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*To my students, whose passion for human rights is an inspiration
and a source of great optimism.*

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Political Democracy and State Repression

Christian Davenport

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Reader's Guide

This chapter discusses the relationship between political democracy and state repression. Specifically, it evaluates what research has been conducted on the topic but also what has been ignored. Exploration of the United States and its treatment of African Americans is used as an example of how existing research in this field should change. This case emphasizes the importance of disaggregation (regarding institutions, actors, and actions). The chapter concludes with specific suggestions for further development.

Introduction

For hundreds of years, activists, policy makers, and ordinary citizens have been interested in reducing the amount and severity of state coercive behaviour directed against those subject to this power (e.g.

restrictions on speech, association, assembly, and religion, as well as torture, disappearances, and mass killing). It was not until about thirty years ago, however, that this issue was examined systematically within dozens of articles and books. What do we now know about what diminishes state repression?

Research has revealed that only two variables diminish human rights violations: (1) political democracy—political institutions that involve the governed in the process of governing, as well as diverse practices that subject leaders to some degree of oversight/accountability, and (2) economic development—societies that produce greater amounts of wealth typically experience fewer human rights violations (e.g. Hibbs, 1973; Mitchell and McCormick, 1988; Henderson, 1991, 1993; Poe and Tate, 1994; Davenport, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2007a,b; Poe *et al.*, 1999; King, 2000; Zanger, 2000; Camp Keith, 2002; Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*, 2005). Although similar in causal impact, there are some important differences between these factors. First, the impact of democracy has been far greater in magnitude compared to economic development: democracy is simply a more powerful determinant of state repression than the economy. Second, since the Second World War, it appears that the external 'impossibility' and internal development of democracy around the world have been far more successful than efforts to spark economic development (Diamond, 2008). In short, it is easier to create and sustain democracy than economic development.¹ Third, most activists, policy makers, and ordinary citizens see democracy as the solution for repression, and they call for this outcome and mobilize people to achieve this objective in part for this reason (one can find examples for this from the French and Haitian revolutions through the Arab Spring). Such a solution follows a relatively long tradition in political science where democracy is viewed as a resolution to a wide variety of problems, but it also follows a relatively long tradition within policy making and non-governmental organization (NGO) communities as well. Indeed, it is only recently that such thinking has been challenged (e.g. Carothers, 2002; Diamond, 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2002).

Despite the sheer wealth of empirical and popular support for the pacifying influence of democracy on state repression, there are some important limitations with existing work. For example, while correlations are consistently statistically significant, the scholarly community is only just beginning to understand what causal mechanisms are involved, in what manner they function, and within what contexts they are most effective (Davenport, 2007a). As a consequence, there is a great need for further examination. This chapter provides an overview of existing research on the democracy–repression nexus, highlighting its strengths. It also outlines a more nuanced

way of examining the topic, shedding light on the problems with existing work—specifically, the failure to disaggregate democracy and repression across space and actors—and what could be done to address these limitations. These problems are illustrated through a brief discussion of the relationship between democracy and repression within the United States during the 1940s–80s. The final section suggests several areas of investigation that might prove to be lucrative.

Understanding the Democracy–Repression Nexus

To understand why governments ban, beat, torture, disappear, and kill their citizens takes some care. Adopting a version of rationalism, most researchers who study the topic highlight the centrality of government leadership (i.e. the executive) and they employ a simple decision calculus to understand when repressive behaviour will be undertaken (e.g. Dahl, 1966; Walter, 1969; Dallin and Breslauer, 1970; Gurr, 1986; Duvall and Stohl, 1988; Karklins and Peterson, 1993; Simon, 1994; Lichbach, 1995; Gartner and Regan, 1996; Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*, 2005; Davenport, 2007a).² In this work, coercive activity is expected when (1) the perceived benefits of repressing exceed the costs, (2) there are no viable alternatives for socio-political control, and (3) the probability of success from repressive action is high. Repression is not anticipated when benefits are low, costs are high, there are alternatives, and the probability of success is minimal.

Given this framework, exactly why does democracy matter? What is it about these political institutions that reduce state coercion? There are several reasons for a link between democracy and coercive pacification, all directly connected to what is meant by democracy and repressive behaviour—where I will begin.

Democracy and Repression

Within existing research, 'democratic' political institutions generally refer to the minimalist conception of democracy advocated by scholars such as Schumpeter: i.e. competition among elites for electoral support. Here, a mechanism of governance is discussed rather than the end to which that mechanism is directed.³ Of course, there is some variation with regard

to the means highlighted. For example, some focus on the constraints placed on political leaders, highlighting veto 'points' or 'players' and executive constraints (Tsebelis, 2002). Others focus on the participation of the citizenry in popular elections (Davenport, 1997; Richards, 1999a). Others focus on the representative and/or competitiveness of political parties (Richards, 1999b). Still others focus on combinations of these various elements. In all variations, however, the basic point is the same: there are ways of governing that are more 'democratic' than others. For example, a democracy is more likely to place greater constraints on its political leaders so that they will be less able to do what they wish and will consequently feel a greater degree of oversight/constraint. A democracy is more likely to involve more of its citizenry in the selection of its leadership so that those subject to rule can have a greater degree of control over who is guiding the political unit. Finally, a democracy is more likely to have diverse political parties, as well as highly competitive electoral contests between them, so that a wide variety of perspectives can find their way into the political system.

Similarly narrowed is the conception of repression. As conceived in the literature, this phenomenon involves the actual or threatened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, for the purposes of imposing a cost on the target and deterring specific activities and beliefs perceived as challenges to government personnel, practices, or institutions. Like other forms of coercion, repressive behaviour relies on threats and intimidation to compel targets, but it does not concern itself with all coercive applications (e.g. deterrence of violent crime and theft). Rather, it deals with applications of state power that violate rights concerning expression, due process in the enforcement and adjudication of law, and personal integrity or security (Davenport 2007b, p. 2).⁴

Given these definitions, there are several influences that democracy is expected to have on state repression (Davenport 2007b, pp. 10–11). These are adopted by scholars, activists, advocates, and policy makers the world over:

1. Democratic institutions are believed to increase the costs of using repressive behaviour because authorities can be voted out of office if voters find their actions inappropriate.
2. Individuals in democracies generally accept specific values regarding toleration, communication,

and deliberation—values that are challenged and undermined by the use of repression.

3. Democracies provide an alternative mechanism of control through participation and contestation. They also weaken the justification for coercive activity by reducing the likelihood for human conflict and facilitating the conveyance of grievances.

In the first scenario, democracy decreases repression because it frightens policy makers, making them aware that there are repercussions for hurting citizens. In the second, democracy decreases repression because it socializes leaders and citizens to embrace certain actions and beliefs and to reject others. In the third scenario, democracy decreases repression because it provides a different way to influence citizens. For example, by 'channelling' individuals into pre-existing institutions and regulated behaviour, democratic political systems are able to reduce the need for employing other, more violent techniques.

It is with these relationships in mind that scholars analyse relationships between democracy and coercive state behaviour. They want to see if democratic political institutions could deliver on their promise to pacify state coercion. Of course, not all of these analyses are comparable. Rather, there have been some significant changes over time.

For example, the earliest examinations of the democracy–repression nexus adopted a large-*N* approach, where they attempted to identify how democracy (generally a composite index of diverse components such as the polity index [Gurr, 1974; Marshall and Jaggers, 2000] influenced repression in the present across as many *nation-years* as they could obtain data for (e.g. Hibbs, 1973; Ziegenhagen, 1986). Here, it was assumed that movement up the scale of democracy led to movement down the scale of repression. The findings of this body of work were clear and consistent. Across time, space, measurements, and methodological techniques, almost all studies found that democratic political institutions and activities decreased state repressive behaviour. In earlier work I referred to this as a 'domestic democratic peace', mirroring the finding of international relations scholars (Davenport, 2007b, p. 11).

Over time, a few researchers began to speculate about the functional form of this relationship (Muller, 1985; Fein, 1995; Regan and Henderson, 2002; Davenport and Armstrong, 2004). Adopting the same large-*N* approach employed in earlier work, these scholars

argued that democratic institutions did not influence repression in a linear fashion, with every increase in democracy leading to a decrease in repression. Instead, scholars began to suggest that the relationship and theoretical argument functioned in a very different manner, and that the domestic democratic peace might be a bit more optimistic than warranted.

For example, some maintained that it was not the degree of democratization that diminished repression but rather the clarity or certainty with which political leaders governed. A distinctive lack of clarity and certainty characterized political systems in the middle of a democratic continuum, and these so-called 'hybrid' or 'anocratic' regimes prove to be the most repressive. This is commonly referred to as the 'more murder in the middle' (MMM) hypothesis (e.g. Fein, 1995), indicating that these regimes in the middle of the spectrum engage in the most repression (an inverted U-shaped relationship). Researchers examined this proposition by introducing democracy and its square into estimated models, consistently finding support for the argument.

Others maintained that it was not clarity or certainty but 'democraticness' that was crucial to understand. In this view, not all movements to democracy are comparable, and it is only when a certain threshold is passed that we should expect an influence (Davenport and Armstrong 2004; Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*, 2005). In order to examine these relationships and also to consider alternative specifications such as the inverted-U relationship of the MMM hypothesis, the methods adopted in this work were more sophisticated than any attempted earlier. For example, Davenport and Armstrong (2004) employed a variety of sophisticated statistical techniques (e.g. LOESS graphs, the binary decomposition model, and time-series cross-sectional analyses) to estimate relationships. The findings of this work have provided the most definitive results regarding the influence of democracy on repression. As found, the threshold model (where there is no impact until the highest values of democracy are reached) is far superior to any other. In short, there is no murder in the middle—at least nothing extraordinary.

The form of the relationship was not the only part of earlier scholarship questioned by later work. Researchers also began to speculate about exactly what aspect of political democracy wielded an influence on state repression. This question is extremely important, for it focuses discussion on determining which

element of the political system needs to be modified in order to achieve reductions in repressive behaviour. On this point opinions differ, with researchers advocating and exploring diverse components of democratic regimes, including constitutional structure (Davenport, 1996; Camp Keith, 2002), elections (Davenport, 1997; Richards, 1999a), political party diversity (Richards, 1999b; Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*, 2005), veto points (Davenport, 2007a), executive constraints (Davenport, 2004; Bueno de Mesquita *et al.*, 2005), executive constraints weighted by participation (Davenport and Armstrong, 2004), and, more recently, freedom of the press (Davenport *et al.*, 2008).

To examine the relevant relationships, the basic approach used by earlier scholars was modified. In this case, researchers had to disaggregate measures of democracy and use indicators that operationalized the particular mechanisms of interest. This effort was made easier in part because these distinct components were always available; they were just ignored because earlier applications lumped them together into indices. The findings of this research have been mixed. Most of these studies find statistically significant relationships, and thus support is generated for the proposition that there are specific aspects of democracy that influence repression. Unfortunately, there has not yet been an effort to examine all components against one another systematically and competitively. The best of this work has only compared a handful of rival explanations (Bueno de Mesquita, 2005; Davenport, 2007a). Additionally, there has not yet been an attempt to explore non-linear relationships within these disaggregated efforts. The validity of the threshold, as opposed to the MMM hypothesis, has not been examined at the sub-national level.

The Future of the Democracy-Repression Nexus

This section identifies some important elements of what should be the next wave of quantitative research on the relationship between democracy and repression. Specifically, these elements address three limitations with previous work.

First, existing research has ignored the fact that the nation-year might not be the most appropriate unit of analysis. Research on political culture (Elazar, 1972; Putnam, 1994) as well as political violence (Ball *et al.*, 1999; Davenport and Stam, 2003; Boudreau, 2004; Wilkinson, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006) has clearly established that important

differences exist within countries in each of these areas. Indeed, the research has largely problematized all efforts to examine nation-years, showing that factors within countries are more important predictors of repression and that it is inappropriate to argue that whole territorial units are subject to similar influences or influence similarly by the same factors. More directly relevant to the subject at hand, work by Hill (1994) has revealed that the degree of democracy within a nation state (in this case the United States) varies significantly across space. Additionally, historical work by Donner (1990) reveals significant variation in political repression across the USA.

Second, related to the last point, existing research has ignored the fact that different aspects of political democracy may exhibit distinct influences on different repressive agents (i.e. the military, the police, the court system, politicians, and non-state militias at local, state, and national levels). This acknowledges that not all actors engaged in coercive activity are similarly or equally influenced by the same factors.

Third, existing research has largely ignored the fact that repression might influence democracy. This influence is commonly addressed within literature on 'liberalization'—which refers to a 'relaxation' of political repression (Wood, 2000). Here, it is expected that relaxing or reducing repression provides an opening for diverse societal and political actors to promote democratic institutions and behaviour by putting into place diverse mechanisms (e.g. elections and constraints on policy making) that further reduce the likelihood of repression.

Why have these issues been ignored? There are several reasons. One of the most important is that the data used for analyses of the democracy-repression nexus are generally aggregated to the nation-year, and there was nothing that could be analysed at a more fine-grained level. This is beginning to change.⁵ Over the last few years, researchers have been disaggregating political and conflict processes with greater frequency. Another important factor is that democracy scholars have not been particularly interested in repression and have been more interested in economic development (e.g. Lipset, 1959; Burkhart and Lewis-Beck, 1994; Przeworski, 2000). Indeed, democracy scholars rarely use the word repression, focusing instead on 'liberalization'. In contrast, repression scholars have long been interested in political democracy.

To redirect scholarship and improve our understanding of what is taking place when repression is applied, therefore, it is imperative that researchers focus within states—paying close attention to who is

engaging in repressive behaviour, where they are in the state, how they are connected to those in power, and what connection (if any) they have to relevant democratic institutions. To provide an example of how researchers might begin to think about these issues, a discussion is given in the next section of perhaps the most famous case of how varied quality in democracy within a country influenced the application of repressive action within that country: the coercion of African Americans in the South between the 1940s and 1980s.

KEY POINTS

Theoretically, scholars have treated the relationship between democracy and repression through a rationalist framework, focusing on the costs/benefits of repression, alternatives for social-political control, and the probability of success.

First wave scholarship on democracy and repression found a linear relationship: the more democracy, the less repression.

Second wave scholarship agrees that democracy has a significant influence on repression, but challenges the linear nature of this relationship. Scholars have identified an inverted U-shaped relationship, with 'more murder in the middle' of the democratic spectrum, and a threshold level of democraticness beyond which repression decreases. The evidence supports the threshold argument.

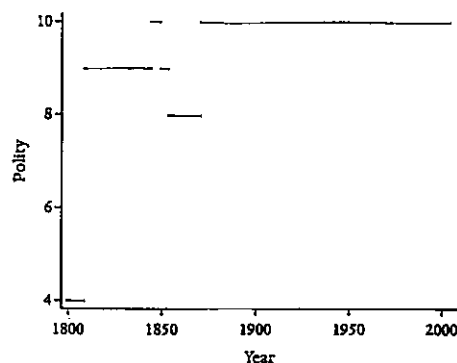
Different aspects of democracy matter—and matter differently—with respect to their influence on levels of repression. Elections, political party diversity, veto points, executive constraints, competition weighted by participation, and freedom of the press are factors shown empirically to influence repression.

The nation-year is a problematic unit of analysis. More comprehensive evaluation of the influence of repression in democracy should be considered. These issues have so far been ignored because of a lack of data and because democracy scholars have typically been more interested in economic considerations and uninterested in repression.

Case Study: Democracy and Repression in the United States: A Peculiar Story of African American Persecution and Freedom

Most people in the United States think of human rights violations as being something that takes place in authoritarian regimes or in democratic transitions;

Figure 8.1 Democracy in the United States: The Polity Index, 1800–2004.



places far, far away. I could thus discuss the continued repression found in Tunisia after the minor increases in democracy resulting from the reforms of the Arab Spring of 2011 in connection with the threshold argument or discuss the continued manifestation of state repressive action in South Africa after the fall of Apartheid. I wish to alter this practice and argue that the same insights we have discussed apply to the US case. Indeed, I will go on to argue that this case allows us to explore several of the issues raised in this chapter with greater depth and nuance.

When most people think of the USA, they think of it as a democracy—perhaps *the* democracy. This is consistent with the views of some of the most prominent scholars of the topic (e.g. Dahl, 1966, 1971; Huntington, 1991; Held, 1996). It is also consistent with some of the most prominent measures of the concept. For example, considering ‘the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative policies and leaders’ and ‘the existence of institutionalized constraints on the exercise of power by the executive’ (Marshall and Jaggers, 2000, p. 22) between 1800 to 2004,⁶ the polity index indicates that, except for the earliest part of the 1800s, the United States has been in the highest categories of democracy for about two hundred years (see Fig. 8.1 and Box 8.1). During the early 1800s there were significant restrictions on the regulation of parties, but these were changed in 1809 during James Madison’s inaugural year—a point after which the USA would never return to a level below the highest two categories on the measure.

BOX 8.1 Understanding the Polity Measure

Polity is conceived on a 10-point scale—with 10 as the highest value of ‘democracy’ and ‘autocracy’ that one could achieve. Different points are provided for distinct aspects of political democracy. In this project, a 10 point score represents the most developed democracy with no restrictions on political parties, significant restrictions on the executive and no limitations on who could run for national-level leadership positions. A 0 represents a situation where none of these exist. Source: Gurr, T., Marshall, M., Davenport, C., and Jaggers, K. (2002). Polity IV, 1800–1999: A reply to Munck and Verkuilen. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35/1, 40–45. Additional source for polity project: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>.

Disaggregating Nation States

Now, immediately someone will note that the quality of this democracy was limited for much of this history. For instance, women had not obtained the right to vote until 1920 (with the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution) and African Americans, the focus of this chapter, were effectively disenfranchised until 1965, when the Voting Rights Act was passed.⁷ The neglect of this point can be directly attributed to the measure being used. Polity does not include information on suffrage, and thus this issue would not (and has not) come up in most of the research relying upon this indicator (which is the most popular indicator for democracy in the social sciences). This issue

of neglect should not be levied against only Polity. Given the similarities between this measure and others it is likely that this would be the same for them as well (e.g. Munck and Verkuilen, 2002).

When one considers suffrage in the African American case, however, it is clear that variability in democracy exists, especially in the southern part of the country. Indeed, it is generally understood that, from the period of slavery through the late 1960s and early 1970s, extensive voting rights restrictions and other aspects of authoritarianism existed in the Deep South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.⁸ These restrictions were almost exclusively based on ethnicity. Historically, there is thus significant spatial variation within the United States regarding the quality of political democracy as gauged by one of its core components—the right to participate in the political process.⁹

Even after accepting this point, we should be careful not simply to view all of these states as comparable. Although uniformly less democratic (more authoritarian) in nature towards blacks, there was significant variation even among these southern states. For example, the percentage of voting age African Americans registered to vote was less than 0.5 in Alabama (where blacks make up 35 per cent of the total population), Louisiana (36%), Mississippi (49%), and South Carolina (43%); the percentage of voting age African Americans registered to vote was between 2 and 9 per cent in Arkansas (25%), Florida (27%), Georgia (35%), Texas (14%), and Virginia (25%); and the percentage of voting age African Americans registered to vote was between 10 and 16 per cent in North Carolina and Tennessee—where, respectively, blacks made up 27% and 17% of the total population (Hill, 1994, p. 29).

Looking at party competition reveals similar patterns (Hill, 1994, p. 60). Here, we find that Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee were one-party, and thus less competitive, Democratic states in the 1940s. South Dakota, Vermont, and North Dakota were one-party Republican states. In contrast, Rhode Island, Missouri, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Delaware, Montana, Nebraska, Colorado, Connecticut, and Illinois were two-party, competitive states.

While one could obviously extend a discussion of repressive activity directed against African Americans back to slavery and the slave codes (1619–1865) or

the legal restrictions and activities of the black codes (1800–66), I focus on the period associated with *Jim Crow* (1876–1965; see Box 8.2). Although neglecting the worst horrors of the earlier periods (e.g. torture in the form of floggings and whippings as well as political terror in the form of lynchings), this period is of interest because it immediately precedes the efforts to desegregate (begun with *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*), the civil rights movement (1955–68), and the so-called democratic revolution within the South (in the Civil and Voting Rights Acts). This period therefore establishes the context within which three of the most important events in US democratic history occur. It is also the period that has some of the most extensive documentation on relevant government activities, and it immediately follows the initial period of data collection undertaken by Hill (as discussed).

By far the most extensive effort to identify state authorized/required restrictions on African Americans during the *Jim Crow* era was undertaken by Pauli Murray (1951). This voluminous work identified all of the legislative controls that were imposed to enforce racial segregation across a wide variety of categories: amusements, public halls, education, employment, hospitals, penal institutions, welfare institutions, transportation, and miscellaneous. The work was intended to be as comprehensive as possible:

[t]he compilation includes segregation and anti-miscegenation statutes, laws relating to public accommodations and which are popularly called ‘civil rights’ laws,

BOX 8.2 Jim Crow Laws

At diverse periods in time, the United States legal system established very specific restrictive (i.e. repressive) laws regarding the civil liberties of African Americans. During slavery (1619 to 1863) there were the ‘slave codes’. These outlined a wide variety of limitations on what slaves could do, as well as what masters and ordinary whites could do against them. Later, there were ‘black codes’ in the South but also the North, which attempted to deal with African Americans after the ending of slavery (between 1866 and 1875). By 1876, however, there was a more detailed and formalized system of laws that emerged to separate blacks and whites throughout almost all dimensions of public as well as private life. These laws were largely found within the South, although some could be found in the North as well.

fair educational practice acts, fair employment practice acts, statutes directed against lynching and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, alien land laws, and miscellaneous anti-discrimination measures.

(Murray, 1951, p. 5)

This said, Murray was careful not to misrepresent the effort, stating that the compilation, while extensive, is not complete (*Ibid.*). Additionally, she notes that her research does not interpret laws but rather presents what they say and draws the direct implications of this language. The actual implementation of the laws is ignored, creating the possibility that the real world looked different from the one imagined by the statutes.

What type of repressiveness do we see when this work is considered? In the situation of relative political authoritarianism—that is, black disenfranchisement with white (ethnic) domination of both the political, social and economic systems—how were African Americans treated? Murray's summary table is replicated in Table 8.1.

What is perhaps most striking from the compiled information is the wide variety of restrictions that were placed on blacks. Moving through the table, one is able to see that races were segregated in pool rooms, race tracks, circuses, schools, facilities at work, medical care, prison, housing, and even diverse forms of sports, such as boxing. Mirroring the discussion we have had about democracy, we also see significant variation across space. Directly in line with expectations, the least democratic states are the most restrictive on African Americans: Alabama (with 18 different types of restriction out of 51), Arkansas (20), Florida (19), Georgia (16—the low), Louisiana (19), Mississippi (21), North Carolina (26—the high), South Carolina (23), Tennessee (18), Texas (21), and Virginia (23). Within these states one sees pervasive limitations across diverse aspects of life, reflecting a clear effort to keep blacks 'within their place' and to prevent racial mixing.

In contrast, there are no segregation restrictions authorized by law in the states that would traditionally be conceived as being the most democratic in the 1940s: e.g. Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont. Similarly, in states fairly high on a democracy scale there were a few or a single restriction: e.g. Washington, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, and Colorado.

Repression varied by category. For example, by far the largest number of restrictions existed in the realm of education. Not only were there extensive

attempts made to prevent ordinary young children from coming together in public and private institutions, but there were also attempts made to separate those having trouble in school (juvenile delinquents), those who were challenged in some way (the deaf, blind, and dumb), as well as those seeking to improve themselves by learning a trade or pursuing higher education. The second most pervasive restriction, across states, existed in the realm of intermarriage. This particular category is interesting because this prohibition was adopted, not only by all states in the South, but also within almost all other states at the time.

In line with existing literature, therefore, we find some preliminary support for the argument that the lowest levels of democracy, viewed at the sub-national level, were associated with some of the highest levels of political repression. Interestingly, there is also some support for the linear argument when whole countries are disaggregated. For example, while West Virginia would normally be considered to be on the middle of a democratic continuum (Hill, 1994, p. 96), it is found at the mid-level of repression during the period in question, with 14 restrictions being found. As West Virginia is generally considered to be part of the upper-South/mid-Atlantic (between what is traditionally considered the South and North—thus not subject to all of the cultural and political influences in either), this middle position makes sense. This argument also accounts for the orientation of Maryland (with 12 restrictions). In line with this, Oklahoma would normally be considered to be on the lower end of a democratic continuum—i.e. authoritarianism (Hill, 1994, p. 98). This accounts well for its relatively high level of repressiveness (with 21 restrictions).

From an evaluation of democracy (suffrage and party competitiveness) and repression (restrictions on civil liberties) across the states of the USA, therefore, it is clear that the basic argument of the domestic democratic peace is sustained at a lower-level aggregation below the nation state: more democratic states (i.e. states where blacks had the right to vote and where party competition was higher) tended to repress African Americans less (i.e. these states tended to have fewer restrictions on what blacks could do). This work suggests that it is not only possible but crucial to examine relationships within and not just across countries. National-level assessments of political democracy and state repression are simply too coarse to capture adequately the reality on the ground. The aggregation of these highly varied experiences might also result in misperceptions of causal relationships.

Aspects of Democracy and Repression

Within this brief chapter, I do not mean to suggest that all aspects of democracy are relevant for all aspects of repression. I have highlighted that two often-neglected aspects of US democracy, suffrage and party competition, were crucial for understanding exactly why repression was enacted against part of the American population: African American citizens did not have the ability to select less-repressive leaders, nor did they have the opportunity to remove legally those who engaged in behaviour that they disliked. In this context, those interested in using repressive action were able to do so with impunity.

Another illustration from the American case concerns the existence of vigilantes and popular militias. After the *Brown* decision by the Supreme Court in 1954, which eliminated the legal justification for separate educational facilities, it was left for state authorities to enforce the ruling. This was extremely problematic in two ways. First, because some authorities, as well as diverse citizen organizations such as the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission and White City Councils, did not support the ruling, those attempting to exercise their newly-won rights were left unprotected. As a result, it was frequently the case that restrictive practices were allowed to continue for some time. Second, enforcement was problematic because African Americans and whites who attempted to adhere to the newly established federal law were hindered by local-level violence and repression enacted by mobs, Klansmen, and other whites—violence and repression abetted by police and political inactivity.

The situation did not continue indefinitely.

After the beating of a white minister who was trying to help black students enter the school... (U.S. Attorney General) Brownwell... announced the federal government would prosecute persons who forcefully interfered with the integration of Clinton High. U.S. marshals then received orders to round up troublemakers, and on December 5, 1956, the Justice Department for the first time asserted its own authority to halt interference with a desegregation order. (Belknap, 1987, p. 39)

National guardsmen, the US military, and agents of the Justice Department were used in similar situations throughout the South.

This development was important because local instability, caused by a lack of effective policing of a

hostile part of the white population, compelled a response from higher-level political authorities as the unrest directly addressed the federal government's ability to enact laws and policies. In short, the violence not only threatened human life but directly challenged the rule of law and maintenance of order that were essential for the functioning of the political system. As an Eisenhower speechwriter recalled after the fact:

[t]he President, so slow to take firm federal action in support of civil rights, could and would respond with dispatch to a public challenge to presidential and constitutional authority.

(Belknap, 1987, p. 49)

As the President stated, '[f]ailure to act... would be tantamount to acquiescence in anarchy and the dissolution of the union' (in Belknap, 1987, p. 49). In this context, it was revealed that democratic processes within certain aspects of government do not directly resonate with all aspects of the repressive apparatus. Indeed, they might be completely disconnected from one another.

Another example is provided by federal responses to the extensive bombing campaign undertaken by supporters of white supremacy in the mid-to-late 1950s and into the 1960s. By this time, African Americans were less likely to be targeted with the lynch rope. Rather, given the higher degree of mobilization, extremist whites used explosives to undermine black organizations and to intimidate those seeking an extension of democracy. Towards this end, the homes of religious leaders (such as Martin Luther King Jr) were targeted. In addition to this, meeting places (churches and education facilities) were also targeted.

Unlike the high degree of political complicity identified above, in this case local officials moved against white extremism. As stated by Belknap (1987, p. 55), 'most public officials in the South do seem to have made a sincere effort to stamp out the epidemic of dynamiting that was plaguing their region'. The evidence was clear.

In South Carolina the attorney general, the governor, and the chairman of the judiciary committees in both houses of the legislature all pressed for tougher laws against bombing and bomb threats. Tennessee Governor Frank Clement and Alabama Governor James Folsom both offered rewards for information leading to the arrest of bombers. So did Montgomery's mayor and city commissioners. Perhaps the best evidence of how serious southern officials were about halting the terroristic use of explosives was their creation of the

Table 8.1 Segregation Authorized or Required by State Law (Murray, 1951, Chart III).

States →																																																								
Discriminatory Practice Int	AL	AK	AR	CA	CO	CT	DE	DC	FL	GA	ID	IL	IN	IA	KS	KY	LA	ME	MD	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	MT	NE	NV	NH	NJ	NM	NY	NC	ND	OH	OK	OR	PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VT	VA	WA	WV	WI	WY							
Amusement																																																								
Billiards									✓																																															
Public halls																																																								
Parks																																																								
Public halls																																																								
Racetracks			✓																																																					
Circuses																																																								
Education																																																								
Constitutional provision	✓						✓		✓	✓						✓	✓							✓		✓							✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓			
Statutory provision— public school	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓					✓		✓							✓		✓		✓			✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
Private school									✓							✓																			✓						✓															
Schools for deaf			✓				✓	✓								✓	✓						✓										✓		✓					✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Schools for dumb																																																								
Schools for blind			✓						✓							✓	✓							✓									✓		✓					✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Reform schools	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓		✓				✓		✓								✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Trade schools	✓	✓								✓	✓					✓	✓							✓		✓								✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		
Higher education	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓						✓	✓		✓					✓		✓							✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓			
Teacher's training	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓						✓	✓		✓					✓		✓							✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓			
Separate schools— Indians							✓																	✓									✓																							
Separate textbooks— black/white									✓																									✓																						
Separate libraries																																																								
Employment																																																								
Separate washrooms in mines			✓																																																					
Separate toilets in manufacturing businesses																																																								
Segregation in cotton textile factories																																																								
Hospitals																																																								
Segregation generally																																																								
Mental patients	✓								✓							✓	✓		✓							✓								✓		✓			✓	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Tubercular patients	✓						✓									✓			✓																✓					✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Nursing	✓																																																							
Penal institutions									✓																																															

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

States →																																																				
Discriminatory																																																				
Practice in		AL	AK	AR	CA	CO	CT	DE	DC	FL	GA	ID	IL	IN	IA	KS	KY	LA	ME	MD	MA	MI	MN	MS	MO	MT	NE	NV	NH	NJ	NM	NY	NC	ND	OH	OK	OR	PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VT	VA	WA	WV	WI	WY		
Segregation generally		✓	✓							✓	✓							✓					✓											✓						✓	✓			✓								
Separate chain gangs		✓	✓							✓																								✓						✓												
Welfare institutions																																																				
Homes for ageing/orphans								✓									✓	✓															✓		✓						✓	✓							✓			
Paupers		✓																																																✓		
Transportation																																																				
Buses		✓	✓							✓	✓							✓					✓											✓		✓				✓	✓			✓								
Railroads		✓	✓							✓	✓						✓	✓		✓				✓										✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓								
Street cars, etc.			✓							✓								✓			✓													✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓								
Steamboats/ferries																				✓														✓						✓												
Waiting rooms		✓	✓							✓								✓					✓											✓		✓				✓	✓			✓								
Sleeping compartments			✓								✓												✓																				✓									
Miscellaneous																																																				
Mixed marriages																																																				
White-Negro/Mulatto		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
White-Indian																																																				
White-Asian				✓	✓						✓	✓									✓																															
Cohabitation prohibited		✓	✓							✓								✓			✓																															
Adoption by persons of same race only																																																				
Separate army battalions														✓																																						
White-Negro boxing prohibited																																																				
White-Negro fraternal organization prohibited																																																				
Cannot advocate social equality																																																				
Telephone booths																																																				
Voting lists, etc.		✓	✓								✓		✓																																							
Voting places			✓																																																	
Housing																		✓																																		

Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

Southern Conference on Bombing (SCB). Initiated by Jacksonville Mayor Haydon Burns after dynamite ripped a black high school and a Jewish community center in his city, the SCB began with a meeting of seventy delegates in May 1958. The founders included ten mayors and law enforcement officers from twenty-one southern communities.

(Belknap, 1987, p. 55)

The reason for their willingness to act was not attributable merely to the fact that they felt that lethal violence was deemed unacceptable and to popular fears of growing conflict. Rather, it was that they feared that if they could not control overt activity directed against African Americans attempting to exercise rights granted by higher political institutions, that others at the federal level would do so. Although initially federal authorities under President Eisenhower were hesitant about becoming involved, over time, a variety of new laws or newly interpreted laws facilitated and enhanced federal involvement. For example, the intrastate nature of the violence was used to invoke federal authority in connection with the transportation of explosives and incitement to violence. The implications of these developments were significant but not too far-reaching—at least not in the short term. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 created new federal offences with significant punishments, but it represented simply another step along a continuum of increasing federal intrusion into the southern states. It would not be until the violence associated with the Freedom Riders and vicious attacks on non-violent demonstrations associated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference a few years later that even greater strides would be made in this direction.

This element of the story is better known and will not be discussed here. What is important is that southern political actors eventually decided to enforce federal law and subdue those within their communities who were engaged in violent behaviour. This represented a sea change in the attitude and behaviour of local government authorities. It also paved the way for the development of democracy within the South.

Repression as a Determinant of Political Democracy

What is interesting about the case under discussion is that different actors engaged in different repressive acts, having important implications for the overall outcome. For example, within the South legal and political

restrictions as well as violence were enacted against African Americans. Some of these activities were undertaken by agents of the state (e.g. politicians, judges, and police officers) but some were not (e.g. White City Councils and Klansmen). In some cases, these were the same people. Whatever the case, those who were not favourably disposed toward African Americans were outmatched and outnumbered. Additionally, there was little possibility of any punishment being levied against the perpetrators of repressive activities. After changes at the federal level—in the realm of law as well as political sensibility—this situation changed. In this context, those who were against black persecution (particularly the more violent form, which was not popularly supported) had greater leverage for challenging the repressors. Additionally, there was a growing (albeit slow) possibility that the actions undertaken would be investigated and potentially prosecuted.

What becomes interesting is that repression that was once enacted or supported by local authorities became criminalized as political officials and diverse citizens attempted to distance themselves from what was taking place. At the same time, the federal government began increasingly to engage in repressive activity against the subset of the southern population that had been marginalized by its adoption of and commitment to racial violence—something that was viewed as disruptive and threatening to law and order, not to mention unconstitutional.

[b]etween roughly 1960 and 1980, a literal revolution in political rights occurred, giving millions of previously disenfranchised citizens the right to vote and otherwise participate in the governmental process. That change was largely the product of federal government intervention in voting rights policy, with the express purpose of making our political process more democratic. Doubtless, too, that intervention has made this a more democratic nation.

(Hill, 1994, p. 18)

Not all things had improved to the same degree, however. While the number of 'democratic' states increased dramatically over time (none would now be considered autocratic), the Deep South still falls at the bottom of any summary measure: Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Texas, Alabama, Louisiana, and North Carolina remain the least democratic of the American states (Hill, 1994, pp. 96–98).

The US case is somewhat at odds with existing democracy scholarship in numerous ways. First, it is an increase

in repression and not its relaxation that appears to explain the movement to democracy within the American South. Or, perhaps a certain degree of targeted repression precedes the relaxation that other scholars highlight, thus pushing the relevant time period for study backwards in time. This would seem to be similar to the South African case, as the African National Congress was subject to a significant amount of repression prior to the de-radicalization of its political programme and negotiation with the Apartheid government. Second, the same acts are interpreted quite differently under different contexts. For example, what was earlier tolerated, supported, and sometimes enacted by government officials later became intolerable, unsupported, criminalized, and prosecuted. This leads us to focus on not only what is done but by whom, acknowledging that clear associations with political authorities may not always be possible.

KEY POINTS

Generally, researchers consider country-level assessments of democracy and repression, but this is problematic. For example, in the case of the United States and the treatment of African Americans, there was incredible variation in the quality of democracy and repression across states. Some states were quite democratic and treated African Americans quite well. Other states were quite autocratic in nature and treated blacks poorly. All of these states were found within the same country.

Perhaps the most important aspect of democracy regarding African Americans was the right to participate. For most of their existence in the US, blacks were not able to vote. Consequently, they were not able to hold authorities responsible for the coercive treatment they endured. In those states where blacks were able to vote, they tended to be treated better.

Repression can also facilitate political democracy. By eliminating those within the society who were coercively engaging with other citizens (e.g. local elites suppressing the freedom of African Americans), the federal government was able to facilitate the extension of democracy at the local level.

The Path to Peace: Directions for Future Research

This chapter has attempted to provide an overview of the existing literature regarding the relationship

between democracy and repression as expressed within the quantitative research community—work extending back over approximately forty years. This review involved identifying the general approach and findings of this work, noting both strengths (rigour and consistency in results) and weaknesses (a failure to examine causal mechanisms in greater detail as well as a failure to disaggregate units of analysis). The historical case of the United States, with specific reference to the treatment of African Americans, was used as an example of exactly what is being missed within existing research. This section seeks to outline more precisely what subsequent examinations of the democracy–repression nexus must address in order for our understanding of the topic to improve.

Different Questions

The first shift in scholarship that I would recommend concerns a transformation in the type of questions that are asked. It is no longer necessary to ask if democracy influences state repression and human rights violations or even to ask about the nature of the specific relationship. This issue has already been addressed. It is now important for researchers to pinpoint the causal mechanisms at work—to identify exactly which aspect of democracy is relevant and for what type of repression, as well as for which repressive agents. The latter issue is much less developed than the others. In following from this, it would also be valuable to explore how and why variation in democracy within a country leads to variation in repression within the same territorial jurisdiction. It is no longer appropriate to talk about democracy influencing human rights violations without acknowledging that the quality of democracy varies across relevant territorial units.

A different line of inquiry, one that is clearly emerging in the pages of newspapers around the world, is the issue of subcontracting. It has recently been discovered that many governments (including some democracies) send those whom they wish to be tortured or otherwise coerced to other countries to be dealt with (see Chapter 18). This is important, for it reveals that political leaders have a concern with the costs involved with relevant behaviour: they fear being discovered as it could cause them to lose legitimacy or office. At the same time, it reveals that political leaders are not deterred from repressive action as much as they are deterred from repressing in an obvious fashion. These

issues need to be explored in greater detail. Related to this is the issue of non-lethal mechanisms of torture. It has recently been discovered (e.g. Rejali, 2007) that democracies have pioneered the use of repressive techniques that are less likely to leave trace evidence (such as marks on the victims). This again reveals that, while the costs of repression influence democracies, they may simply lead to shifts in tactics away from the most obvious/egregious forms of repression. Similar arguments could be made about the use of political surveillance.

Disaggregating Data

To explore the issues raised above, there would need to be a fundamental change in how researchers conceptualize the relevant unit of analysis. While most literature in comparative politics and international relations examines nation-years, it is imperative that future analyses of the topic consider lower-level aggregations. It is becoming less reasonable to assume that one summary score captures well the degree of democracy within a country. There is significant variation within nation states regarding the role and influence of the mass population, as well as the type and magnitude of restraints on political authorities. In addition to this, the role and use of diverse repressive tactics in their efforts to establish and maintain sociopolitical order varies significantly within nation states. If researchers, policy makers, activists, and ordinary citizens are interested in understanding how repressive power is wielded by political authorities, it is incumbent upon them to explore the nuances of exactly how coercion is wielded.

Relevance

A third and final direction for future research concerns the connection between human rights scholarship, policy, and activism. For too long these areas have been held apart from one another—to the detriment of all. This is unfortunate because discussions and debates about the 'war on terror', counter-insurgency, and protest policing have taken place without being informed by an important branch of social science devoted to studying precisely these topics. This is also unfortunate because round tables, journal articles, and academic books on these subjects have been developed without any concern for their immediate

and practical implications in the current context. For example, one area of research and policy that would be improved by explicit consideration of the democracy-repression nexus is democratic development and the effectiveness of counter-insurgency. Within my recent book examining 137 countries from 1976 to 1996, I find that, while certain aspects of democracy (measures of competition/participation and executive constraints) influence repression in the expected manner, some do not (suffrage and the number of veto players). Additionally, I find that the pacifying influence of democracy on repressive behaviour is increased in the context of inter-state war, decreased in the context of violent dissent, and mixed in the context of civil war. As Iraq has revealed all three contexts, it thus provides an interesting opportunity for the generalizability of this argument to be further explored. Unfortunately, the insights garnered from a human rights/repression approach have not yet been applied to this case; most individuals engaged in research on this topic have adopted approaches developed within the areas of inter-state and civil war (as well as the somewhat less rigorous work on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism). Applying the democracy-repression nexus to this case and competitively evaluating it against arguments emerging within other disciplines and sub-fields of political science might prove to be useful as we attempt to understand how political violence is used and could be lessened in the world.

KEY POINTS

Researchers need to improve the way in which they think about the relationship between democracy and repression. For example, they need to ask different questions, moving to understand exactly how democracy influences repression and why.

Researchers need to modify how they gather information about democracy and repression, collecting information on a highly disaggregated level. This would allow examinations to be as accurate and as realistic as possible.

Researchers as well as policy makers and activists should attempt to overcome their differences and work together on the problems that concern all of them: the elimination or reduction of state repression.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the relationship between political democracy and state repression—the democracy-repression nexus. It began with an evaluation of the diverse ways in which researchers have investigated the relationship, discussing dominant conceptualizations, consistent findings, and diverse puzzles that have emerged from this work: (1) disaggregating nation states and exploring within-country variation, (2) considering how different aspects of democracy influence different types of repression, and (3) considering how repressive behaviour influences political democracy. The chapter then explored these different puzzles

within the context of the United States and its treatment of African Americans. The chapter ended with several suggestions for future research. These included: shifting the questions that are being asked from the general issue of whether and if democracy influences repression to how and where; improving the way that data is collected to facilitate an examination of relationships in a more disaggregated and nuanced fashion; and, finally, making a better connection between academic research and political activism and policy making that allows the discussions taking place in each venue to be receptive to and influenced by the other.



QUESTIONS

Individual Study Questions

1. What is democracy?
2. What is repression?
3. Why and how does democracy influence repression?
4. What are the common errors in existing scholarship?
5. What should be examined in the future?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Can democracy and repression be separated from one another conceptually?
2. Do you believe that democracy influences repression, that repression influences democracy, or both?
3. Do you believe that democracy or economic development is more important for reducing state repression?



FURTHER READING

Della Porta, D. and Reiter, H. (1998). *Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies*. Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota Press.

This book discusses general approaches to how dissent is repressed within political democracies.

Gibson, J. L. (1988). Political intolerance and political repression during the McCarthy Red Scare. *American Political Science Review*, 82/2, 511–529.

This article provides an insightful analysis of the causal mechanisms involved with democratic applications of state repression.

Mitchell, N. *Democracy's Blameless Leaders: From Dresden to Abu Ghraib, How Leaders Evade Accountability for Abuse, Atrocity, and Killing*. New York: New York University Press.

Powell, G. B. (2000). *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

This book explores how and to what degree democracy can function as a mechanism of popular will.

Reiter, D. and Stam, A. C. (2002). *Democracies at War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

This book explores exactly how and why democracies do what they do when conflict is under way—specifically when they enter and how they fight wars.

Stohl, M. (1976). *War and Domestic Political Violence: The American Capacity for Repression and Reaction*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

This book explores the dynamics of how democracies use repression within situations of inter-state war.



WEB LINKS

Human rights and repression data. This link provides information on all known human rights/repression databases.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/> *US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor*. This site provides information on human rights conditions in the United States and throughout the world. There are also links to US evaluations of their efforts to establish democracies around the world.

<http://coginta.com/> *The World Database on Policing*. This site has information about policing institutions from around the world.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/themap/map.html> *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*. This site provides an interactive mapping program that allows the viewer to explore diverse aspects of the Jim Crow system (e.g. the laws, population movements associated with the relevant period, and violent activity directed against African Americans).

<http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/resources/gateway.htm> *The History of Jim Crow*. This site provides a variety of easily accessible resources on the topic.

<http://www.inmotionaame.org/home.cfm?bhcp=1> *In Motion—The African American Migration Experience*. This site links to a variety of maps across US history that capture the physical movement of African Americans throughout the states.



NOTES

1. Since the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the opinions about imposing democracy have shifted, but that these political systems have been created with greater frequency is undeniable.
2. As discussed by Goldstein (1978, p. 558):
3. As noted by Goldstein (1978, p. 558):

The most important, and the only variable which *must* change for levels of political repression to change, is the attitude of policy-making authorities with regard to political dissidents. In order for political repression to increase, political authorities must decide to take actions that will increase it; in order for political repression to decrease, political authorities must decide to take actions that will decrease it. These actions manifest a shift in attitude on the part of political authorities, and this shift is the only variable which, by itself, can change the level of political repression.

4. This is problematic for those who advocate a liberal-democratic perspective (e.g. Dahl, 1971; Beetham, 1994; Diamond, 2008) because there is a conscientious effort made to separate means/processes and ends/objectives.
5. There is a new project that is working on this explicitly but it is not yet completed: <https://v-dem.net/>.

6. Clearly the conception adopted here is a bit more encompassing than that applied by others, which tends to focus on only one aspect of coercive governance. As a result, there is a wide variety of activities that would be included: e.g. mass killing, torture, disappearances, imprisonment, political banning, wiretapping, and the use of agents provocateurs. Regardless of the increased scope of behaviour believed to be relevant, however, it is readily understood what is at issue: coercive behaviour directed against citizens for the explicit purpose of controlling what they think and do.
7. This is broken into four components: the competitiveness of executive recruitment, the openness of executive recruitment, constraints on the chief executive, and the competitiveness of political participation.
8. Although the Fifteenth Amendment made restrictions based on race illegal in 1870, there was still a wide variety of strategies employed to prevent African Americans from participating.
9. Many scholars also note that southern politics was not only about how whites would control blacks but also which whites would exercise this control (Woodward, 1951, p. 328).



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<http://www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/goodhart2e/>