Response memo

"Examining Repressive and Oppressive State Violence using the Ill-Treatement and Torture Data"

15 August 2019

We would like to thank the editor for the opportunity to revise our manuscript, and thank the reviewers for their helpful comments. We have made several revisions along the lines suggested by referees and the manuscript has improved as a result. To address R1's comment about the overlap between violence targeting dissidents and violence against ethnic minorities, we have added to the manuscript several examples of violence with no clear political motive from various Amnesty reports, including violence against ethnic minority groups. R1 was also concerned about our argument that the public is willing to tolerate abuse of minorities, in light of Inglehart's argument about post-materialist values. We have conducted a brief analysis, which we summarize below, to address this point. We have also conducted additional regression analyses using variables that account for the varying quality of information across countries, as suggested by R1. In addition, we have added figures comparing out-of-sample fit for our regression models, which we did not include in the previous version of the manuscript. We respond to the reviewer comments in more detail, as needed, below.

R1

> This manuscript explores the possible divergent impact that democratic institutions might have on repressive (politically motivated) and oppressive (not politically motivated) violence. The authors argue and provide evidence that democratic institutions, particularly those focusing on political competition and leader constraints, are more strongly associated with repressive violence than oppressive violence. The overall theoretical argument concerning the differences between the institutional predictors of repressive ad oppressive violence is quite interesting and a significant contribution to the relevant literatures on state violence and political institutions. Provided the authors successfully address a few theory- and data-related issues that I raise below, I would recommend the publication of this manuscript after a round of major revisions.

> The differences between politically motivated and other types of violence could be explained better. First, it may not be entirely convincing to argue that repression and violence that ethnic minority groups face is not very often politically motivated regardless of whether members of a minority group facing violence identify themselves as dissidents (pp. 5-6). It is possible that dominant groups that control the state might perceive members of a rival ethnic group as a political threat and thus commit systematic political repression. To make this argument stronger, the authors should at least provide a few specific examples from different countries where violence against ethnic minority groups had no discernable political motivation.

We appreciate the point that abuse of ethnic minorities is often politically motivated, even when victims are not actually members of any organized political group. There is certainly some overlap between the abuse of members of marginalized communities and the abuse of (perceived) dissidents. Most obviously, ethnically-based insurgencies often lead to discrimination and violence against members of the ethnic group who have no connection to violent dissident activity. Also, in places where peaceful opposition groups are largely organized along ethnic lines, e.g. groups in Latin America that advocate for land reform that would benefit indigenous groups, there is some overlap between these types of state violence. However, there are also plenty of cases with no identifiable political motive. The previous version of the manuscript included some brief examples of this kind of violence on p. 10 where the ITT data are introduced. We have moved these discussion to this section (pp. 5-7) and expanded it considerably to provide more examples of oppressive violence (all from democratic countries). These include the abuse of criminal suspects in Brazil, immigrants in Germany, and Roma in Hungary. We add that it is, unfortunately, relatively easy to find in most reports allegations of oppressive abuse that targets members of the black and latino communities in the

US, immigrants and foreign nationals in most European countries (and the US), Roma in many European countries, and members of certain castes in India.

> The theoretical argument regarding why oppressive violence will not trigger a major public response could be explained better. The assumption that the public will not punish their democratically elected leaders when ethnic minorities or other marginalized groups face violence seems to be conditioned by the level of modernization and political polarization in a given democracy. As Inglehart and others have long argued, citizens in post-materialist societies (like northern European countries) tend to express significant interest in and support for minority and immigrant rights as much as their own basic survival and in-group political interests. The authors could perhaps provide some public opinion data using Eurobarometer and other regional public opinion data sources on the average public support for issues like respect for human rights of immigrant groups and other minorities to better substantiate their theoretical claim. That is, they could provide evidence to establish their claim that rights violations targeting marginalized groups are usually not politically salient issues.

Though we did not include it to conserve space, we used the World Values Survey to briefly examine this issue. The 2005-2009 surveys include an item asking respondents to rate their feelings about ethnic diversity on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents the opinion "ethnic diversity erdoes a country's unity" and 10 represents the opinion "ethnic diversity enriches my life." The data contain responses to this question from 45 countries, ranging in number from 835 to 2,737 respondenses, with an average of about 1,250 responses per country. The mean of the ethnic diversity item for each country is shown in Figure 1.

Based on the figure there does not appear to be a strong relationship between positive sentiment about ethnic diversity and economic development, which we understand to be the main driver of post-materialist values according to Inglehart. The figure does show a northern European country, Sweden, in the top 10, but the countries above Sweden have far lower levels of GDP per capita and probably would not be classified as post-materialist. Additionally, some highly developed countries including Norway, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Spain, and Germany are in the bottom half. As a final point, recent political developments in Europe and the US seem to indicate that these particular post-materialist values are fragile and eroding, or were perhaps an illusion to begin with.

> The authors briefly note on page 9 that ethnic politics is quite common and part of national politics in ethnically divided societies. If so, it is possible that in electoral and consolidated democracies, leaders would be overall concerned with the amount of support they receive from even small marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities and immigrant citizens to be able to win elections. In such cases, it is not clear from the authors' theory why leaders in competitive political systems leaders would not be constrained by electoral considerations in their discriminatory practices against marginalized groups.
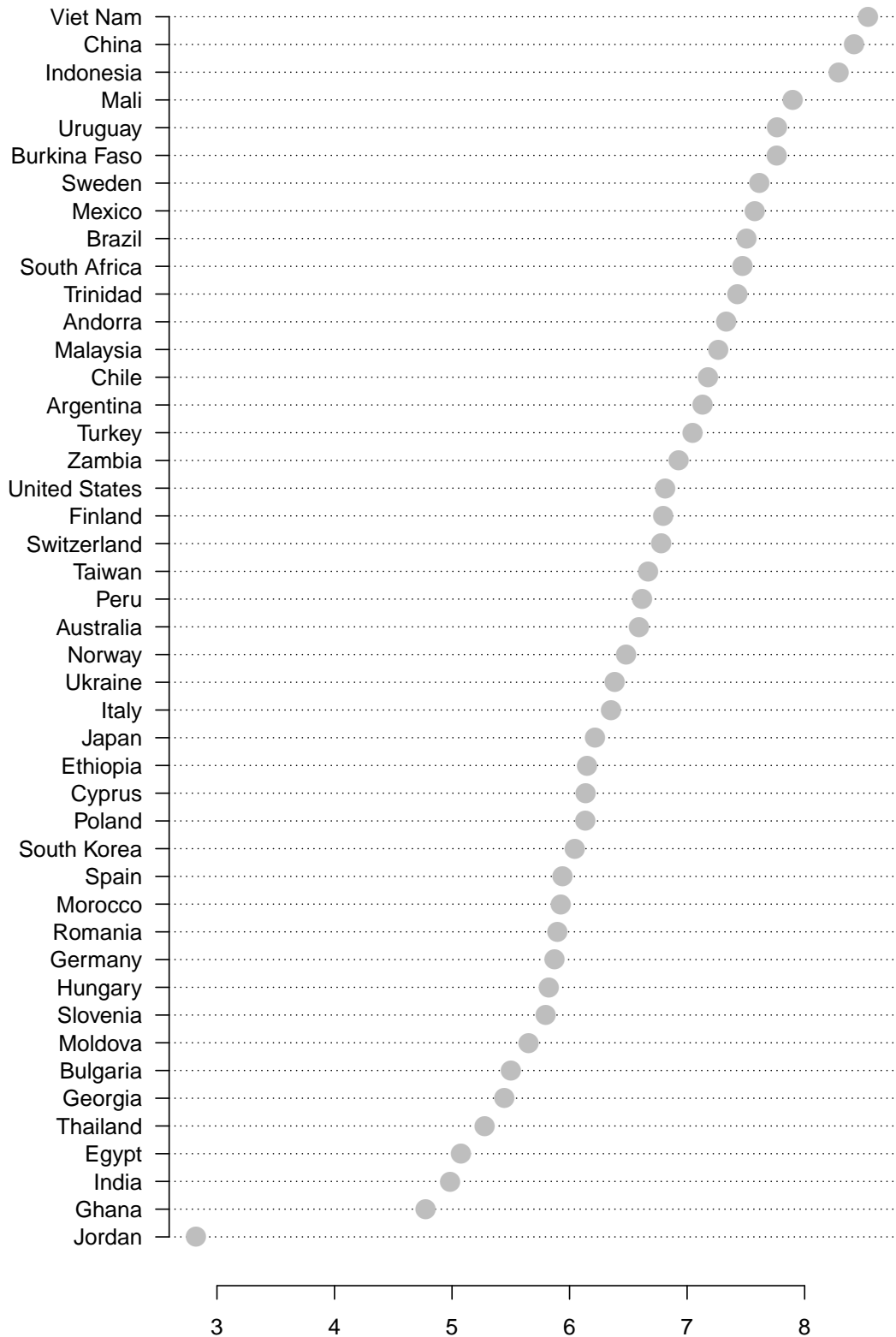
This is an interesting point that we plan on exploring in future work, but is beyond the scope of this paper. It seems that to test this would require cross-national data on the number of political parties, their relative sizes, and the number of parties with an explicitly "ethnic" platform. We can imagine an analysis that examines whether, among consolidated democracies, these variables interact to influence the frequency of abuse targeting marginalized communities. Indeed, measures of these concepts are readily available. However, outlining the theoretical motivation for that analysis and summarizing it would almost certainly use too much space. In short, this is an interesting question that probably requires and deserves article-length treatment.

> The data part is overall well-executed. Figure 3 is quite helpful in showing significance of the variables, but it would be better if they could explain what they mean by "significance" in those models. I assume they consider variables that have a p-value of 0.05 or lower as significant?

Correct, we are referring to statistical significance only. We have changed Figure 3 so that colors now indicate the direction and statistical significance of a coefficient, which hopefully makes it clearer we are referring to this meaning of "significance". See the new Figure 3 legend.

> The quality of data on torture allegations might differ from one country to another in their sample. The authors could therefore control for press freedom, the number of human rights INGOs, and

WVS Ethnic Diversity Sentiment (1–10)

Viet Nam
China
Indonesia
Mali
Uruguay
Burkina Faso
Sweden
Mexico
Brazil
South Africa
Trinidad
Andorra
Malaysia
Chile
Argentina
Turkey
Zambia
United States
Finland
Switzerland
Taiwan
Peru
Australia
Norway
Ukraine
Italy
Japan
Ethiopia
Cyprus
Poland
South Korea
Spain
Morocco
Romania
Germany
Hungary
Slovenia
Moldova
Bulgaria
Georgia
Thailand
Egypt
India
Ghana
Jordan

3   4   5   6   7   8

Mean of Positive Sentiment

political and social globalization in their models to at least indirectly control for such variance in the amount and quality of torture data in their sample. They need to also control for year dummies as the quality of data as well as freedom from torture might have increased over time.

We added a sensitivity analysis in a new appendix. We considered the reviewer's recommendations as well as several modeling choices we had previously made in the analysis. For the reviewer's suggestions, we examined the following variables:

- Press freedom. We used a binary version of the Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle, 2015, media freedom index (that is the data authors' suggestion).
- Political globalization. From the COW IGO (state unit) dataset, we constructed two measures of the absolute number of IGOs a country(-year) was a member of, and the fraction of IGOs in existence in a year that a country was a member of.
- Year dummies. The reviewer's comment suggests a increasing or decreasing trend over time, whereas year dummies could map any arbitrary pattern. We instead included the possibility of a linear or squared time trend, which to us seems to better capture the reviewers concern about changes in data quality or improvements in human rights over time.
- Social globalization. We were not sure what specific measures we could use for this. We checked whether it would be possible to use trade as a percentage of GDP (from the World Bank WDI) as a measure of economic globalization. However, due to missing values that we were not able to resolve, and which would render any comparison circumspect, we were not able to include a measure for this dimension.
- Human rights IGOs. We considered the Murdie and Davis 2012 "Shaming and Blaming", ISQ data, however because of a large number of missing values we also discarded this dimension.

The results of the sensitivity analysis overall tend to be consistent with the results we report in the main paper. We summarize divergences in the appendix. We should note that there are no instances where the sensitivity results are clearly inconsistent with the main paper findings we report. Furthermore, where there are divergences, they first and foremost are driven by model and intercept choices, i.e. whether using the Poisson GLMER with country random intercepts in the main paper or a simpler Poisson GLM with global intercept only. The other choices, including all the additional control variables we considered, play secondary roles only.

We thank R1 for helpful comments and feedback

R2

> This is an interesting paper, and one that acknowledges and recognizes an important distinction between types of violence. I appreciate the fact that it furthers Will's work with respect to both data collection projects as well as his attention to the importance of concepts and definitions and explaining the nuances of state violence. Moreover, by disaggregating violence into repressive and oppressive violence it helps bring attention to an as yet unstudied area. While the paper does not make any specific theoretic claims, the broad trends and expectations that are identified will help future researchers advance the study of important processes. This is a paper that is ready for publication.

We thank R2 for these encouraging comments.