan Africa, makes extracting revenue extremely costly (Herbst 2000). Dense populations reduce transportation and monitoring costs. Unfortunately, finding reliable measures of population density over time is difficult.
13. Population is also used in other studies to indicate the opportunity that a state has to repress.
14. Other studies use a Civil War variable to proxy for the same concept of a violent behavioral challenge to the state. DISSACT is a better indicator as it identifies specific potential violent challenges to state authority. Civil wars, on the other hand, are when those challenges are already manifest. Whether I create a nominal variable or leave it as a count, the DISSACT variable is always strongly negative and highly significant.
15. I log the variable as I assume that changes in dissident activity at lower levels, from the second act to the third, for example, have a greater impact on the dependent variable than changes from say the 51st violent act to the 52nd. I also estimated models with the raw DISSACT variable and get very similar results.
16. I only display the estimates from the logit models in Table 3. The results are extremely similar for the OLS models.
17. I include the results from the OLS models along with all data and do-files necessary to replicate the results in an online appendix available at <http://mypage.siu.edu/jkyoung/publications.html>.
18. In the OLS specifications, I employ a panel-corrected standard errors (xtpcse command) model using STATA 10 and use a lagged dependent variable both to correct the serial correlation as well as to model past repressive behavior.
19. In the OLS models, INSECURE is positive and significant across the models. Using Goemans et al. (2009) data in creating the measure has similar effects across the logit models, and the INSECURE variable using this specification also fails to reach statistical significance in several models.
20. In the two models where the MOUNTAINS is not significant at the $p < .05$ level, it is significant at the $p < .10$ level.
21. I used the PTS A measure for this table. The results for the PTS S are nearly identical. The spirit of the CIRI results are similar but are more complicated as there are more categories to discuss.
22. All replication materials for these robustness checks are available on the author's Web site. For a detailed discussion of Loess and Binary Decomposition see Davenport and Armstrong (2004).
23. See Long and Freese (2006) for a discussion of the use of these information criteria.

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