

Terrorism In Dictatorships

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A key finding in the terrorism literature is that dictatorships experience less terrorism than democracies. However, we have few explanations for why some dictatorships experience substantial threats from terrorism while others do not. A growing body of work on authoritarian politics focuses on political institutions in these regimes to explain a broad range of political outcomes. Building on this literature, we argue that opposition political party activity increases the collective action capacity of regime opponents and that elected legislatures can channel this mobilized capacity into support for the government. However, when active opposition parties operate in the absence of legislatures, political opponents increasingly turn to terrorism. We find evidence that terrorist groups are most likely to emerge in dictatorships with opposition political parties but no elected legislature. These regimes also experience the highest volume of subsequent attacks.

Shortly after the 1973 coup in Chile, the military closed the legislature and banned political parties. Nearly a decade later, in mid-May 1983, opposition parties and unions organized the first widespread national protests against the Pinochet regime. Still technically illegal, parties mobilized opposition rallies, lobbied reformers in the military, and coordinated meetings of various opposition groups (Garretón 1988). While the military regime responded with continued intimidation and repression, opposition party activity proceeded apace. Thus, by the mid-1980s there were active opposition parties even though the legislature remained closed. In the next two years parties and union groups staged monthly protests. Moreover, numerous antigovernment terrorist groups emerged in the wake of the protests. Between 1984 and 1986 there were five active terrorist groups in Chile, both left- and right-wing. One of these groups, the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), attempted to assassinate Pinochet in 1986 and was estimated to have between 500 and 1,000 members at its height. Chile experienced 563 attacks in 1984, among the highest total in any authoritarian regime since 1970.

In contrast to cases such as Chile, many Soviet bloc dictatorships in Eastern Europe ruled with legislatures and incorporated a range of social groups into the ruling party (Jowitt 1975; Staar 1982). For example, under the dictatorship of Josif Broz Tito, Yugoslavia's Communist Party held regular elections, stood up a national legislature, and incorporated large segments of the industrial working class into its political structure (Burks 1982). No substantial terrorist group emerged in the two decades prior to the end of the regime, and Yugoslavia only experienced three errant attacks during this period.

The majority of research on regime type and terrorism demonstrates that nondemocracies are less likely targets of terrorism than democracies (Chenoweth 2010; Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 2001; Li 2005; Li and Schaub 2004; Pape 2003; Weinberg and Eubank 1998).¹ However, similar to Chile many non-democracies have multiple terrorist groups and suffer from a substantial number of violent attacks. Of the 2021 groups which existed globally from 1970 to 2007, roughly one-quarter emerged in authoritarian regimes.² Furthermore, of the nearly 84 thousand

¹An online appendix with additional empirical results is available online at both <http://journals.cambridge.org/jop> and http://www.princeton.edu/~dbcarter/David_B._Carter/Research.html. Replication materials are available at http://www.princeton.edu/~dbcarter/David_B._Carter/Research.html. We use the terms “non-democracy”, “dictatorship”, and “authoritarian regime” interchangeably.

²Data obtained from Young and Dugan (2010).

attacks in the Global Terrorism Database during the same period, 40% (over 33 thousand) occurred in nondemocracies (START 2008).³ Moreover, as the cases of Chile and Yugoslavia illustrate, not all nondemocracies are equally likely targets of terrorism.

Many explanations for the relative lack of terrorism in nondemocracies highlight the capacity of nondemocratic leaders to suppress discontented groups without concern for protecting civil liberties (Li 2005; Pape 2003). However, theories that focus on repression cannot explain why Chile under Pinochet, one of the most repressive military governments in Latin America, experienced more terrorism than the former Yugoslavia under Tito.⁴ Other explanations suggest that because nondemocracies lack civil liberties, they can limit the ability of terrorist organizations to organize and use violence (Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 2001; Eyerman 1992; Schmid 1992; Weinberg and Eubank 1998). However, not all nondemocracies limit the organizational capacity of discontented groups to the same extent. For example, some dictators allow opposition to organize into political parties and to participate in legislatures, while others do not.

Despite many theories that explain why nondemocracies experience less terrorism, there is neither a theory nor systematic evidence about how and why terrorism occurs in such regimes. We argue that political institutional arrangements play an important and overlooked role in explaining how terrorism emerges in nondemocracies. Specifically, we focus on two political institutions: parties and legislatures. Many dictatorships have elected legislatures that meet regularly and house multiple parties. For example, dominant party rule in Mexico under the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) and Lukashenka's dictatorship in Belarus both had multiparty legislatures. Others lack a legislature but have active opposition political parties, as in Pakistan during the early years of military rule under Musharraf (1999–2002) or the Pinochet regime in Chile during the mid-1980s. Still others rule without the aid of formal political institutions, such as the Saudi Arabian monarchy. On the surface, the existence of different authoritarian institutions might look like nothing more than mere "window dressing." However, the literature on authoritarianism suggests otherwise and demonstrates that political institutions can influence dictators' chances

of survival in power as well as many political outcomes and policy choices (Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Kim 2010; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Magaloni 2006; Smith 2005; Wright 2008). A central argument in this literature suggests that authoritarian institutions are instrumental in helping a dictator secure the tacit support of potential opponents and discontented groups (Boix and Svolik 2008; Gandhi 2008).

Building on the insights from the literature on authoritarian institutions, we posit that political institutions shape the incentives and opportunities for discontented political actors to turn to terrorism as a method to achieve their political goals. Political party activity under dictatorships can help mobilize discontented opposition groups. Moreover, when these parties are housed within a legislature, the mobilized opposition has an opportunity to express grievances and potentially shape policies. However, the existence of opposition political parties in the absence of an elected legislature increases the incentives and capacity of discontented groups to pursue violence. Without an institutionalized venue within which mobilized groups can obtain concessions from the regime, opposition groups may turn to more radical measures. Thus, we argue that autocracies with opposition political parties but no legislature are more likely targets of terrorism than others.

In the following sections, we outline our main argument and analyze data on the emergence of new terrorist groups and the volume of terrorist attacks in 138 authoritarian regimes between 1970 and 2007. After presenting cross-national evidence consistent with our theory, we illustrate our argument with a case study of Algeria. We conclude with a discussion of our findings.

Terrorism and Political Institutions in Dictatorships

Terrorist organizations are discontented political actors who attempt to achieve political goals through the use of violence against noncombatants.⁵ Groups use violent attacks as instruments to reach political goals (Hoffman 2006, 5). However, attacks are costly instruments because they drain groups' limited resources and cause group-member casualties (Kydd

³We assume a democracy has a Polity score of at least 6.

⁴Between 1976, the first year of available data, and 1989, the year of the referendum on Pinochet's rule in Chile, the average score on the Political Terror Scale (AI) for Chile is significantly higher (4-on a 5-point scale) than for Yugoslavia (3).

⁵We utilize the following definition of terrorism: "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation" (START 2008).

and Walter 2002, 2006; Pape 2003). Thus, if their goals can be achieved without the use of violence, or with minimal violence, discontented groups are unlikely to expend resources and assume the risk associated with conducting violent attacks.

The choice of violent tactics by discontented political actors depends on the constraints the actors face and the alternative opportunities they have to pursue their goals. The political institutional structure in which the groups operate is an important determinant of these constraints and opportunities. Thus, the relationship between political institutions and terrorism has been a topic of interest for terrorism scholars. However, the debate on political institutions and terrorism has largely focused on comparing democracies and nondemocracies (Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 2001; Li 2005; Li and Schaub 2004; Pape 2003; Weinberg and Eubank 1998). Similarly, selectorate theory generates its clearest predictions about terrorism through a comparison of democracies and nondemocracies (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003; Findley and Young 2011). Accordingly, a large body of research demonstrates that the majority of terrorist attacks target democratic countries which provide citizens with peaceful means to raise their concerns (Chenoweth 2010; Eubank and Weinberg 1994, 2001; Li 2005; Li and Schaub 2004; Pape 2003; Weinberg and Eubank 1998), even though some studies in the literature do not find corroborating evidence for this argument (e.g., Drakos and Gofas 2006; Wade and Reiter 2007).⁶

Research on regime type and terrorism has only recently moved beyond the dichotomous classification of regime type. Several scholars highlight the implications of institutional differences among democracies for terrorism. Some show that alternative electoral rules in democracies generate different cost and benefit calculations for terrorist groups (Li 2005). Aksoy and Carter (2012) demonstrate that the permissiveness of electoral rules only affects the emergence of groups that have within-system goals, but has no effect on groups with anti-system goals. Others emphasize the link between terrorism and party systems in democracies (Piazza 2010). Relatedly, others attribute terrorism patterns to interest

group density and the number of veto points—measures which tend to be correlated with democracy (Chenoweth 2010; Young and Dugan 2011).

However, to date the literature has not explored institutional variation among nondemocracies. Just like democracies, nondemocracies exhibit significant differences in their political institutions. For example, Geddes points out that “different kinds of authoritarianism differ from each other as much as they differ from democracy” (1999, 121). A fundamental way in which these regimes differ from each other is related to political parties and legislatures. For example, among the dictatorships that existed between 1946 and 2008, nearly 70% had an elected legislature, just under one-half had an opposition party that existed outside the regime front, and 36% had opposition parties housed in an elected legislature (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, 2010). We argue that political parties and legislatures in authoritarian countries have important implications for patterns of terrorism observed in these countries.

Why Do Dictators Allow Political Institutions?

Dictators both repress and purchase loyalty as part of a strategy to stay in power. However, repression is a costly and potentially risky strategy (Haber 2006; Wintrobe 1998). It requires an organization, such as a security service or police force, with sufficient collective action capacity and effectiveness to deal with potential opponents (Haber 2006). Even though an organization with such a capacity can be useful for the dictator, it also poses a potential threat because the organization itself can overthrow the dictator.

The risks associated with repression lead many dictators to purchase loyalty. The currency for this exchange can take the form of rents, if the dictator has sufficient resources or policy and power-sharing concessions (Boix and Svoblik 2008; Gandhi 2008). Political concessions, however, require the dictator to make credible promises, and political institutions provide a mechanism to make concessions credible. By co-opting potential opponents and incorporating them into the formal structure of power, dictators can repeatedly bargain with the same groups and lower the transaction costs associated with political exchange (Gandhi 2008). Institutions also provide information and lower uncertainty about future interactions. For example, Boix and Svoblik (2008) emphasize this informational role, positing that legislatures enhance power-sharing agreements among elites by providing information about the true size of a dictator’s budget

⁶Several studies suggest that transnational terrorism is more likely to emanate from nondemocracies (Pluempner and Neumeier 2010) and that democracies tend to be the targets of such attacks (Kurrild-Klitgaard, Justesen, and Klemmensen 2006). Many studies that uncover a relationship between democracy and terrorism use data on transnational attacks (e.g., Li 2005).

in an exchange of benefits for loyalty. One implication of these arguments is that political institutions in nondemocracies help dictators stay in power by co-opting potential opponents.

How Do Authoritarian Political Institutions Affect Terrorism?

While political parties may be instrumental for the activities that facilitate co-optation (Blaydes 2011; Lust-Okar 2005; Magaloni 2006)—such as elite bargaining, career advancement in the party, or the efficient distribution of rents—they also increase the collective action capacity of potential opponents. Standard theories about political parties in democracies suggest that parties are an organizational solution to collective action problems (Aldrich 1994). Even in dictatorships, party activity entails communication among elites, political activity at the local level, and the dissemination of information and personal connections among both elites and nonelite groups.⁷ While legislatures typically meet in a central location at specific times, party activities take place throughout the country and can occur without the full knowledge of the dictator or the security apparatus. Thus, the existence of opposition party activity should increase the collective action capacity of regime opponents. Indeed, the literature on competitive authoritarianism (or “hybrid” regimes) suggests that multiparty elections that include organized opposition can result in liberalization, particularly if opposition parties coordinate (Howard and Roessler 2006). Central to the very definition of this regime type is the existence of political parties that increase the collective action capacity of the opposition.

Legislatures in nondemocracies often function as a forum for bargaining over the exchange of policy concessions for loyalty. Gandhi (2008) argues that legislatures open up a venue for the opposition to express political grievances without threatening the survival of the regime and provide an arena to enhance bargaining for policy concessions. Thus, where political parties organize the discontented opposition, mobilized opposition can try to obtain policy concessions by working from within the legislature. If the dictator has an incentive to co-opt the opposition—whether to

secure their participation in vital economic activity or to prevent them from turning against the regime—party supporters can secure some concessions. Moreover, co-opting moderate opponents into a legislature can also give them a stake in the regime; they will thus be less likely to side with radicals in opposing the dictator, lest they risk losing their share of the spoils (Lust-Okar 2005). When some mobilized opponents have been co-opted through a legislature, the opposition should thus have less of an incentive to pursue potentially risky and violent means to pursue their policy goals.

However, in the absence of an elected legislature, mobilized opponents can only influence the politics from outside the formal structure of power. Under this scenario, parties help mobilize discontented groups but they do not have a venue for obtaining credible concessions from the dictator. Thus, we argue that in the absence of a legislature, opponents who are mobilized through political party activities will often resort to more violent means to obtain their political goals. There are two ways in which mobilization of parties can move regime opponents to violence in the absence of a legislature.

First, moderates might become radicalized. Seeing little opportunity to press their position within the regime structure, they turn to outside avenues of influence, including violence. Second, opposition party activity can give cover to the mobilizing activities of radicals. As Lust-Okar (2005) points out, when moderates protest against the regime, radicals have an incentive to join because the dictator is less likely to repress moderates than radicals. The former are typically a larger group and repression against moderates is more likely to produce backlash. When radicals and moderates join in a larger protest, it is less likely any group within it can be targeted with repression. However, dictators can use a legislature to split these two groups if the moderates fear losing access to power when the radicals join the protest. Thus, the risk of punishment for antiregime activity is lowest when moderates are protesting. Importantly, moderates are most likely to stop mobilizing against the regime when radicals join them due to the risk of losing access to power. Even when relatively small-scale political protests start, they are less likely to last or escalate if moderates are co-opted through a legislature. In contrast, in the absence of a legislature to co-opt moderates, opposition activity will be more likely to persist even when radicals join. Thus, when there are opposition parties but no legislature, terrorist violence is more likely to begin and to result in more attacks.

⁷Selectorate theory does not account for political parties in autocracies (Buono de Mesquita et al. 2003, 34). However, in dictatorships with limited opportunities for opposition mobilization, we argue that parties influence terrorism even if their members are not considered members of the selectorate.

In Chile during the mid-1980s, the protest movement not only included moderate parties but also radical left-wing parties linked to terrorist groups. Protest rallies were supported by the moderate Alianza Democrática, which included the Christian Democrats as well as smaller right-wing parties, but also the Movimiento Democrático Popular.⁸ This latter group included the banned Communist Party and the Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR; Garretón 1988, 12). While the MIR supported the protests, they also pursued violent tactics to resist military rule, assassinating General Carlos Urzua in August 1983 (Spooner 1994, 193). After the success of protests led by the centrist Alianza Democrática, a coalition of left-wing parties, including the Communists, organized their own marches (Garretón 1988; Spooner 1994, 195). Party-led mass demonstrations also aided recruitment. While unarmed self-defense groups were formed to help protect demonstrators from the police, these same groups also served as recruiting grounds for violent antiregime groups (Oxhorn 1995, 222–23). Party activity in Chile provided the radical left with an opportunity to mobilize support for their organizations, using the cover of moderate party activity to shield their members from further repression.⁹

Our data do not allow us to distinguish whether terrorism in nondemocracies emerges because radicals mobilize or moderates radicalize, though we find evidence of both in our case study of Algeria. However, it is important to note that both proximate mechanisms lead to the same expectation about how political institutions affect terrorism: *when opposition political parties exist—whether legal or not—but the opposition does not have access to a legislature,*

antigovernment groups are more likely to turn to terrorism. Thus, we expect that nondemocracies with opposition parties but no legislature will experience a higher risk of group emergence. Moreover, the increased collective action capacity of the opposition implies that such groups will produce more violence after adopting terrorism. Thus, we expect that nondemocracies with opposition parties but no legislature will experience a higher volume of attacks.

Data

We analyze terrorist group activity with two complementary measures: emergence of new terrorist groups and volume of terrorist attacks. We use these two measures for several reasons. First, the measures are related, as attacks are carried out by groups after they emerge. Second, our argument that opposition parties facilitate collective action has implications for both group emergence and the volume of attacks: regimes with organized opposition parties should be at a higher risk of new group emergence, especially in the absence of a legislature to co-opt the opposition. In such cases, high rates of group emergence should be associated with high volume of subsequent attacks, unless a regime's repressive apparatus can shut groups down once they emerge. However, the existence of an organized opposition suggests that the regime has not been effective at repression. Finally, the two dependent variables nicely complement each other since they have different strengths and weaknesses, as we outline below.

Terrorist group data comes from the most comprehensive group data available to our knowledge. Young and Dugan (2010) generated a list of groups from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of terrorist attacks (START 2008). The GTD is an event data set that purports to record each terrorist attack globally. The group behind each attack is identified in approximately 50% of all attacks in GTD. Young and Dugan utilize this information to build a database of 2021 groups that existed from 1970 to 2007.¹⁰ Although it is the most comprehensive data of its kind, the groups data uses information on only the approximately 50% of attacks in GTD which are clearly attributed to a group. Thus, when

⁸The Christian Democrats and the radical left parties did not form a coalition, even though they supported many of the same protests (Baldez 2002, 156–60; Oxhorn 1995, 211–12).

⁹While our argument focuses on the collective mobilization that becomes possible when opposition parties are operational, the emergence of opposition groups can be a response to other opposition organizations. The presence of other organizations might “crowd out” some terrorist groups; or competition among groups might escalate into violence. Some theoretical treatments of terrorism build on this insight to model terrorist mobilization when factions compete with each other to recruit members (Bueno de Mesquita 2008). But even in this strategic environment, strengthening institutions for nonviolent expression of grievances reduces terrorist group mobilization—a logic consistent with our argument. In Algeria, as we discuss below, terrorist groups linked to the elected Islamist party emerged as a response not only to the absence of a legislature but also as a strategic move to counter the loss of their members to preexisting groups that had reemerged. While our institutional account does not seek to explain these intergroup dynamics, they would not be possible without collective action, which we argue, is in part the product of opposition political party mobilization.

¹⁰The most comparable data set that covers a similar period, 1968–2006, and includes groups that are not transnational is Jones and Libicki (2006), which includes 648 groups. We do the same analysis below using the Jones and Libicki (2006) groups and find similar results.

we analyze group emergence it is possible that we lose nearly half of the data due to the lack of information identifying some attacking groups.

Therefore, we also use the full GTD to study the volume of terrorist attacks (START 2008). To analyze the volume of attacks, we do not need to identify the attacking group but only need to identify the country in which an attack takes place. Thus, the attacks data includes all groups regardless of whether they are identified in GTD. This shields us from the criticism that our results might be affected by “losing” data due to the limitations in identifying the attacking groups.

The data on political institutions in nondemocracies is from Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010). They code democracies as countries in which: the legislature and the executive are elected, multiple parties compete in elections, and executive power turns over via elections. All other regimes are considered nondemocracies. Overall, the institutions data covers 140 countries from 1946 to 2008, and the terrorist group data covers the period from 1970 to 2007. We combine the two sources and employ data for 138 authoritarian spells from 1970 to 2007.

Dependent Variables

We use two dependent variables: group emergence and volume of attacks. Our first dependent variable measures whether at least one group emerges in a given year and country.¹¹ Groups are coded as emerging in a given country if they carry out the bulk of their attacks across their existence within that country (Young and Dugan 2010).

Each country (i) either has a group emerge that targets it in year (t) or not. Accordingly, the first dependent variable, $y_{i,t}$ takes the following form:

$$y_{i,t} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if no group emerges in country } i \text{ in year } t \\ 1 & \text{if at least one group emerges in country } \\ & i \text{ in year } t. \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

Each group counts only once in the year it first emerges. However, a country that experiences group emergence in a given year is always at risk of seeing a new group (or set of groups) emerge in subsequent years. This dependent variable thus captures the idea

¹¹We also construct a count variable that measures the number of groups that emerge in a country in a given year. The results are the same as those reported and are thus omitted.

that a country’s political system has “failed” to keep political violence at bay when a new terrorist group emerges.

Our second dependent variable is a count of the number of attacks, x , experienced by country i in year t .¹² The attacks variable takes the following form:

$$y_{i,t} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if there is no attack in country } i \text{ in year } t \\ x & \text{if there are } x > 0 \text{ attacks in country } i \text{ in year } t. \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

Independent Variables

Our theory centers on the idea that different combinations of authoritarian political institutions shape the incentives and the ability of the discontented opposition groups to pursue violence. To recap, we argue that the existence of opposition political parties in the *absence* of an active elected legislature will lead to the emergence of more terrorist groups and attacks. In contrast, when opposition political parties exist and can participate in an elected legislature, the incentives to pursue violence diminishes.

To assess this argument we need information on political parties and legislatures in autocracies. The institutions dataset includes a variable that indicates whether a country has an active, elected legislature in a given year (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010). We chose this measure, rather than the existence of *any* legislature, to capture the expressive capacity of an elected legislature. Nonelected legislatures that are appointed by the dictator should be less effective at co-opting potential opponents.

The institutions data set also includes a variable indicating the *de facto* existence of multiple political parties outside the regime front. We use this variable for two main reasons. First, opposition parties do not have to be legal to augment the collective action capacity of regime opponents. When an opposition party mobilizes support through rallies, communication with supporters, and intraparty elections, this increases the collective action capacity of regime opponents even though the party might be nominally illegal. While in many cases, this measure coincides with *de jure*, or legalized, opposition parties, this

¹²Given the importance of domestic terrorism to our theoretical story, we also estimated all attacks models using only attacks that were specifically coded as domestic by Enders, Sandler, and Gaibulloev (2011). We find similar results and include those results in the appendix. This is unsurprising given that most attacks in the GTD are domestic rather than transnational.

need not be the case. For example, the Pinochet regime in Chile outlawed leftist political parties after the 1973 coup and did not officially legalize them until 1987 shortly before the referendum on a return to civilian democracy. Nonetheless, in mid-1983 opposition political party activity existed and aided organizing national protests against military rule.

Second, the variable marks the existence of at least one party outside the regime front. While token opposition parties may exist to give the impression of multipartyism, in many cases these parties do not actually represent opponents. For example, a number of European Communist regimes retained front parties that were not technically Communist parties. The measure we use excludes cases where parties that are supposed to be in opposition are actually part of the regime front. The measure only includes cases where such parties are actually outside of the regime front.

Using the information on active elected legislatures and de facto opposition political parties from Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010), we develop two related main independent variables. The first one, *Opposition Parties and No Legislature*, is a binary variable that is coded one if a given regime has at least one opposition party and no elected legislature in a given year, and zero otherwise.¹³ Because our theory points to the institutional arrangement with opposition parties and no legislatures as the most likely to breed terrorism, the binary variable allows a straightforward assessment of our main argument.

We also develop a more fine-grained independent variable which ensures that our findings are not due to aggregating different institutional arrangements. Accordingly, our second variable breaks authoritarian institutions into four exclusive categories as follows:

1. *Opposition Parties with No Legislature* (12%): Coded one when at least one de facto party exists outside of the regime front but there is no elected legislature, zero otherwise.

2. *Opposition Parties with Legislature* (36%): Coded one when at least one de facto party exists outside of the regime front and there is an elected legislature, zero otherwise.
3. *No Parties* (17%): Coded one when there are no political parties, zero otherwise.
4. *Single Regime Party* (35%): Coded one when there is only one regime party, zero otherwise.

The numbers in parentheses indicate the percentage of cases under each category. Our main expectation is that countries in the first category will be the most likely targets of terrorism. Accordingly, we use regimes with opposition parties and no legislature (category 1) as the reference category in our regression models. Under such regimes, the opposition is organized through political parties but not co-opted through a legislature, which provides the incentives and the organizational capacity to resort to violence.

Countries under the third and fourth categories will be the least fertile for terrorism. Single-party regimes (category 3) are typically the most resilient as they have successfully co-opted opposition groups into their party structure. Further, these are ‘closed authoritarian’ regimes in which mobilization outside the state structure is severely limited. For example, Robertson argues that in these regimes “dissidents are organizationally isolated and have an extremely hard time creating organizations that can sustain a movement beyond narrow personal circles” (2011, 26). The countries with no parties (category 4) are mostly monarchies and some military regimes. These have almost no need to allow institutions because they have other apparatus to deal with the opposition (i.e., military or security services; Gandhi 2008). Accordingly, since single-party and no-party regimes tend to have other political organizations to co-opt opposition groups, opponents in these regimes have the least collective action capacity to mobilize violent antiregime groups.

Finally, autocracies in the second category will experience more terrorism compared to those in the third and fourth categories and less terrorism than those in the first category. Our explanation suggests that opposition party activity facilitates terrorist group mobilization. Thus, regime opponents in the second category should have the same capacity if not the same incentive to pursue antigovernment strategies compared to those in the first category. However, the existence of a legislature will facilitate the co-optation of at least some of the organized opposition. Accordingly, the risk of terrorism should be lower where there is an elected legislature.

¹³This binary variable is not simply capturing the level of “democraticness” in a dictatorship, at least as measured by the Polity scale. For nondemocracies from 1970 to 2008, the mean Polity score is -3.92 for cases where our binary variable is coded 1 and -3.66 where the binary variable is coded zero—a difference that is not statistically different from zero. Algeria and Chile during periods of multiparty politics and a closed legislature had Polity scores of -7 and -6, respectively. The Polity score for Yugoslavia under Tito, a single-party regime with a legislature, was -7 until 1980 and rose to -5 after 1980. In contrast, monarchies that operate without parties and legislatures, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have Polity scores of -10.

To sum, if we are correct, countries in category 1 should experience more terrorism than those in categories 2, 3, and 4. Additionally, category 2 should have the second highest risk of terrorism. Finally, countries in categories 3 and 4 should experience the lowest volume of attacks and probability of group emergence. To provide a comparison of our findings with the existing literature (e.g., Li 2005), we also estimate several models that include democracies along with the different categories of nondemocracies. We measure democracy using the democracy indicator variable in Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010).

We include several variables that measure the internal instability of countries as both terrorism and institutions may result from political instability. An indicator of internal turmoil measures whether a country is currently embroiled in a civil war. We utilize the 1,000 battle deaths threshold employed by the correlates of war (Sarkees 2000), but also estimated all models using a 25-battle-deaths threshold and find similar results (Gleditsch et al., 2002).¹⁴ Additionally, as a proxy for political instability, we include the polity durability measure, which measures the number of years since a three-point change in a country's polity score.¹⁵ In chronically unstable countries antigovernment groups might view instability as an opportunity to pursue violence. The log of a country's population is also included, as prior studies find that larger countries experience more terrorism (e.g., Li 2005; Li and Schaub 2004). Finally, we include the log of GDP per capita, as this has been found to influence internal conflict (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003; Li 2005). The GDP data from Maddison (2007) covers the entire time period.¹⁶

Results

We use two primary empirical models to explore how authoritarian institutions affect the emergence and volume of terrorist activity. First, we estimate models of group emergence using logistic regression. We show that authoritarian institutions affect the

probability that a regime experiences group emergence in a given year. Specifically, we demonstrate that regimes with multiple parties and no active legislature are the most prone to group emergence. Second, we estimate negative binomial models of the volume of terrorist attacks across time.¹⁷ Our results demonstrate that authoritarian institutions affect the volume of terrorist attacks across time in much the same way as they affect group emergence.¹⁸

We do several things to ensure that our findings accurately reflect the influence of institutions and not some other country-level or temporal factor that is correlated with the institutional measures. First, in the logit models we account for the time since a given country has experienced the emergence of a terrorist group. A country which experienced group emergence last year is more likely to experience another group emergence relative to a country that experienced group emergence several years ago. We include a cubic polynomial in time since last group emergence (i.e., t , t^2 , and t^3) in all models (Carter and Signorino 2010).¹⁹ Second, we estimate models with year-fixed effects to account for any general time trends in group emergence in autocracies. Previous research finds different trends during and after the cold war (e.g., Enders and Sandler 1999), which year fixed effects easily accounts for. Third, we estimate models with country specific random effects. This ensures that our findings for the institutions are not a function of more general cross-sectional differences that are correlated with our measures of institutions. Finally, we also estimate models that allow unobserved factors to affect both dictators' selection of a particular institutional setup and terrorism, finding very similar results. We present the results of the selection models in the supplementary appendix.

Table 1 reports results from six models. Models I–III estimate the influence of authoritarian institutions on the emergence of terrorist groups while models IV–VI estimate the effect of institutions on the number of attacks. The key variable in Table 1 is *Opposition Parties and No Legislature*. The excluded category is all other authoritarian regimes, which means we interpret the coefficient for *Opposition Parties and No Legislature* relative to all other

¹⁴We treat civil war as a control; when we exclude civil war years, the results are unaffected, suggesting that our institutional explanation applies to noncivil war environments. We also try lagging the civil war variable by a year.

¹⁵We also try including a measure of the number of times an autocratic leader left power in a country since 1946 (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010).

¹⁶Using the Gleditsch (2002) data, which does not cover 2005–2007, yields similar results.

¹⁷Our volume of attacks dependent variable shows considerable overdispersion, which suggests that a negative binomial model is appropriate.

¹⁸See the appendix for our preliminary assessments of our argument using simple cross-tabulations.

¹⁹We do not show these coefficients in the tables to economize on space.

authoritarian regimes. We first focus on logit models I–III, where the dependent variable indicates whether a new group emerged in a country in a given year (i.e., expression 1). We briefly discuss the control variables for all models simultaneously below as they perform similarly across the models.

The logit models in Table 1 consistently show that dictatorships with opposition parties but no legislature experience a significantly higher probability of group emergence relative to all other dictatorships. The finding is robust across specifications that include year-fixed effects (i.e., models II and III), as well as country-specific random effects (i.e., models II and III).²⁰ Using the estimates from model II, if we compare a “median dictatorship” (i.e., all other variables are held at median values) with active opposition parties and no legislature to a “median dictatorship” with a different institutional setup (e.g., single regime party), the former experiences a nearly 60% higher probability of group emergence than the latter.

In model III we include democratic regimes. Our finding that dictatorships with opposition parties and no legislature experience significantly more terrorism than other dictatorships still holds. Additionally, the coefficient of dictatorships with opposition parties and no legislature is higher than that of democracies, although the two coefficients are not significantly different at the 0.05 level. This indicates that it is certainly not the case that all dictatorships experience significantly less terrorism than democracies.

Models IV–VI in Table 1 show that institutions also significantly influence the volume of attacks.²¹ Overall, the results of the three negative binomial models of attacks are very similar to those of logit models I–III. Dictatorships with opposition parties and no legislature experience significantly more attacks. Again, this result is robust to the inclusion of democracies to the sample. Furthermore, democracies again are not significantly different than dictatorships with opposition parties and no legislature.

We also consistently find that countries which have experienced greater regime volatility or are currently embroiled in civil war are more likely to experience group emergence and a higher volume of attacks. The inclusion of the *Civil War* and *Regime Durability* variables ensures that our findings for dictatorships

with opposition parties and no legislature are not an artifact of these regimes also experiencing more internal turmoil. We find some evidence that dictatorships with higher GDP per capita are more likely to experience group emergence, although this variable loses statistical significance in some of the group emergence models with country-specific effects (e.g., models II and III). Finally, we find that countries with larger populations experience more terrorism, which is consistent with previous research.

An Alternative Measure of Institutions

The models reported in Table 1 include a simple binary measure of authoritarian institutions. The measure is theoretically appropriate given our focus on the adverse effects of opposition parties with no legislature. However, the main weakness of the binary measure is that it aggregates three different institutional arrangements into one excluded category. In this section, we employ the more fine-grained measure that splits autocracies into four categories: (1) Opposition Parties with No Legislature, (2) Opposition Parties with Legislature, (3) No Parties, and (4) Single Regime Party.

We expect to find that dictatorships with opposition parties and no legislature (i.e., category 1) experience more terrorism relative to the other three categories. We therefore use category 1 as the excluded category and include the remaining three categories in our empirical models. Thus, in Table 2 the coefficients of the three categories are interpreted relative to countries that have opposition parties but no legislature.²² Accordingly, we expect the coefficients of all the included authoritarian institutional categories to be negative.

In Table 2, the first three columns (i.e., models VII–IX) are logit models of group emergence, while the last three columns (i.e., models X–XII) are negative binomial models of attacks. Other than the institutional variables, all models in Table 2 are specified identically to those in Table 1.

The models in Table 2 consistently show that dictatorships with multiple parties and no legislature experience the most terrorism relative to other dictatorships. In all the three models of group emergence (i.e., models VII–IX), dictatorships with opposition parties and no legislature on average experience the highest probability of group emergence. That being said, there are some informative differences

²⁰The appendix shows the results are robust when including press freedom and observed “repression”; they also do not change if we exclude civil war cases.

²¹We also tried a zero-inflated negative binomial model, which produced very similar results. Given that the results do not change, we report the results of the simpler model.

²²The reference category for the models in Table 2 is different than for the models in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Authoritarian Institutions and Terrorism: Multiple Parties and No Legislature

	Dictatorships		All Regimes	Dictatorships		All Regimes
	Logit	Logit	Logit	Negative Binomial	Negative Binomial	Negative Binomial
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V	Model VI
Constant	-5.72** (0.96)	-8.46** (1.38)	-7.99** (0.96)	-9.21** (1.92)	-5.66** (0.53)	-5.18** (0.33)
Opposition Parties and No Legislature Democracy	0.55** (0.19)	0.72** (0.19)	0.52** (0.17)	1.62** (0.29)	0.55** (0.08)	0.52** (0.07)
Log GDP per capita	0.28** (0.10)	0.27** (0.14)	0.07 (0.10)	0.62** (0.21)	0.29** (0.05)	0.24** (0.03)
Log Population	0.28** (0.07)	0.44** (0.09)	0.58** (0.08)	0.69** (0.13)	0.11** (0.03)	0.14** (0.02)
Civil War	0.53** (0.36)	0.51** (0.41)	0.69** (0.29)	0.78 (0.61)	0.80** (0.15)	0.79** (0.10)
Regime Durability	-0.12* (0.07)	-0.15** (0.05)	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.14** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.01)
Cold War	-0.41 (0.15)			-0.69* (0.37)		
Dependent Variable	Group Emergence	Group Emergence	Group Emergence	Number of Attacks	Number of Attacks	Number of Attacks
Log-likelihood	-1043.16	-945.63	-1854.90	-5795.96	-5013.26	-11125.14
Year Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Country Random Effects	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
N =	3092	3092	5529	3092	3092	5529

Note: Standard errors clustered by target in parentheses.

** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$.

across different institutional arrangement categories. For instance, regimes with a single regime party are always significantly less likely to experience the emergence of a new group. Similarly, regimes with no political parties are always less likely to experience group emergence. This accords with our expectations, as we argue that the absence of an organized opposition makes collective action quite difficult.

Dictatorships with active opposition parties and an elected legislature are generally less likely to experience group emergence, although the result becomes insignificant in model IX. The coefficient of consistently lower magnitude suggests that countries with opposition parties and a legislature are more likely to see group emergence relative to single-party regimes or regimes with no parties. This result is consistent with the collective action argument, as collective action should be harder for a regime to control when

opposition political parties are active. Interestingly, democracies are *not* significantly more likely to experience group emergence than dictatorships with opposition parties and no legislature. This provides further evidence against the notion that democracies generally experience significantly more terrorism than all dictatorships.

Models X–XII in Table 2 show similar effects of authoritarian institutions on the volume of attacks across time. In all models, dictatorships with a single-regime party or no parties experience a significantly lower number of attacks. The effect of having multiple parties and a legislature is also significant and negative, although the coefficient drops just below significance at $p < 0.10$ in the model with country random effects and democracies. In sum, the results for the volume of attacks across time largely mirror those for group emergence in Table 2.

TABLE 2 Authoritarian Institutions and Terrorism: Comparison of Institutional Setups

	Dictatorships		All Regimes	Dictatorships		All Regimes
	Logit	Logit	Logit	Negative Binomial	Negative Binomial	Negative Binomial
	Model VII	Model VIII	Model IX	Model X	Model XI	Model XII
Constant	-4.95** (0.94)	-7.46** (1.39)	-7.22** (0.97)	-4.56** (1.80)	-4.92** (0.53)	-4.43** (0.35)
Single Regime Party	-0.95** (0.29)	-1.31** (0.25)	-1.20** (0.22)	-2.62** (0.44)	-1.11** (0.11)	-1.23** (0.09)
No Parties	-0.62** (0.26)	-0.82** (0.28)	-0.77** (0.25)	-2.14** (0.39)	-0.57** (0.12)	-0.58** (0.11)
Opposition Parties & Legislature	-0.40** (0.20)	-0.44** (0.22)	-0.09 (0.19)	-1.00** (0.34)	-0.32** (0.09)	-0.10 (0.07)
Democracy			0.01 (0.19)			0.11 (0.08)
Log GDP per capita	0.24** (0.09)	0.23* (0.14)	0.03 (0.10)	0.35* (0.18)	0.24** (0.05)	0.20** (0.03)
Log Population	0.28** (0.06)	0.46** (0.09)	0.59** (0.08)	0.56** (0.12)	0.14** (0.03)	0.15** (0.02)
Civil War	0.45 (0.39)	0.66 (0.42)	0.83** (0.30)	1.08** (0.47)	0.99** (0.15)	0.91** (0.10)
Regime Durability	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.14** (0.05)	-0.06 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.10** (0.02)	-0.02** (0.01)
Cold War	-0.26 (0.16)			-0.45 (0.28)		
Log-likelihood	-1036.83	-938.86	-1839.17	-5708.97	-4987.89	-11028.82
Year Fixed Effects	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Country Random Effects	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
N =	3103	3103	5540	3103	3103	5540

Note: Standard errors clustered by target in parentheses.

** $p < .05$; * $p < .10$.

Our results suggest that in dictatorships terrorism is more likely when opposition groups have the opportunity to mobilize through party structures, but lack an institutional avenue to influence the government through a legislature. The robustness of the institutional variables to the inclusion of variables such as civil war and regime durability, as well as year and country specific effects indicates that authoritarian institutions have an important influence on patterns of terrorism.²³ In the following section, we discuss the case of Algeria in the late 1980s and early

²³The appendix contains a section which addresses the possibility that unobserved factors that influence the selection of institutional arrangements in dictatorships may be correlated with terrorist activity. The results of the selection model yield similar results to those reported in the main text.

1990s to illustrate how our institutional mechanism operates in detail.

Political Institutions and Terrorism in Algeria

Amidst an economic crisis in Algeria, riots in October 1988 forced the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) to pursue political reforms. A new constitution legalized opposition parties the next year, quickly followed by a series of elections. The main opposition party, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), won the majority in the legislature and appeared poised to take power in 1992. This brief period of multiparty politics was cut short by a palace coup in January when the military closed the legislature and

forced President Bendjedid to resign. Later that year, two terrorist groups emerged, comprised of both ex-FIS activists as well as antistate groups that had previously rejected electoral politics.

Our sketch of these events underscores two points. First, we show how electoral mobilization during the period of multiparty politics resulted in expanded collective action capacity of Islamic groups. Central to our theory is the contention that opposition collective action during periods when parties exist is instrumental for the emergence of terrorist organizations. When opposition parties operate in dictatorships, antiregime groups can mobilize support for both moderate and radical factions, thereby increasing their capacity to form terrorist groups. Once mobilized, these opposition groups have increased ability to turn to violence if they are denied access to political power in a legislature.

Second, we trace the process of group formation that begins with opposition party mobilization and ends with the emergence of terrorist groups after the closing of the legislature in 1992. We show not only that members of the main opposition party helped organize antiregime groups in the aftermath of the coup, but that the collapse of the legislature sapped the legitimacy of the democratic path to power for Islamic groups. The loss of legitimacy, in turn, increased support for armed Islamic groups and radicalized moderates.

The FLN and the Islamists Prior to 1989

Following independence in 1962, the National Liberation Front (FLN) dominated Algerian politics. The party maintained power by building a large coalition of supporters with patronage funded from the state-owned oil sector, using public sector employment and state spending to prevent social protest and buy political support (Chhibber 1996; Leca 1990). When oil revenues declined in the 1980s, support for the FLN unraveled (Entelis 1996, 46). This prompted a series of economic reforms, such as reducing public sector employment and selling state-owned businesses (Chhibber 1996, 133). These measures, however, were not enough to placate political opposition, and after a series of riots in late 1988, the regime conceded political reform.

Prior to the political opening, Islamic groups had little influence. Prominent Islamic leaders were repressed and the FLN effectively co-opted Islamic groups (ICG 2004, 1). For example, the FLN incubated a conservative Arabist wing to reconcile the socialist goals of the FLN with the principles of shari'a (Kepel

1995, 121) and granted policy concessions—such as a regressive family law in 1984—to co-opt Islamists (Kalyvas 2000; Mortimer 1996). The military suppressed a brief Islamist uprising in the mid-1980s, killing its founder while imprisoning other leaders (Hafez 2000; Kepel 1995). As a result of co-optation and repression, Islamic groups were relatively weak prior to 1989 and “engaged in very little overt political opposition or extra-institutional protest” (Hafez 2004, 44). Prior to multiparty mobilization in 1989, Islamic groups had little capacity to organize and even less power.

Islamist Mobilization and Multiparty Politics, 1989–91

In February 1989, a national referendum won support for a revised constitution that legalized independent political organizations, allowing civil society groups to mobilize support for opposition parties. Brumberg (1991, 62) estimates that by the end of 1989, over 10,000 new political and professional associations had formed, among them 22 new political parties. This mass mobilization was not limited to Islamic groups, but involved “Islamic, civic, secular, feminist, student, labour and farmer groups” (Entelis 1992, 73).

While multiparty politics encouraged the formation of new political organizations, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) had an early advantage. Using “independent” mosques—those that escaped state regulation because they were not completely built—to organize support for their party, the FIS provided basic social services where the state had failed (Chhibber 1996, 141). Fifteen Islamic parties competed in the 1991 elections, but few apart from the FIS had a strong, identifiable base: “[t]he others were creations of the government or of individuals, without any economic or political foundations” (Martinez 2000, 44). In the 1990 local elections, FIS won two-thirds of the regional assemblies and 55% of municipal councils; the FLN placed a distant second.

The FIS was not a monolithic party. The moderate faction, lead by Abassi Madani, advocated an electoral path to power, stressing democratic and peaceful strategies to mobilize support for the Islamic movement (Brumberg 1991). Madani's leadership was also critical in establishing the national credentials of the FIS because he was a founding member of the FLN (Chhibber 1996, 141). The radical faction, lead by a preacher who had been imprisoned by the FLN in the mid-1980s, sought an Islamic state, which it viewed as incompatible with Western-style democracy (Brumberg 1991; Entelis 1996; Kalyvas 2000).

Multiparty politics allowed both factions to mobilize supporters. While the moderate faction assumed formal control of the FIS, “the moderates did not manage to silence the radicals,” especially after the postponement of national elections from June to December of 1991 (Kalyvas 2000, 387). Hafez (2004, 45–46) stresses the inclusive nature of FIS during the period before the coup, which allowed groups that would later be the basis of armed antigovernment groups—such as Algerians who had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets—to mobilize support under the FIS umbrella. While both moderates and radical factions mobilized supporters from 1989 to 1991, the promise of winning legislative power decreased the incentive to pursue violence. In the three years prior to the coup, Algeria experienced only 31 terrorist attacks, compared with over 200 in the year following closing of the legislature.

On 11 January 1992, the military staged a coup, forcing President Benjedid to resign. The military closed the legislature, canceled the second round of elections, and imprisoned FIS activists. The dismantling of the legislature led to a power vacuum in Islamist movement, permitting the rise of radicals backed by armed Islamist groups. With the closure of formal political institutions, Islamic moderates were discredited. Hafez argues, “[t]he armed jihadists only gained prominence in 1992, after the military’s intervention . . . put an end to FIS’s electoral strategy” (2000, 574).

The Formation of Armed Groups

Two armed groups formed in the aftermath of the military coup: the Islamic State Movement (MEI) and the Islamic Armed Movement (MIA). Both were led by former members of the Bouyali group that had been repressed in the mid-1980s by the FLN (Hafez 2000, 574). After a meeting in which these groups attempted to merge organizations was attacked by state security forces, surviving members opted to join an alternative organization under the banner of the Armed Islam Group (GIA) (Hafez 2000, 574). From the start, the GIA maintained its independence from FIS leadership and would later become a rival of the FIS armed wing (Hafez 2004, 47).

Despite the fact that the GIA was independent of the FIS, many activists from the latter joined the GIA (Hafez 2004, 46). Hafez expresses little doubt about the cause: “[t]he political exclusion and indiscriminate repression of the FIS resulted in the migration of many FIS activists toward radical organizations

that rejected democracy [and] the electoral process” (2004, 47). Roberts’ observation concurs: “[t]he violence of the mainstream of the armed rebellion . . . has primarily been a reaction to the state’s decision to deprive it of a constitutional avenue” (1995, 40–41). Thus closing access to the legislature increased the incentive to pursue violence.

With the GIA gathering FIS activists, party leaders formed an alternative armed group, launching the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) in July 1994 by merging existing groups from different parts of the country. The formation of AIS came after numerous defections by senior FIS leaders leaving to join the GIA (ICG 2004, 12). Thus, FIS activists who were mobilized during multipartyism became key members of both of the main armed antigovernment groups by the end of 1994.

However, the migration of ex-FIS radicals to violent antistate groups was not the only legacy of a closed legislature. Many antiregime moderates were also radicalized during this period. Political liberalization in 1989 unleashed a period of religious freedom during which radical Islamic clergy gained access to mosques. Kalyvas (2000, 389), for example, notes that hundreds of independent mosques were built during this period. Party mobilization ended state control of religion, permitting new groups to advocate for an Islamic state, including some who rejected the democratic path. Martinez argues that FIS activism during the period of open institutional access prior to the 1992 coup was instrumental in “spread[ing] the Islamist model and its language” (2000, 49). Entelis underscores this point by arguing that armed Islamic groups were comprised of new militants who had been “‘re-Islamicized’ by the FIS and further radicalized following the interruption of the electoral process” (1996, 62). Thus, the evidence from Algeria suggests that closing the legislature not only turned mobilized radicals to violence but also radicalized moderates.

Political mobilization during the brief period of multiparty politics led directly to the formation of terrorist organizations when the military closed access to the legislature after the 1992 coup. FIS activists not only helped start the main terrorist groups, but the period of open political mobilization also allowed extreme groups to spread their message, increasing support for radicals. Violent attacks by armed Islamist groups did not begin until after the military closed the legislature and canceled elections. According to the GDT data, two terrorist groups emerged after the military closed the legislature, leading to over 400 terrorist attacks from 1992 to 1994.

The Algerian case illustrates how closing legislative access to mobilized opponents fosters the emergence of terrorist groups in dictatorships. Prior to the period of multiparty politics, Algeria experienced few terrorist attacks, successfully co-opting potential opponents with formal institutions such as a legislature and dominant party. When the military closed the legislature after a brief period of multiparty mobilization, violent groups quickly emerged. Military repression against Islamists and competition between the two main armed factions of resistance increased violence, leading to a brutal civil war that claimed the lives of nearly 150,000 Algerians. While many cases of terrorist group emergence occur shortly before or in the midst of civil wars, our explanation for their formation focuses on political institutions. The emergence of terrorist groups in Algeria clearly precedes the bloodiest periods of civil conflict and was the direct result of a change in political institutions under dictatorship.

Conclusion

The literature on terrorism has paid much attention to the relationship between regime type and terrorism. Almost every published work concludes that democracies are more prone to terrorism. Furthermore, a growing literature explores variation in patterns of terrorism experienced by democracies with different political institutional arrangements. However, little attention has been paid to terrorism in nondemocracies. Consequently, nondemocracies have been largely treated as a homogenous category despite much evidence that they have a variety of distinct institutional structures.

We argue that autocratic political institutions, such as opposition political parties and elected legislatures, have significant yet overlooked influence on patterns of terrorism. More specifically, we argue that dictatorships with active opposition political parties and no legislature are the most prone to terrorism. Opposition parties facilitate collective action in repressive regimes where there are significant obstacles to mobilization. When opposition parties participate in an elected legislature, dictators can buy off some of the opposition. However, when opposition parties mobilize but do not have access to a legislature, aggrieved groups have both the incentive and the collective action capacity to pursue their goals via violence. Thus, dictatorships with opposition parties but no legislature are the most prone to terrorism.

We provide a range of evidence to support this theory. First, we show that regimes with opposition parties and no legislature are the most likely to experience the emergence of terrorist groups. Second, we demonstrate that autocracies with this particular institutional arrangement are also the targets of a substantially higher number of terrorist attacks across time. In general, our results suggest that if opposition parties exist, access to an elected legislature weakens the incentives to use terrorism.

These results suggest that authoritarian institutions can play somewhat similar roles to democratic institutions. Much of the literature on democratic institutions suggests that internal turmoil is best avoided by allowing for the representation of a diverse set of interests. For example, Powell (1982) shows that democracies with proportional representation electoral systems experience less political violence, in part because such systems allow for a diverse set of organized interests to participate in the political system (Askoy and Carter, 2012; Krain 1998; Li 2005; Lijphart 1977; Powell 1982; Saideman et al. 2002). In autocracies, banning parties and repressing opponents occur more regularly. Nonetheless, our results suggest that that opposition political parties and their participation in a legislature can play an important role in reducing political violence in authoritarian countries.

Our institutional explanation for terrorism has implications for other types of antigovernment behavior, such as nonviolent protests and civil wars.²⁴ Indeed, the Chilean case suggests that terrorist groups can emerge alongside a peaceful antigovernment protest movement. In this instance, peaceful opposition mobilization helped defeat the dictatorship. The Algerian case shows how terrorism and the repressive response it elicits from a dictatorship can escalate into civil war where terrorist groups evolve into rebel insurgents. However, nonviolent protests and civil wars may require the presence of other mobilizing factors. For example, the peaceful protest movement in Chile in the 1980s was fostered by elites from the Christian Democrats—a long-ruling party under prior democracy—in collaboration with a large, internationally supported human rights network. In Algeria, neither of these types of actors were present. Instead, violent antistate groups in the 1990s grew out of prior terrorist networks that operated under dictatorship in the 1980s and an Islamist party that had never held power. Civil wars may require more than institutional change under dictatorship, such as

²⁴See Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) for a discussion of non-violent protest.

the presence of external funding (e.g., loutable resources or foreign support) or conducive terrain (e.g., mountains). For such reasons, in this article we focused on terrorist group activity and leave other forms of antigovernment behavior for future research.

Finally, this study also points to several new paths for future research. First, our argument about the importance of interactions among organized moderates and radicals suggests that data on the ideological composition of organized opposition is ideal to further test our arguments. Using such data we can more directly study the dynamics of interactions between opposition groups and dictators. Our country-level data is consistent with our explanation, but we rely on a case study of Algeria to provide microlevel evidence of a mechanism. Second, this study raises important new questions about the relationship between terrorism and institutional stability in autocracies. In a related ongoing project, we show that terrorism is not systematically associated with fundamental institutional change, but that high levels of terrorist violence lead to a reshuffling of leadership that usually preserves existing institutions.

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