The Repression Dilemma:
The Politics of Policing Multi-ethnic Societies

Travis B. Curtice[1]

<u>BOOK PROPOSAL</u>

Overview

What are the effects of repression on public attitudes toward the police? How might

individuals' political and ethnic characteristics condition their interactions with police? Finally, what

are the implications of these effects on crime and social order? In answering these questions, this

book highlights the puzzle of policing, especially in non-democracies. On one hand, police are the

institution responsible for providing law and order as a public good ensuring the safety and security

of the state. In this capacity, police must be able to solicit information and cooperation from the

communities they are protecting. On the other hand, police in non-democracies are the security

agents often tasked with everyday acts of repression to deter dissent, ensuring control for political

authorities.

By focusing on the perceptions of civilians toward the police, I argue the reliance of political

authorities on the police to repress political opposition results in the *repression dilemma* – actions

political authorities take to repress dissent decrease the state's ability to provide law and order. State

repression, especially by the police, negatively affects public perceptions of police, which, in turn,

affects people's willingness to cooperate with police. How people view actions taken by the police—

as legitimate or illegitimate—depends on their relationship to the state (i.e., do they support the

ruling political authorities). In short, the effects of repression on individuals' attitudes toward the police are shaped by people's political affiliations. Extending beyond partisanship, these perceptions are also salient along ethnicity. In multi-ethnic societies, lines of power are often delineated along ethnic categories. In these contexts, I argue repression increases *both* distrust of the police and co-ethnic bias, decreasing civilian cooperation with police and undermining the ability of police to provide law and order.

By examining the politics of repression, I provide a theoretical and empirical examination of i) the effects of repression on public perceptions of the police; ii) the implications of repression for crime and social order; and iii) the role of in-group bias in shaping patterns of cooperation. I connect the historical origins of policing with political science theories of repression to show why relying on the police to repress dissent increases costs for political authorities and societies. Drawing on extensive evidence from Uganda, I demonstrate that repression by the police and actions political authorities take to ensure police are willing to comply with orders to repress affect how people view the police. Public perceptions of police matter as negative assessments of the police and mistrust of political authorities decrease support for police and citizens' cooperation in the provision of law and order, weakening the ability of states to deter crime and provide security.

Expanding the empirical scope beyond Uganda, I discuss how politicizing of the police should be seen as a warning sign. Police abuse combined with mistrust of political authorities have serious implications for patterns of enforcement, crime, election violence, and other forms of political violence in neighboring cases, including Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and others. Finally, the book concludes with a discussion of the implications of my theory for the politics of policing in other cases, including police abuses of Indigenous and minoritized communities in the

United States and Canada. Rather than elections, I argue that people's relationship with the police should be a critical marker of democratic strength.

Contribution of the Book

In unconsolidated democracies, civilians face various threats of violence. Violence includes exposure to crimes ranging from homicides, femicides, and kidnappings to less violent criminal activity like petty theft and burglaries. However, violence also involves contentious politics as political authorities employ repressive tactics like arrests, torture, disappearances, and assassinations against political opponents. In interviews, surveys, and editorials, people share concerns about the risks of encountering criminal activity but also encountering the state's repressive apparatus.

This book sets out to examine how civilians navigate threats of crime and repression. It does so by examining civilian-police interactions and the politics of policing in Uganda, a multi-ethnic, electoral autocracy. Specifically, I examine the effects of repression on public attitudes toward the police. As these effects are unlikely to be uniform, I also explore how individuals' political and ethnic characteristics condition their interactions with police. Finally, I also examine the implications of these effects on crime. This book develops and tests a theory of the politics of policing that focuses on policing and repression from the perspective of the citizen. I theorize that the co-production of law and order involves three sets of actors: 1) political authorities, 2) police (or another security institution), and 3) civilians. By bringing the preferences and attitudes of civilians into the story, I show that when political authorities rely on the police to repress dissent it undermines their ability to provide law and order.

While repression alone directly affects how the public views the police, I argue that there is also an indirect effect of repression on civilian-police interactions in multi-ethnic societies in which mistrust of political authorities increases co-ethnic bias between civilians and the police. This

mistrust of the government and increased fear of repression further undermine people's cooperation with police officers who are from other ethnic groups. Along these lines, this book makes four claims: first, repression by the police negatively affects public perception of police; second; these perceptions are conditioned by partisanship; third, repression by the police negatively affects the provision of law and order -- crime is higher in opposition areas than in areas that align with the political authorities; and fourth, mistrust shapes co-ethnic bias in civilian interactions with the police. Examining how repression affects how people view and interact with the police has important implications for political and economic development, cycles of conflict, and patterns of political violence more broadly.

The objective of this book is to explain how the police's unique dual role in un-consolidated democracies (on one hand to provide law and order while on the other repress dissent) affects public perceptions of police. Theoretically, it charts a new research agenda relating political violence, crime, and order, focusing on how politicization of police impacts civilians' attitudes and behaviors toward the police and state. Political authorities relying on the police to repress dissent 1) negatively affects public perceptions of police, 2) decreases civilian cooperation with the police; and 3) undermines the state's ability to provide law and order. Importantly, however, these effects are conditioned by in-group characteristics like partisanship and ethnicity. Moving beyond the theoretical and empirical goals, normative and policy considerations also drive the book. Significant allocations of development aid are spent each year on security sector assistance to combat violent extremism. However, how people view police should inform these policies and where necessary provide a corrective to strengthening security forces responsible for human rights abuses. Methodologically, the book seeks to illustrate an ethical approach to research that takes seriously the sensitive nature of the topic while also accounting for the challenges of causal inference.

The main theoretical contribution of the book is a seemingly small insight that has significant implications for how we think about and understand contentious politics. Within international relations and authoritarian politics, many scholars focus on the role of the military, pro-government militias, or even the secret police as the dictator's agents of repression. Other scholars emphasize the importance of pro-government militias or the highly politicized secret police to repress dissent. While these security forces are important, we have often neglected the security agents who are responsible for most of the day-to-day acts of repression in un-consolidated democracies. Rather than the military, in fact, it is the national police who are often used to gather information on political opponents, monitor threats to the regime, suppress political opponents, and intimidate voters at the ballot box. Yet, relying on the police to repress dissent generates costs for the state because unlike other security forces, the police must rely heavily on the communities where they are policing to be effective at their main job -- providing security and deterring crime.

The second contribution of the book is its theoretical and empirical focus on civilians. Much of the existing work on repression focuses on the relationship between the autocrat and her security agents. With a specific focus on the police, this study explores the other side of the equation: the relationship between civilians and the police by examining how repression by the police affects citizens' willingness to co-produce law and order alongside the police. I argue that repression affects support for the police and has a conditional effect on co-ethnic bias, which undermines the provision of law and order. Providing robust evidence for this theory demonstrates a cost of repression more broadly. Political authorities relying on the police to repress dissent and maintain political order undermined the state's ability to provide security and increased political opposition.

Organization of the Book

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical puzzle of the repression dilemma, showing why the decision of political authorities to rely on the police to repress dissent undermines citizens' confidence in the police. Importantly, it highlights why this is especially important in multi-ethnic societies where political authorities, police officers, and citizens use in-group heuristics like partisanship and ethnicity to navigate the politics of repression and dissent. I discuss my case selection of Uganda and the mixed-method approach used to test the observable implications derived from my theory.

Chapter 2: The Repression Dilemma and Policing in Multi-ethnic Societies

This chapter presents a theory of the politics of policing in divided societies. I argue that leaders who rely on the police to repress dissent face a dilemma. The more they use the police to repress dissent, the more they undermine the co-production of law and order. The argument shows why repression directly undermines how people view the police and shows why ethnicity shapes both how people view the police and their willingness to cooperate with them. Importantly, this chapter provides a theory from the perspective of individuals who are exposed to repression but also must navigate threats of violence from criminal activity.

Chapter 3: Politicizing the Police in Uganda

This chapter presents the case of Uganda with a focus on how the UPF developed. I discuss both the institutional structure of the UPF and the history of conflict, coups, election violence, and ethnic tension have shaped the force. Using events data, I compare patterns of repression committed by the police to political unrest events that involve the military, showing how the police are responsible for acts we typically associate with repression. Finally, I conclude by providing descriptive statistics of how people view the police.

Chapter 4: How Repression Affects Public Perceptions of Police

This chapter answers two important questions. What are the effects of state repression on public perceptions of police? And to what extent are these effects uniform or conditional on individuals' loyalty to political authorities? In this chapter, I demonstrate that repression by the police negatively affects how people evaluate the police, especially among those who do not support the ruling party. People who oppose the regime are more likely to fear the police following a repressive event relative to regime supporters. To test this argument, I leverage a unique research design opportunity that emerges from the social media tax protest led by Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu (also known as Bobi Wine) and subsequent selective repression by the Uganda Police Force while a nationally representative survey on police and security was being administered in Uganda. I demonstrate selective repression of protesters decreased support for the police. Additionally, I demonstrate that these effects are largely driven by political loyalty; repression has a stronger effect on how members of the opposition evaluate the police relative to incumbent supporters.

Chapter 5: Incumbent Support and Crime

This chapter examines the relationship between support for the incumbent government and patterns of crimes at the district-level. If people who oppose the regime are less likely to cooperate with police, we should expect that crimes should be higher in areas that show higher levels of opposition. I argue opposition to the regime undermines people's confidence in the police, decreasing cooperation and increasing crime. To test this hypothesis, I examine the correlation between Museveni's 2016 vote-share and police deployments on patterns of crime in 2017 and 2018. I show that districts with higher levels of Museveni vote-share have significantly lower levels of some types of crimes.

Chapter 6: Co-ethnic Bias, Mistrust, and Repression

In divided societies, where the police use repression, how does ethnicity shape the co-production of law and order? For scholars of comparative politics and international relations, examining the effects of ethnicity on patterns of conflict, cooperation, and state repression remains a foundational endeavor. This chapter examines the effects of ethnicity and mistrust in political authorities on people's willingness to report crimes to the police. Studies show individuals who share ethnicity are more likely to cooperate to provide public goods. Yet we do not know whether co-ethnic cooperation extends to the provision of law and order and, if so, why people might cooperate more with co-ethnic police officers. In the context of policing, this is especially difficult where leaders often strategically manipulate the social composition of their security apparatus to ensure repression. Consequently, people often interact with non-co-ethnic officers which should reduce their willingness to provide information, report crimes, and cooperate more broadly. I test the observable implications of this with two survey experiments. First, I use a nationally representative list experiment to demonstrate that an estimated 42% of Ugandans do not report crimes to the police because the officers they encounter are from outside of the community. Second, I use a conjoint experiment in Gulu district to examine how both co-ethnic bias and mistrust in political authorities affect people's willingness to cooperate with police. I show that individuals prefer reporting crimes to co-ethnic officers, even after controlling for potential confounders. Broadly, this result is strongest among individuals with no trust in the police or the political authorities.

Chapter 7: Partisanship and Public Perceptions of Police

This chapter examines the politics of policing beyond Uganda, situating the study in a broader comparative lens showing how support for the ruling incumbent political party shape public perceptions of police. Drawing on cross-national public opinion surveys and qualitative evidence across Africa, I examine how political and ethnic affiliations affect patterns of trust in the police.

Specifically, I assess whether 1) individuals who support the incumbent government express higher trust in the police relative to those who oppose the government; 2) trust in the police is lower in non-democracies relative to democracies; and 3) these relationships change around periods of unrest and political competition, including coups, elections, and repressive campaigns.

Chapter 8: Implication for Policing Election Violence: Evidence from Kenya

Drawing on evidence from Kenya, this chapter examines why some individuals turn to police for safety when threatened by election violence but not others? Using nationally representative survey data from Kenya prior to the 2017 elections and data on the ethnic composition of the Kenya National Police Service, I show that individuals are more likely to report threats of election violence to police when they share ethnic identities with the incumbent regime and their co-ethnics are represented in the police. This chapter provides evidence for a potential incumbency advantage, as co-ethnics of the incumbent will provide police with information regarding threats of election violence, especially when incumbents draw on a history of stacking their security apparatus with co-ethnic officers.

Chapter 9: Policing, Race, and the Settler Colonial States

Expanding beyond evidence from Africa, this chapter explores the logic of the repression dilemma to the politics of policing in the United States and Canada – two ostensibly democratic states. Specifically, drawing on historical and survey data, it examines how fear and mistrust of the police among Black and Indigenous peoples are rooted in patterns of state repression and control that reinforces politics of inclusion and exclusion. This chapter shows that the politics of policing – providing security for some while repressing others—is a defining feature of political development in the United States and Canada. Importantly, this chapter pushes back on the idea of North American exceptionalism to show that in-group dynamics continue to shape public perceptions of

policing and dissent, highlighting the risk of future political violence in addition to the ineffectiveness of the police to protect communities, given a history of police abuse along ethnic and racial lines.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

The final chapter concludes by discussing the theoretical and empirical claims made in the book. I walk through the implications for how we think about political violence, conflict, and security more broadly. One key question raised by the study is the extent to which policing is actually a public good. The theoretical and empirical contributions of these studies question this traditional assumption. In the conclusion, I discuss the implications of this study for the future of politics in Uganda and the politics of policing beyond this case. Finally, I conclude by laying out a future research agenda on policing, co-ethnic bias, and political violence in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Methods and Datasets

Studying the politics of policing, especially in politically repressive states, raises ethical, logistical, and methodological challenges similar to conducting research in conflict environments. First, the availability and access to observational data on police activity is limited. Moreover, the sensitive nature of police interactions renders observational measures of behavior suspect. Second, individuals are unlikely to discuss their "true preferences" relating to police if they fear potential retaliation, making it difficult to solicit "truthful" responses by asking directly. Two threats to inference, for example, are social desirability bias and preference falsification; respondents say what they think they are supposed to say either to avoid social sanction or gain a reward. Third, given the political context, any study of such a sensitive topic must be careful not to endanger study participants.

To overcome these challenges and answer these questions, I use a diverse set of methods and field research primarily in Uganda to test the observable implications of my theory. This mixed-method approach includes a natural experiment, two survey experiments, qualitative interviews, and observational statistical analyses. This work uses a variety of methods to take into account the sensitivity and ethics of the topic studied as well as the demands of causal inference.

For the empirical evidence from Uganda, I draw on two original survey data collection projects that I fielded in Uganda: first, a nationally representative survey (n~2,000); and second; a survey in Gulu district (n~1,000). In addition to the survey data, I employ data on crime patterns, police deployments, election results, and political unrest events. In all of the work in the book, I strive to use a variety of methods that takes into account the sensitivity of the topic as well as the demands of causal inference. Next, to examine the implications in a broader African context, I employ a series of public opinion surveys from Twaweza's Sauti Za Wanachi platform and Afrobarometer merged with political institution and events data on regime type, patterns of repression, coups, and elections. Finally, I include with a discussion of research on policing in the United States and Canada, situating police abuse in North America within my theoretical frame of the politics of policing and repression in a multi-ethnic state. I then provide statistical analyses of event data on police abuse, crime, and protests, and, pending Covid19 constraints, a survey experiment on policing, repression, and identity implemented in the United States and Canada.

Comparable Works and Competition

Many scholarly books focus on the politics of repression and political violence. This includes works of authoritarian politics like Svolik's (2012) book on authoritarian politics; Blayde's (2018) book on state repression in Iraq; Greiten's (2016) book on dictators and their secret police; Hassan's (2020) book on state-level bureaucrats in Kenya; and Nugent's (2020) book on how polarization and

repression shape democratization in Tunisia and Egypt. It also speaks to a broader comparative literature on ethnic conflict and coups including Roessler (2016); Harkness (2018); and De Bruin (2020). Finally, it also connects to a novel trend in the literature on political violence and crime like Yashar's (2018) book on homicidal ecologies; Lessing's (2017) work on Making Peace in Drug Wars; Tapscott's (2020) book on informal security in Uganda; and King and Samii's (2020) book on Diversity, Violence and Recognition.

Existing work has not connected how the role of police as repressive agents interacts with citizens' personal characteristics like partisanship and ethnicity to affect public perceptions of police and individuals' willingness to cooperate with police. This book contributes by developing a general theory on the politics of policing and repression in multi-ethnic societies. Importantly, although the primary empirical focus is on Uganda, broader connections are made to regional patterns of policing in Africa in addition to exploring the implications of the book to police abuse and ethnic tension in the United States and Canada.

The Audience

I expect the book to appeal to academic, policymakers, and general readers interested in political and economic development, conflict, security, political violence, and policing. The book is written from a comparative perspective with an eye on causal inference and another on the ethical and policy implications of understanding security sector strategies, police reform, and citizen-police interactions, especially in conflict-affected and fragile societies. I have presented sections of the book at several conferences including annual meetings of International Studies Association, American Political Science Association, and Western Political Science Association and workshops including the Harvard Experiments Working Group, Georgia Area Studies of Human Rights Network, Duke-Emory-Rochester Workshop, Empirical Studies of Conflict Virtual Conflict

Workshop, the Politics of Policing Online Consortium, and two Folke Bernadotte Academy Research-Policy Dialogues. In addition to academic conferences and workshops, sections of the book have been presented before policymakers and development practitioners, including workshops at United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), and United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO).

Additional Book Details

~90,000 words (270 pages including notes and references but excluding online appendix and frontmatter)

30-45 Figures, 25-30 Tables.

Current Status and Timeline

In addition to the two chapters submitted the data, analyses, and writeup of the Uganda and Kenya chapters are complete. I have collected nearly all the data required for the cross-national analysis in Ch. 7. Notably, the only data component that has not been collected is the survey experiments to be implemented in the United States and Canada. I have financial support from Dartmouth to focus on the completing the book, including a research budget which will support this final data collection effort. The Dickey Center's financial support will allow me to focus on research, facilitating a rapid completion of the book manuscript. Depending on the duration of the review process, my aim is to complete the manuscript by the end of 2020 calendar year, enabling a 2021 publication date in order for the book to speak to election violence and unrest that is likely to surround Uganda's 2021 general election and the political crisis that might unfold following the United States' 2020 general election. This book makes significant academic contributions while also providing timely policy implications for us to understand the challenges of police reform in multi-

ethnic societies with a history or police abuse; challenges that must be addressed in order to improve civilian-police interactions.

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 The Author

Travis Curtice is a U.S. Foreign Policy and International Security Fellow and Niehaus Fellow at the John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College, a member of the Folke Bernadotte Academy's research working groups, and the co-founder and director of the Comparative Policing Lab. He has held previous fellowships, including the Jennings Randolph Peace Scholar Fellowship at the United States Institute of Peace, and the Election Monitoring Fellow at the Carter Center's Democracy Program. His research has been published or is forthcoming in *the*

Journal of Conflict Resolution, the Journal of Global Security Studies, and *Conflict and Peace Management.* His writing and analysis have been published in *the Washington Post, Political Violence at a Glance, Democracy in Africa, Sojourners* and the *CP: Newsletter of the Comparative Politics Organized Section of the American Political Science Association.*

His research is motived by the following questions. How does state repression work on the ground? What kinds of dilemmas emerge for governments, agents of repression, and citizens who interact with coercive institutions? What are the larger forces influencing the use of state repression? In answering these questions, his research has received generous grants from the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (JPAL) Crime and Violence Program, the Carter Center, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In all of his work, Curtice uses a variety of methods including extensive fieldwork, survey experiments, national experiments, statistical models, and interviews that takes into account the sensitivity of the topic as well as the demands of causal inference and ethical scholarship. He has worked and researched in fragile and conflict-affected societies, including Bosnia, India, Kenya, Liberia, Nepal, and Uganda.

The motivation for this project stems from his experience working among Internally displaced people (IDPs) in northern Uganda in 2007. Since then, Curtice has worked and researched extensively in Uganda, including developing his dissertation at Emory University – advised by Jennifer Gandhi – on the politics of policing in Uganda, which examines the security threat that citizens have to navigate between fearing security forces but also relying on them to keep people safe. This tension is especially crucial when considering how people interact with the police.

In addition to his academic training, Curtice has worked with several non-governmental organizations, including consulting as an election data analyst for the Carter Center's election observation missions in the Cherokee Nation, Kenya, Liberia, and Nepal. While elections serve a

critical function in any democracy, his experience working with the Carter Center showed him the dangers of focusing on elections as a critical marker of democracy without also considering how the police interact with citizens. His experience working with policymakers, politicians, and practitioners informs much of why he studies how civilian-police interactions shape cycles of political violence, conflict, and political development.