Threat Dimensions and the Societal Repression of Women's Rights

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Abstract: Women constitute half the population yet are minoritized globally. We argue that women are abused via *societal repression*: government authorities and dominant groups in society (the *repressive cohort*) collude to repress a non-dominant group for control and continued dominance. We present a theory of how women threaten governmental and societal control and how the repressive cohort responds. Authorities repress when women's demands represent a meaningful threat to the repressive cohort's dominance. When women are sufficiently capable of coercion, governments concede in policy but allow the dominant group to continue repressing privately. We present empirical expectations and use studies of girls' education in Bangladesh and femicide in Turkey to demonstrate how demands for women's rights lead the repressive cohort to repress or improve rights. The case of women's rights allows us to conceptualize what constitutes threat and how private actors participate in repression.

Introduction

When do governments grant rights to women, and when do they repress them instead? Women constitute one-half of the world's population—in some places the majority—yet they are treated with minoritized status in most countries. One-third of women have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of intimate partners or family members, and international law holds state authorities responsible for insufficient protection of women. States enact policies to improve women's visibility, representation, or equality, while women continue to suffer discrimination and violence in systemic patterns (Bush and Zetterberg 2021). Women have increasing representation in governments, yet in the same countries they remain excluded and oppressed in the workplace and the home (United Nations Statistics Division 2020). Violence against women empirically increases as the share of women in political offices increases (Matfess, Kishi, and Berry 2022). In many states, governments protect rights for the general population while simultaneously having poor records of protecting women.

We cannot use standard social science theories to understand violations against women.[1] Human rights scholars propose that protections are a function of mobilized demands: Organized social movements call for protections and concessions, and groups with resources and access to governments have their claims recognized. However, women are a diffuse population and difficult to organize (Goss and Heaney 2010), rarely protesting as a distinct group to demand their rights.[2] Human rights treaties are mixed in their effectiveness, but the Convention for the

[1] In this article, we focus on rights that are violated because the victims are women, not violations that apply across a cross-section of all genders.

[2] Of the 23,246 protest events in Latin America and Africa included in the Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD), less than 2% are coded as female events, meaning that the main actor(s) organize on the basis of female gender identity, the target(s) of the event are explicitly

Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is consistently connected to improved women's rights (Hill 2010; Lupu 2013; Conrad and Ritter 2019). Neither do repression scholars easily explain when states *violate* women's rights. Democracies and non-democracies alike violate women's rights, and theories considering the relationship of threat characteristics to repressive outcomes often consider women to be lower threats to the government than men and other social groups (Nordås and Davenport 2013).

What explains the repression of women, and when do governments sometimes empower and include women instead? The answer requires a recognition of the way that women are repressed. Women are often abused via *societal repression*, in addition to law or state action. Societal repression is the collaboration between state authorities and dominant groups in society (i.e., the *repressive cohort*) to carry out and enforce coercive policies and practices against a non-dominant group for purposes of control and continued dominance. Some statistical measures of women's rights protection take this societal element of abuse into account as the government's responsibility (e.g., Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2014), but we theorize this process explicitly, differentiating between actors and their distinct motives in the process of contention and rights abuse. We argue that national and local authorities collaborate explicitly and implicitly with private actors in the dominant societal group to keep women in lesser societal positions.

The answer further requires a deeper, specific conceptualization and examination of *threat* than is typically assumed in repression scholarship: what it is, who wields it, and how governments respond to it in deciding what rights to grant or repress. We present a theory of how

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female, or the motivating issue of the event is of particular concern to women (Salehyan et al. 2012).

women threaten the governmental *and societal* status quo policies and practices and how the repressive cohort responds. The interaction between women's coercive capacity and demanded change yield expectations about where demands are likely to be repressed, satisfied, or ignored entirely, both by the government and the dominant group. Women threaten the government when they possess the ability to impose continual costs on it for unrelenting violations, and their demands threaten societal actors when they request major changes to the status quo of control and hierarchy. Governments concede rights protections when women demand them, but only when women's claims or coercive capacity are unlikely to overturn existing societal power structures. If satisfying the demands would upset the government's power or overturn societal hierarchies, the government will repress them instead.

We use case studies of girls' education in Bangladesh and femicide in Turkey to demonstrate how demands for women's rights improvements in different women's mobilization contexts across time yield repressive responses or improvements of women's rights.

The theory of societal repression travels across group identity, yet to explain rights outcomes we must explicitly account for which societal actors' status quo is threatened by demands for change and how women constitute that threat, yielding the reason they are targeted for repression or protection. The model describes how a group's demands and capacity to coerce affect whether demands are conceded in policy or satisfied in practice; what constitutes the demands and capacity depends on the context and characteristics of both the dominant and minoritized groups. Women's rights and abuses allow for a study of threat variance across distinct dimensions of threat to social and political power and a deeper understanding of the role societal actors play in a repressive state. By studying women distinctly, we learn more about why

they are abused and when they are protected, but we also learn more about why and how states repress not only women but everyone.

Theory

Repressive actors: The repressive cohort and women's rights violations

Governments repress to retain power over policies and resources, and authorities often collaborate with one or more dominant societal groups to carry it out. From a legal perspective, governments are the duty-holders (and thus legally responsible protectors or violators) of rights, but in practice the people in society who benefit from those violations are colluding perpetrators of repression. We call the combination of these state and societal collaborators the *repressive cohort.*[3] Our concept of a repressive cohort incorporates actors beyond those who mete out repression as agents of the state—police, military, and bureaucrats—to include citizen's councils, vigilantes, businesses, and people in everyday positions of power (Earl 2003; Rothstein 2017; Cunningham, Ward, and Owens 2019).

Earl (2003) denotes three types of actors who participate in societal repression: state authorities with national authority, local government authorities that are less connected to national leaders, and private actors. State and local authorities create policies and carry them out with the authorized power of government. They have political levers and the privilege to use coercion to pull them. In addition, civilian (private) members of society participate in and perpetuate repression. We focus on civilian participants who are members of the dominant caste

[3] A variety of historical and social scientific works consider elite and civilian co-participation in acts of repression and democide (Galtung 1969; Earl 2003; Applebaum, Anne 2012; Straus, Scott 2013; Earl, Maher, and Pan 2022).

or group, where the dominant group is defined relative to the target of violations in terms of power: Whites enforce segregation from Black and Latinx populations in the US; party members collude with communist party actions against dissidents; Indians of upper castes belittle, reject, and torture those in lower castes; men deny opportunities to female family or colleagues (Wilkerson 2020). In our study of women's rights and violations, men are the dominant group, and women are the target of violations.[4]

This is not to say that these identities are the only, or even the most salient, identities for a group at a point in time. Members of the dominant group and the targets of violations have intersectional identities that amplify or minimize the effects of rights violations or improvements. For example, policy concessions on women's rights may not benefit all women equally and sometimes come at the cost of perpetuating violations against other minoritized groups or identities (Raja, Berry, and Lake 2020). In addition, some women join repressors in opposing rights for women, partially to avoid classification with other women as marginalized persons (Wilkerson 2020). In other words, women can be both victims and perpetrators. When acting in alignment and cooperation with the dominant group, we consider these women to be part of the repressive cohort.

A focus on the repressive cohort is necessary to explain rights violations against minoritized targets, especially women. This is because a great deal of the discrimination, underprovision, and violence against women is perpetrated by private actors in the repressive cohort who do not hire them, refuse services to them, control their movements or behaviors, or

[4] We include transwomen and non-binary genders in the non-dominant group relative to men.

injure them.[5] These are human rights violations: Governments are obliged to implement and enforce laws against such discrimination and violence. Bjarnegård and Donno (2023) argue that while governments make policies that prohibit women's rights violations, some types of policies are implemented by centralized processes (like legislative quotas, implemented by the government on itself) or by decentralized processes (like criminalizing domestic violence, enforced by local police and courts with variable incentives to comply). The policies that must be implemented locally and privately are more difficult to enforce and easier to violate--these are the policies where the repressive cohort are most relevant. The CIRI Human Rights Data makes this point explicitly, though it is rarely discussed in scholarship using the data: the coding for both women's social and economic rights includes whether "the government *tolerates* a [high, moderate, low] level of discrimination against women" in the category (Cingranelli et al. 2014, emphasis added). Though their private nature makes them difficult to see or measure, these inequalities and violent acts are part of the repressive process of government and societal control, and they constitute violations of the state's legal obligations to protect women's rights.

We differ from prior work by considering explicitly how government authorities (national and local) and private actors *collaborate* in repressing women. Where state authorities establish the policies and institutions that legitimize and make space for repression (Galtung 1969), the dominant group commits the everyday aggressions that prevent the non-dominant

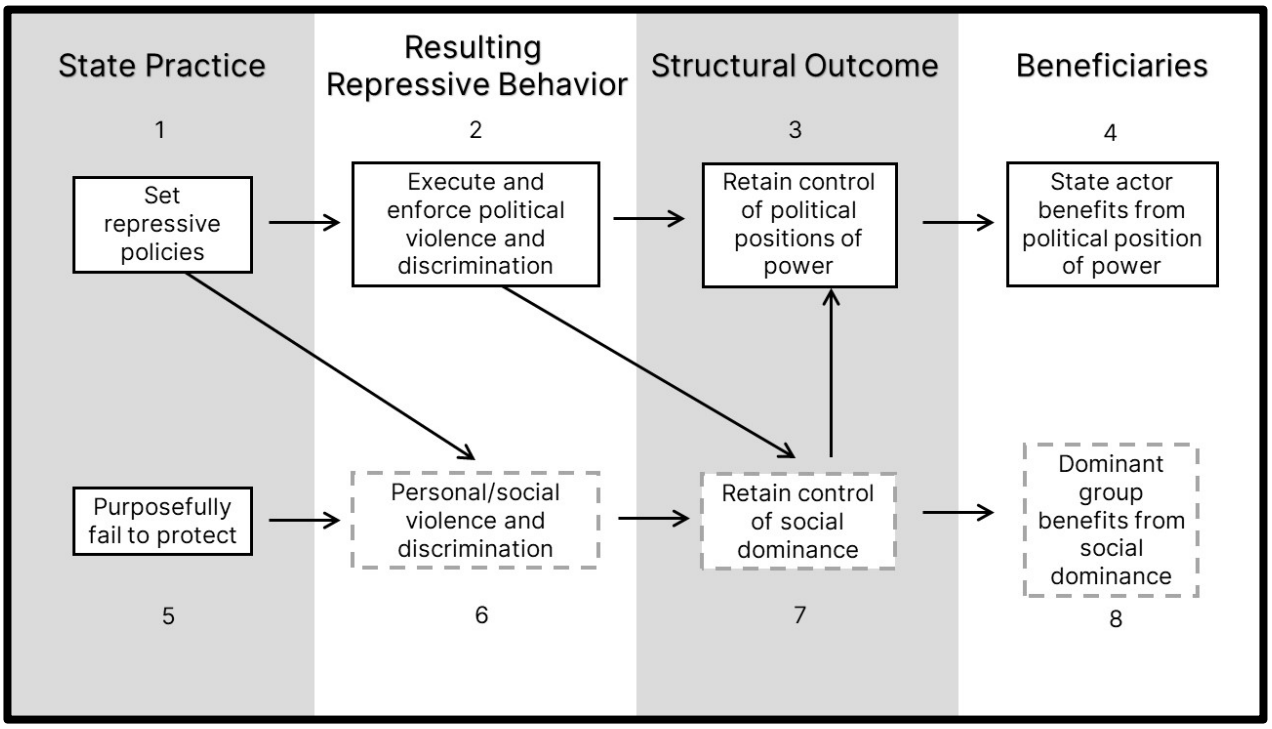
[5] To be precise, we use the terms "women's rights" and "repression of women" to mean human rights that are violated because the targets are women—not necessarily repression of victims that include women. For example, if women are tortured alongside men because of their joint participation in a protest movement, their rights are violated but not usually by the repressive cohort. We are specifically focused on rights violations that are intended to control people based on their gender or ethnic group membership or identification.

group from attaining power, particularly but not only in the cases of economic and social repression. Rights violations create and embed societal inequities, and inequity benefits the persons and groups in power in society, who perpetuate violations to maintain those benefits. Thus, governments violate rights and repress by creating state policy but also by purposefully failing to protect women from men's discriminating or violent actions. Kyrgyz police did nothing to stop several dozen men from assaulting and dispersing women's rights activists at a protest in the capital city of Bishkek in April 2021 (Imanaliyeva 2021). Even Iceland, the country rated the most gender-equal country in the world by the World Economic Forum for the past 12 years, currently faces a lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights for what plaintiffs claim are systematic failures by police and legal system to protect the rights of victims of gender-based violence (Kottasová 2021).

Figure 1 illustrates the logic of our societal repression model, describing how these actors collaborate to enact societal repression.

[Figure 1 about here.]

Figure 1: A theory of societal repression. Headings across the top of the figure describe the boxes in each shaded column; boxes with solid outlines are state authorities' actions and outcomes; boxes with dashed outlines are the dominant group's actions and outcomes.



Both types of actors in the repressive cohort play important roles in perpetrating societal repression. National or regional legislators and executives set repressive policies and structures that allow violence or discrimination without accountability (Fig. 1, Box 1). These policies enable local security and political agents to execute violence against women with low rates of accountability and enforce policies of legal discrimination (Box 2)—these are the levers of political rights violations, enabling government authorities to influence who can challenge the current power hierarchies (Box 3).[6] National and regional policies also allow private actors from

[6] Of course, agents do not need legal permission to violate rights, as their delegated state authority grants them leeway to use violence and discriminate, but it is easier under policies giving explicit permission.

the dominant group to use violence and discrimination without the expectation of punishment (Box 6), whether because the policy explicitly states that a violation is allowed (like authorizing stoning as punishment for adultery) or because it can only be implemented decentrally (like prohibitions against wage gaps). Government authorities further violate rights by purposefully failing to protect the rights of women (Box 5). This allows men to violate rights in the personal and social domain without an expectation of accountability for violence and discrimination (Box 6). Both formal repressive policies and the government's failure to protect the rights of women facilitate violence and discrimination of economic and social rights, which keep women lower in social power structures and allow men to retain their social dominance.

Government actors have political rights levers at their disposal, and they use them to control power to their benefit (Box 4), while men benefit from the social supremacy (Box 8) which survives through those political machinations, as well as privately enacted economic and social repression. Government actors support the dominant group with policy and practice, and the dominant group helps keep the authorities in power to continue to benefit from incentives supplied by the government. In short, the repressive cohort is a symbiotic relationship.

Earl's (2003) typology of repression helps us think through what societal repression looks like, establishing scope conditions and illustrating the concept in the context of women's rights. Repressive tactics differ on three primary dimensions: the type of actor who perpetrates the repression, whether the action is one of physical coercion (e.g., arrests, violence) or channeling (legal, broad, or indirect efforts to limit or control protests or challenges), and whether the actor expects the action to be observable. These dimensions occupy the rows and columns of Table 1, where we provide examples of repression of women's rights and ability to challenge the state's or dominant group's status quo in each category.

Table 1: Examples of societal repression of women, categorized according to Earl's (2003) typology of repression

	Tactics of Control over Protest & SQ Change			
Perpetrator Type	**Physical Coercion**		**Channeling**	
	Overt	**Covert**	**Overt**	**Covert**
State actors tightly connected with national political officials	Laws authorizing violence against women	Absence of laws protecting women from violence	Laws restricting reproductive rights or participation in society	Non-provision of resources for schools for women, maternity leave, family support
	-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-
State actors loosely connected with national political officials	Police arrest women for protesting	Police fail to investigate domestic/sexual abuse	Local limits on women in economic, social, or protest spaces	Local inequalities by gender in education, business permits, service provision
	-5-	-6-	-7-	-8-
Private actors	Physical violence against women protesters, public punishments for social violations	Physical violence in the home	Refusal to share resources, wage discrimination by businesses, marriage contracts, online sexual harassment	Social norms of non-participation in society or discrimination against women
	-9-	-10-	-11-	-12-

To put it simply, women are victims of societal repression. State authorities have direct control over political repression, and they choose behaviors and policies that either support or condone private repression. Men in positions of hiring, pay, inclusion, and social power exclude women from their ranks. Family members deny or punish efforts toward social independence or equality. More dangerously, violence against women is allowed or even expected such that members of society—including friends or family—use rape, domestic violence, and public

violence to control women with little objection from state authorities. Some men benefit personally from repressing women in their homes or workspaces, and other men benefit by maintaining their position of dominance. This position gives men access to economic, social, and political benefits in the social hierarchy, which they use to keep the complicit state authorities in positions to reinforce that power.

Threat: When will the repressive cohort repress or protect the rights of women?

When and why does societal repression occur? Government actors and civilian members of the dominant cohort repress when their power or benefits are threatened. Despite the common *operationalization* of threat as dissent actions,[7] there is no commonly accepted definition of the *concept* of threat in political science, so we start from basics. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *threat* as "A person or thing likely to cause damage or danger."[8] This is similar to scholarship that suggests observable characteristics of a group, like its size or violence, indicate their threat to authorities—group size and violence increase their ability to cause damage or endanger state actors (Earl, Soule, and McCarthy 2003; Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong 2011). In considering the danger that subordinate groups represent to the ruling cohort via dissent actions, we add the Merriam-Webster definition of *threatened*, as in a threatened species: "having an uncertain chance of continued survival."[9] Individuals in in-groups often mistrust and mistreat members of out-groups due to a perception that the out-group will overtake what

[7] *Inter alia*, Poe and Tate 1994; Davenport 1995; Gartner and Regan 1996; Almeida 2003; Earl 2011; Hafner-Burton 2009; Hill and Jones 2014.

[8] Oxford English Dictionary, Lexico website, accessed 10/28/20 URL: https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/threat

[9] Merriam-Webster Dictionary website, accessed 10/28/20 URL: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/threatened

benefits and privileges they have in the status quo.[10] Dominant groups support policies that discriminate or allow violence against groups that "challenge the economic, political, and cultural standing of established groups…to maintain or restore group status," (Andrews and Seguin 2015, 476). Simply put, threat is *the ability to disrupt or alter the status quo that keeps the repressive cohort in power via a group's demands for change to the status quo and their capacity to impose consequences if the demands are not met.* This is the definition we use.[11]

We assume women must ask for a change to status quo rights violations to effect one, and the repressive cohort responds to the demand as a function of women's capacity to collectively impose consequences on them if they do not. Women make a demand, and then the government and societal actors respond to the specific demand made. The repressive cohort decides whether to increase repression (to deter future actions from an explicitly threatening group), ignore the demand and maintain the status quo, or decrease repression (to concede and satisfy the demands for rights protections) relative to the status quo.[12]

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[10] Political science and sociology have rich bodies of scholarship on the perception of, attitudes toward, and mistreatment of out-group members. See, *inter alia,* (Tajfel 1982; Quillian 1995; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Kinder and Kam 2010; Kam and Kinder 2012; Andrews and Seguin 2015; Conrad et al. 2018)

[11] Those who react to threat—whose decisions we hope to explain and predict—react not always to demonstrated ability but to their own perceptions as to how likely the group is to disrupt the status quo. As we cannot measure perceptions, we assume that perceptions of that ability track with observable measures of the ability to actualize coercive outcomes that change or otherwise endanger the status quo.

[12] We are focusing on how the repressive cohort responds to the women's specific demand. Women in Turkey, for instance, are demanding changes to policy and practice related to domestic violence and femicide. While the repressive cohort might make changes to, for

Repression suppresses dissent by infiltrating and sabotaging a movement to undermine its ability to act (McAdam 1999; Davenport 2015; Sullivan 2016a; 2016b) or by raising the consequences so that individuals and groups are deterred from acting (Tilly 1978; Danneman and Ritter 2014; Ritter 2014). Governments repress mobilized demands when the demand the group makes is too valuable to the maintenance of the status quo or when the group is too strong or organized, such that they would not dissipate if the initial demand were satisfied. These are the *dimensions of threat*—demand size and group coercive capacity—that combine to endanger the societal status quo.

We argue that the dimensions of a minoritized group's threat to the social and political order affect the distinct actors of the repressive cohort differently, which leads to the pattern of abuses that women suffer globally. Specifically, we argue that the size of women's demand to change the political, social, or economic status quo affects whether the *repressive cohort* will repress or respect their rights in practice, while their capacity to coordinate and coerce governments that do not respond to their demands affects whether the *government* will repress or respect their rights in policy.

Based on this discussion of threat dimensions and incentives to repress or concede, we expect the following relationships between women's threat dimensions and the repressive cohort's response;[13] we discuss them in detail below Figure 2.

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instance, female representation in government, that is not an answer to the specific demand for domestic violence changes.

[13] As we are not analyzing these statements with evidence in the attempt to falsify them, we refer to them as Claims that derive from our assumptions rather than Hypotheses.

Claim 1: When women have *low collective capacity to coerce*, their demands of any size will be ignored.

Claim 2: When women *demand low salience or minor changes* to men's social or political power, the repressive cohort will satisfy their demands in policy and practice to defuse their movement.

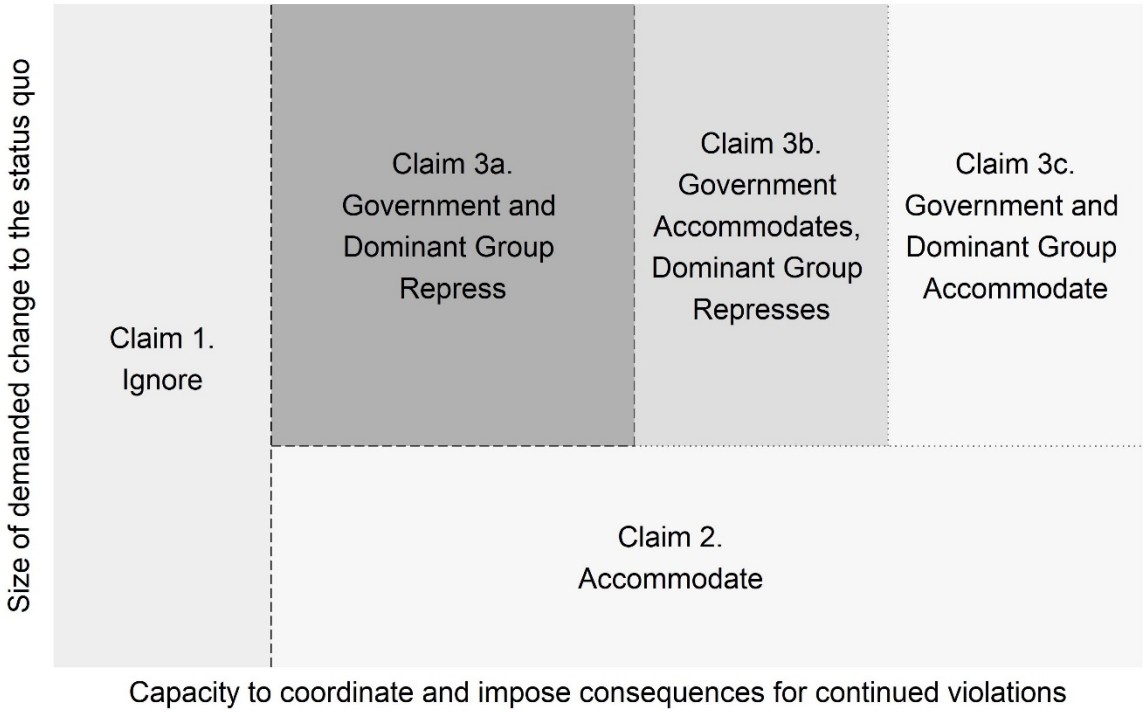
Claim 3: When women *demand high salience or major changes* to men's social or political power, the response depends on their collective capacity to coerce.

> **Claim 3a:** When women have *some capacity to coerce* and consequential demands, the repressive cohort will increase repression of women in policy and practice.
>
> **Claim 3b:** When women have *greater capacity to coerce* and consequential demands, state authorities will grant concessions in policy but encourage and allow the dominant group to repress women without accountability.
>
> **Claim 3c:** When women have *very high capacity to coerce* and consequential demands, the repressive cohort will concede in policy and satisfy their demands in practice, as women are then too costly to either ignore or repress.

These expectations emerge from the logic that governments respond more frequently with repression to consequential demands than they do to disruptive actions (Klein and Regan 2018). We posit that in cases where women ask for consequential changes and the state needs to concede to avoid their meaningful coercion, the state can do so but still allow men to violate rights to control and abuse women. Only when women are quite powerful and able to coerce must the state constrain men and provide full concessions.

[Figure 2 about here.]

Figure 2: Theoretical expectations of state and societal responses to marginalized group's demand size and capacity to impose consequences for continued violations. Cutpoints are abstract and relative, not estimated or derived.



We plot our expectations along the two dimensions of threat in Figure 2. Moving to the right along the X-axis across the figure represents increases in the latent capacity of women to collectively coordinate and impose meaningful disruptive costs on the repressive cohort for continued violations. It includes any characteristics by which the repressive cohort can determine the women's collective ability to endanger the cohort's status quo of power and control, endangering state power, men's dominance, or both. While this is largely context specific, factors such as the economic independence of women, social inclusion of women, political inclusion of women, existing civil society organizations around which women can coordinate, and support from international actors around their cause can all raise the repressive cohort's perceptions of

how able women are to mobilize and coordinate collectively to impose negative consequences for the government or men as a group. Moving vertically up the Y-axis represents increases in the salience of the demanded change to the status quo. Demands that affect the future of relative power and social hierarchy are particularly salient to the dominant group.

Let us walk through the logic of the claims illustrated in Figure 2.

At the far left of the figure, some populations of women have such a **low coercive capacity** relative to the repressive cohort that they will be ignored regardless of the size of their demand (Claim 1). Given that they impose so little cost even when undertaking a protest action, the repressive cohort neither represses to prevent any such action from occurring nor finds it beneficial to concede the demand to stop future action. Women in Afghanistan under the Taliban have this characteristic: protests are small and extremely rare because women are forced to remain at home and excluded from public spaces, and the Taliban do not expect women to wield consequences for government non-response.

In Claim 2, governments and their collaborators are more likely to concede and improve rights practices if (a) **women's demands do not represent a salient threat** to the existing regime and social structure (low concession/demand costs) but (b) women create or threaten enough disruption and costs that a government needs to make the demands go away (high disruption/coercion costs) (Klein and Regan 2018). Low salience demands like the right for women to drive in Saudi Arabia do not greatly affect the overall dominance of men but dissipate the collective demands for change, such that the repressive cohort will change the policy and largely comply with it. Revolutionary threat theories argue that elites extend franchise, suffrage, or other concessions when they face a sufficient threat to social order but would rather concede and bear the costs of sharing rights than risk a revolution (Conley and Temimi 2001; Acemoglu

and Robinson 2006; Przeworski 2009; Gause 2022). Remedying a violation reduces the need for future collective action. If a group forms around a single, obtainable demand, there is no need to continue working together once the claim is granted (Lorentzen 2013). Concessions can splinter large groups: governments can satisfy one group to discourage collaboration with other groups with related claims (Weingast 1997). Cooptation functions similarly by giving opposition groups some power or allocation short of their full demand, satisficing them so they no longer challenge the status quo (Gandhi 2008). Some demands are small and relatively straightforward to grant, such as requests to correct local corruption, access medical care, or increase benefits for a specific group of workers (Lorentzen 2013). These are low salience demands with clear ends and satisfying them does not necessarily imply other groups would achieve the same outcomes, so the government can disperse costly dissent by conceding without risking more group action (Claim 2).

Other demands directly weaken the structural hierarchy in the status quo, such as claims for self-rule, regime change, or the allocation of political power (Davenport 2000, Ch. 1), which are dangerous to authorities' survival and the dominant caste's control of power and resources. For **demands that pose a salient threat to the status quo** (Claim 3), the repressive cohort will repress the demand and often increases repression overall. In Claim 3a, women are **able to work together enough to impose some costs on the repressive cohort**, but they lack the capacity to really sustain support in the face of repression (Davenport 2015). The salience of the demand is too high for the repressive cohort: Remedy would be costlier than repression. The government uses policies and authority to repress mobilized women while men collaborate in the private and social spheres. This is an effort to disband coercive groups and maintain the status quo.

Once women's **capacity to impose costs increases further** (Claim 3b), we expect some level of remedy for demands. With moderately high coercive capacity, the government cannot endure the costs women can impose and must concede something, especially if that capacity comes from increased visibility or international allies (Rejali 2007). Once women's coercive capacity is sufficiently high that the state cannot repress it and retain social order, it instead concedes the policy to disperse active dissidents (Claim 3b). Distinct from full remedy, here men play an even clearer role in the repressive cohort. This is where we expect the government to purposely fail to enforce the new policy. Men are allowed to continue repressing women as private actors. We highlight this in the case analysis below when Turkey ratifies the Istanbul Convention to concede to women's demands for protection from intimate partner violence but make it clear authorities will not punish men for such violence or even femicide.

It is only at the **highest levels of group capacity to coerce** (Claim 3c) do we expect that demands of major changes to the status quo will receive full remedy, both in policy and practice, from all parties of the repressive cohort. This is where women have the requisite resources and coordination to impose huge costs on both the government and men as a group, weathering repression and adapting to retain trajectory (Davenport 2015), that the demand must be satisfied to disperse the challenge. Here, women are too capable and their actions too costly for the repressive cohort to either repress or ignore.

Importantly, women's demands and their capacity to coerce are relative and ever-changing. Their abilities and the salience of their demands may have different importance to the repressive cohort as women's place in the social hierarchy relative to men shifts. They also vary over time, increasing and decreasing as the repressive cohort attacks or accommodates women as a group. To state it simply, societal repression and its relationship to women's mobilized

demands are a dynamic process, where cycles of contention move between different regions of the model with different expected outcomes and back again. This is clear in the case analyses that follow.

This theory is complex, with three primary actors engaging in strategic interactions, competing incentives and tactics, and multiple variables that condition the government and dominant private actors' responses for women's demands for rights protections and equal treatment. To illustrate the assumptions and claims of the societal repression model, we turn to case analysis to demonstrate how threat dimensions and theorized mechanisms connect demands for rights to repression or remedy in practice.

Empirical Analysis

We probe the plausibility of our theory with two case illustrations. While we recognize the value of a large-N correlative test to identify patterns intertemporally and cross-nationally, currently available data precludes such a study.[14] Further, the complexity of our theory suggests that the

[14] Political science currently lacks comprehensive data for a cross-national evaluation of our theory. Our theory requires that any data, while specifically capturing repression against women, be fine-grained enough to capture subtle changes in practice in response to new demands or changes in coercive capacity. The measure best suited for this purpose, the Human Rights Dataset (Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2014), includes variables pertaining to women's economic, political, and social rights. Rights protections are captured on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (no rights in law or practice) to 3 (guarantee of rights in law and practice). For us to use this data, the resulting change from a protest would need to be so substantial that it contributed to an entire point change in the scale—a threshold too high for the changes we describe here. Existing large-*N* data on protests is often fine-grained and measured by event, but it is limited to regions of the world and lacks critical information on the role of women in protests. In our

details of a close case study would clarify the variables and mechanisms. We walk through the theoretical process of societal repression in the context of two cases where women demand changes to their status quo treatment and the government and dominant cohort respond.

While mobilized demands for women's rights can take many forms that are not public protests, public protests are a clear indicator that a demand has been made for change. We identified possible cases for studying societal repression by first looking for instances of women protesting for improved rights. We searched NexisUni for *Associated Press* articles with "women's protest" in the text to identify potential instances where women were involved in protests demanding improvement in women's rights, since these are clear signals to governments and dominant group members that women can organize around a claim to some degree. The resulting articles were then evaluated for whether they captured a protest event where women were protesting for demands related to improving women's rights. We chose one movement, in Bangladesh, where women demanded the right to education (a social and economic right) and another movement, in Turkey, where women demanded the right to life and protection from domestic violence (physical integrity rights). These cases illuminate how societal repression and

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search, we found that even where information on women's involvement in protest and women-centric protest demands are available, there are few protest event observations that pertained to our theory. Out of the over 23,000 events in Africa and Latin America included in the Social Conflict Analysis Database (Salehyan et al. 2012), less than 2% are considered "female events," meaning the participants, demands, or targets of the event are predominantly female. Together, along with the fact that there are any number of other changes and events besides protests that make the threat dimensions of women more salient and potentially trigger a change in rights protections or repression, the problems with existing data make it difficult to link insufficient women's protest data to coarsely measured repression and remedies.

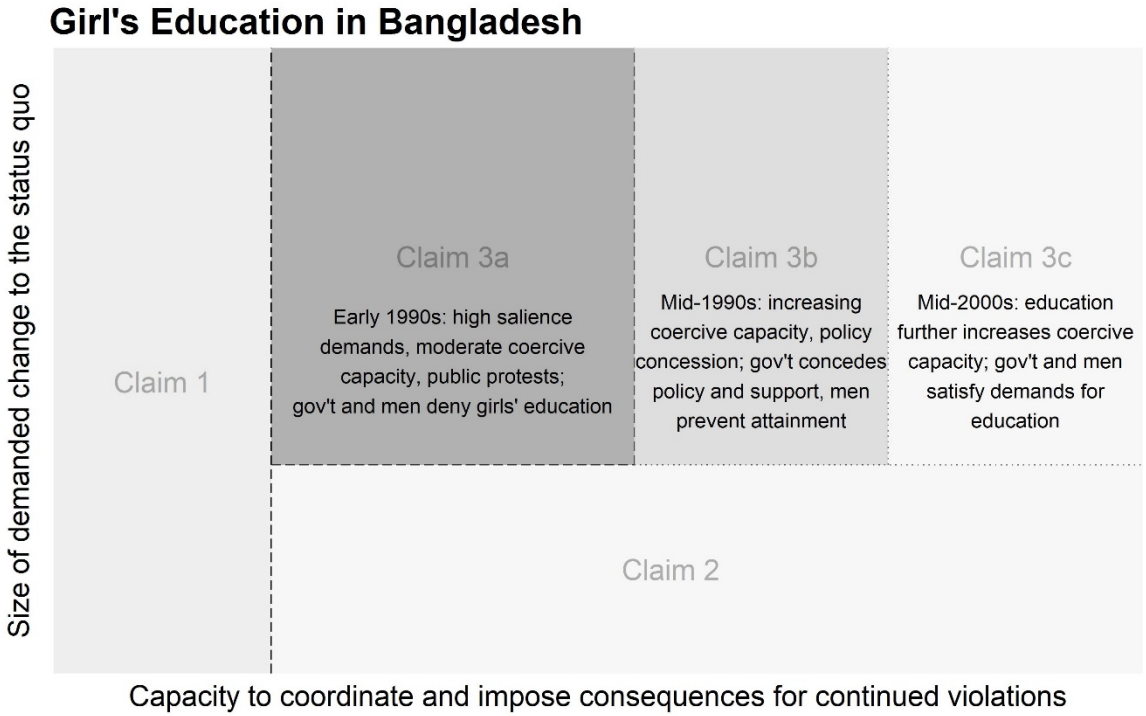
state collusion with men play out in practice and how women's threat dimensions contribute to shifts in women's rights repression or improvement.

Women's education in Bangladesh: Low threat, concession, and eventual remedy

On January 1, 1996, women and girls protested in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, demanding improvements to education and employment for women. An estimated 100,000 women protested at the parliament building, demanding equal rights and criticizing Islamic fundamentalists' stronghold on the government and society (*Associated Press* 1996). This protest was part of a longer social movement where women's organizations worked together to protest the Islamist social norms and practices that kept women bound to their homes. The movement was active throughout the 1990s and grew in strength, such that practices in Bangladesh shifted from repressing girls' access to education in policy and practice (Claim 3a) to allowing freedom in policy but not practice (Claim 3b) and finally facilitating girls' education in both policy and practice (Claim 3c). Figure 3 overlays the key details of the case on our Figure 2, connecting conditions to theoretical expectations.

[Figure 3 about here.]

Figure 3: Theoretical expectations of state and societal responses to women demanding education for girls in Bangladesh from 1990-2020.



Background: high salience demands, moderate coercive capacity (Claim 3a). Before 1990, Bengladeshi women tended not to enjoy rights to education and employment in policy or practice. Women requested access to schools and jobs, but they did so with little capacity for coercion, dissenting in small, sporadic demonstrations and high-profile individual asks rather than large, coordinated efforts. Article 28(2) of the 1972 Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (which remains in force) states, "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life," (Elkins, Ginsburg, and Melton 2021, "Bangladesh"). Specifying the rights to spheres of public life allows for injustice to occur unopposed in private spheres. This has ill consequences for women, ranging from unfair economic practices to domestic violence; most matters of private life follow conservative Islamic law, which relegates

women's social roles to home support (Azim 2022). The dominant group in society (Muslim men) had a hold on but not total control over political power. Muslim men and Islamic clerics frequently opposed women's education and employment as a significant danger to Islamic ideals and God's will, and their influence over the government in the late 1980s and early 1990s meant that the government rarely created policies to prevent discrimination against women.

The Bangladesh Association for Community Education (BACE)—a national NGO working toward universal education for disadvantaged groups—created and implemented the Female Secondary School Stipend Project (FSP) in 1982. The FSP raised money to send girls to secondary schools, with goals to increase and lengthen education and thereby also delay marriage and pregnancy. Yet the program was insufficient to improve female school enrollment without support from the government or members of the dominant religious group throughout the 1980s. In 1991, 64% of girls attended primary schools, 33% attended secondary schools, but only 20% of Bangladeshi women were literate (Schurmann 2009). Dowry requirements meant families had little available money, and the pervasive traditions of keeping women at home and away from non-related men (called *purdah*) undermined families' incentives to send girls to school (Balk 1997). Familial and social repression was the primary barrier to girls' education in the early 1990s, and the NGO-run program was insufficient to overcome it.

Women increase in coercive capacity via organizations and coordinated efforts. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, several women's organizations were founded and increasingly worked together to engage in direct, collective advocacy events to protest the societal repression of women and demand changes in both policy and practice in the private sphere. A women's NGO founded in 1983, Naripokkho, led and coordinated the protest movement against Islam as the state religion. These protests focused on problems such as female

school enrollment, the availability of contraceptives and family planning, and the labor rights of working women (Azim 2022). Though a few women's organizations like Naripokkho were founded in the 1980s, this was a decade in which NGO growth was concentrated among economic development NGOs instead: "the number and role of NGOs…significantly expanded during the rule of the Jatiya Party under Ershad (1982–90)" (Haque 2002, 418). Yet the proliferation of NGOs in the densely populated Bangladesh raised the examples and resources for women's advocates to follow suit in the early 1990s.

In 1994 and 1995, women and student groups participated in public protests demanding access to education and changes to the social norms of harassment, social exclusion, and financial burdens that kept school out of reach for girls (Research Directorate 1996). The more frequent and public protest actions were the result of women's increasing capacity to coordinate and coerce the government into change. Partially, this is because students and anti-regime groups were mobilizing at the same time, offering organizational guidance and resources for women to support their own more secular demands (Research Directorate 1996). Women had greater access to media news and were able to gather in meditation groups called *shalish* (Schuler, Islam, and Rottach 2010), leading to higher levels of activism and coordination**.** Additionally, international organizations lent their influence and resources to amplify the effects of the women's social movement, increasing their capacity to coerce the government for change. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank put explicit pressure on the Bangladesh government to respond to women's demands for education, threatening to withhold funding if they did not support women on this issue (World Bank 2003). Public actions threaten government legitimacy to maintain order, and international pressure affects the government directly through diplomatic and international resource channels. These pressures allow women to

credibly threaten the government with coercive outcomes, shifting the state's response to women from cohort-wide repression (Claim 3a) to policy concession with private repression (Claim 3b).

Policy concession while education is repressed in private spaces. State policies and government-backed programming shifted in favor of women's education in 1994. That year, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation collaborated with the Bangladeshi government to expand the FSP to a national scale. The program provided funds for tuition and living stipends to girls in low-literacy areas all over the country, conditional on satisfactory grades and attendance. The government devoted substantial effort and resources to the project, creating structures and incentives for schools and families to work with the project and improve girls' education (World Bank 2003). Through this program, girls had the legal ability and resources to be able to attend secondary school. This addressed a major hurdle to school enrollment, since even families who could afford to send children to school would usually favor sending boys rather than girls.

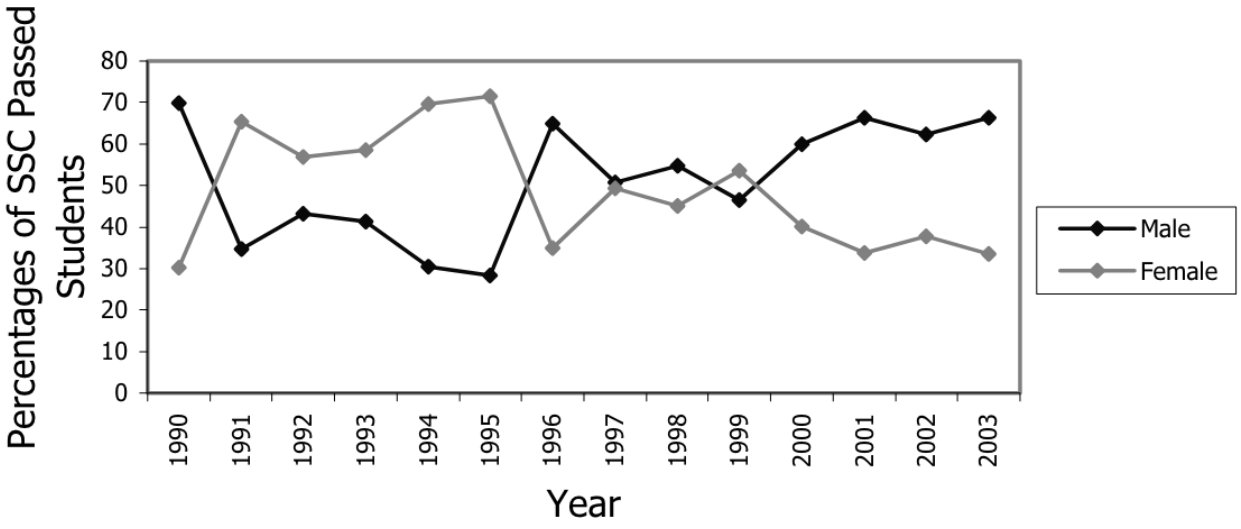
Even so, whenever the government granted progressive policy concessions to foreign donors and protesters for women's rights in the mid-1990s, it expected the dominant group to disobey those policies as they did under the FSP. Laws prohibited discrimination, including the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act of 1995 ("Bangladesh", US State Department 1999). But religious leaders (members of the dominant cohort) publicly discouraged adherence to these laws, arguing that education and economic independence for women could give them superiority to men—representing a threat to their benefits from social dominance—which was not a part of God's plan (Mahnaz Murshid 1997). The government rarely enforced the laws, especially in rural areas, and women failed to stay in and complete school throughout the 1990s, maintaining low literacy ("Bangladesh", US State Department 1999). Members of the dominant

group violated women's rights without accountability, limiting their access to education and economic participation (Azim 2005).

With the government devoting monetary and monitoring resources to girls' education, female enrollment in secondary education increased considerably from 1990 to 2000, decreasing the gender enrollment gap in Bangladesh. Although *enrollment* increased, girls were more likely to not come to school or drop out than boys (Huq and Rahman 2008). The World Bank (2003) program assessment reports that parents "decide not to send the girls to school partly because they perceive that the girls learn little in school, and that their time is better used elsewhere," (page 12). Many principals and teachers made few efforts to supports girls' education, refusing to push them to return to school or support their learning needs to pass examinations and graduate. Parents often encouraged their daughters to leave school before completion to marry. Due to these private forces, girls' education *success* gap remained large throughout the 1990s and beyond. Huq and Rahman (2008) created a figure illustrating the percentage of enrolled students who passed the national secondary school certificate exam in each year from 1990 to 2003, reproduced here as Figure 4. This figure shows that just after the time of the FSP expansion (1994), while girls' enrollment went up, their success relative to boys declined appreciably. These are indicators that though the policy supports girls' attendance at school, men and dominant social groups did not throughout this time period.

[Figure 4 about here.]

Figure 4: Percentage of enrolled students passing the Bangladesh Secondary School Certificate (SSC) by sex. Figure reproduced from Huq and Rahman (2008, p. 127).

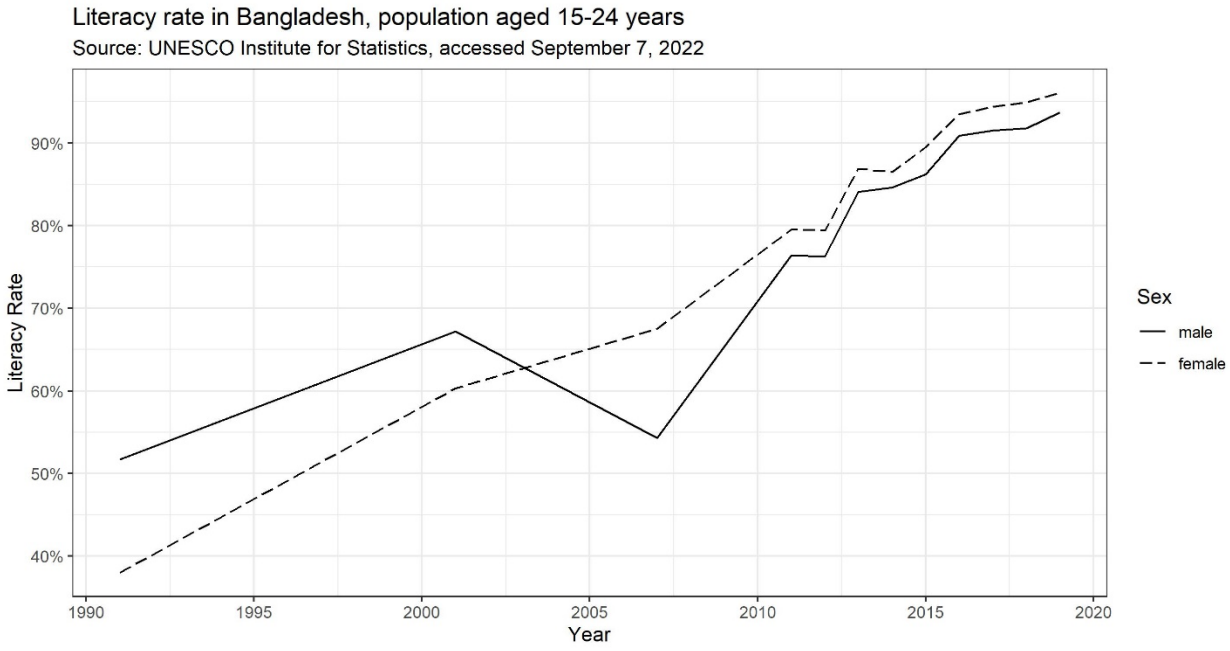


Education access further increases capacity to coordinate and coerce. Despite falling short of its long-term goals of educating girls and delaying social isolation (World Bank 2003), the FSP created important outcomes that facilitated women's empowerment and ability to work together to demand change. Even small changes, such as seeing girls traveling to and from school in large numbers, increases their social visibility and their ability to coordinate together (Schuler, Islam, and Rottach 2010). This rising social capacity slowly increased women's ability to demand more education and economic rights in the public sphere. Importantly, this source of coercive capacity—education—is difficult for the repressive cohort to take away once it has been attained, such that coercive capacity from learning can only grow. In the mid-2000s, alongside that increasing coercive capacity, assessors observed changes in thinking among men and communities, or the dominant societal group. Mahmud (2003, 11) writes in a program assessment report for UNESCO, "The [FSP] programme appears to have created a positive attitude among community leaders and the general population towards female secondary education. This is indeed an achievement in a patriarchal society that values women's seclusion

and in an economy where private returns to secondary education have not been very high." UNESCO data, depicted in Figure 5, shows the effects to be significant on education in practice, with literacy among women increasing alongside men's literacy from 2000 forward (Claim 3c).

[Figure 5 about here.]

Figure 5: Literacy rate in Bangladesh 1991-2019. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, accessed September 7, 2022: http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/bd?theme=education-and-literacy



The case of Bangladesh is a clear example of the repressive cohort's responses to the specific demand being made. Women organized and brought resources to bear against the state to yield policy concessions on girls' education, and they continued in their empowerment to demand changes on the issue of education from social circles. Shifts in attitudes and behaviors from the dominant group enabled more and more women to attend and eventually finish school with key educational attainment. Yet men continue to *violently* repress women to the present, with the government remaining entirely unwilling to use the criminal justice system to protect

them and social supporters of the dominant cohort pressuring women not to report intimate partner violence (Human Rights Watch 2020). We look at the case of domestic violence and femicide in Turkey as an example of women's claims that are partially conceded and then fully repressed.

Femicide in Turkey: High threat, policy concession, and societal repression

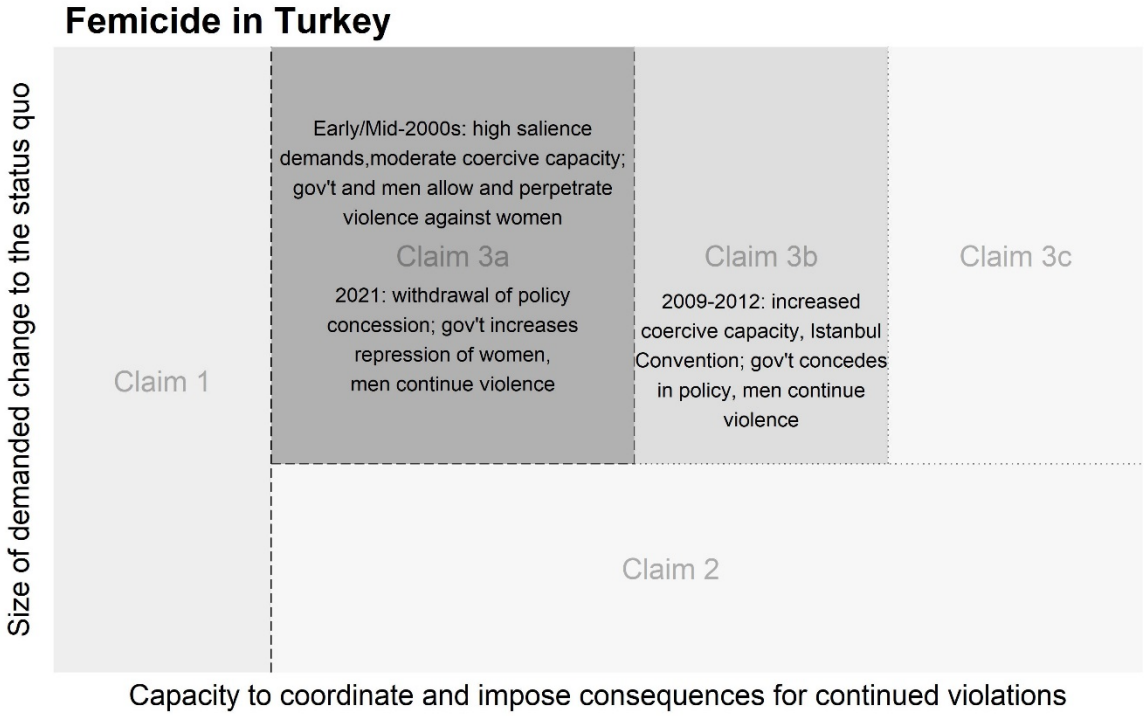
On March 8, 2022, Turkish women staged a peaceful march for International Women's Day despite restrictions against demonstrations in Istanbul's Taksim Square. Riot police fired tear gas at demonstrators and arrested at least thirty-eight women (*Associated Press News* 2022). Since 2000, protests against high rates of domestic violence and femicide—and the lack of government intervention or protection from this private repression—have increased in frequency. The demonstration was the most recent in a decades-long struggle to protect women's rights and address the country's persistent problem of family and partner violence against women.[15] Years

[15] CEDAW does not explicitly list domestic violence as a rights violation, but it recognizes women's right to life and freedom from bodily harm (United Nations 1979). States parties to CEDAW (189 states in the international system, including Turkey) are required to use their sovereign authority to protect those rights. The Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women published General Recommendation No. 19 in 1992 (reaffirmed and elaborated in General Recommendation No. 35 in 2017) to clearly explain how gender-based violence—violence targeted toward or disproportionately affecting women—is a form and manifestation of gender-based discrimination. It violates women's right to life and security, freedom from torture and bodily harm, and right to equality in family and cultural life. This is a clear example of societal repression: civilians from the dominant cohort (men) commit violence against members of the minoritized group (women), which the state authorities allow at a rate that facilitates systematic discrimination and control over the minoritized group.

of state-repressed protest and activism (Claim 3a) made way to both the signing of the Istanbul Convention in 2014 (Claim 3b) and the eventual withdrawal from the Convention in 2021 to return to systematic repression of the right to life (Claim 3a). The case and expected societal repression outcomes are described in Figure 6.

[Figure 6 about here.]

Figure 6: Theoretical expectations of state and societal responses to women demanding protection from intimate partner violence and femicide in Turkey, 2000-2022.



Background: high salience demands, moderate coercive capacity (Claim 3a). Women in Turkey have possessed full de jure and de facto political rights since 1934, including the rights to vote and run for local and national office (Oxford University Press Blog 2012). Yet Turkish women experience widespread repression of their social and economic rights. Women are excluded from the labor force, having employment at less than half the average rate of women's employment in the European Union (EU) (EU Delegation to Turkey 2022).

Critically, women in Turkey are frequently victims of harassment, rape, violence, femicide, and honor killing. A 2015 report by the Turkish government on domestic violence against women, the most recent on the topic, estimates that 36 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime (Turkey Ministry of Family and Social Policies and Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies 2015). The World Health Organization defines femicides as the intentional killing of a woman because she is a woman (World Health Organization 2012). They are often family and partner murders, where a father, brother, boyfriend, or husband kills a mother, sister, girlfriend, wife, or child for gender-conforming reasons. The We Will Stop Femicide Platform reports almost three thousand women have been killed in this way in the past decade, with numbers steadily increasing throughout. 300 were murdered in 2020, with 176 additional women "suspiciously dead", often made to seem like suicides (We Will Stop Femicide Platform 2021). Critically, local and national authorities frequently do not prosecute the murderers for these killings. The Turkish government allows for this extreme pattern of violence against women to continue at the hands of the dominant group while also repressing women's efforts to demand rights protections.

Women's capacity increases via international support. In 2009, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favor of the plaintiff in the case of Opuz v. Turkey (2009). Nahide Opuz's husband brutally beat her and her daughter and killed her mother for "interfering with their marriage," yet police refused to prosecute him for the crime. She relied on local organizations for domestic legal assistance from the Diyarbakır Bar Association Women's Rights Counseling and Implementation Center, which drew on international support to amplify its resources to bring attention to the case and litigate it at the ECtHR (Yılmaz 2020). The court ruled in favor of the plaintiff; the decision was the first that defined gender-based violence as a form of discrimination

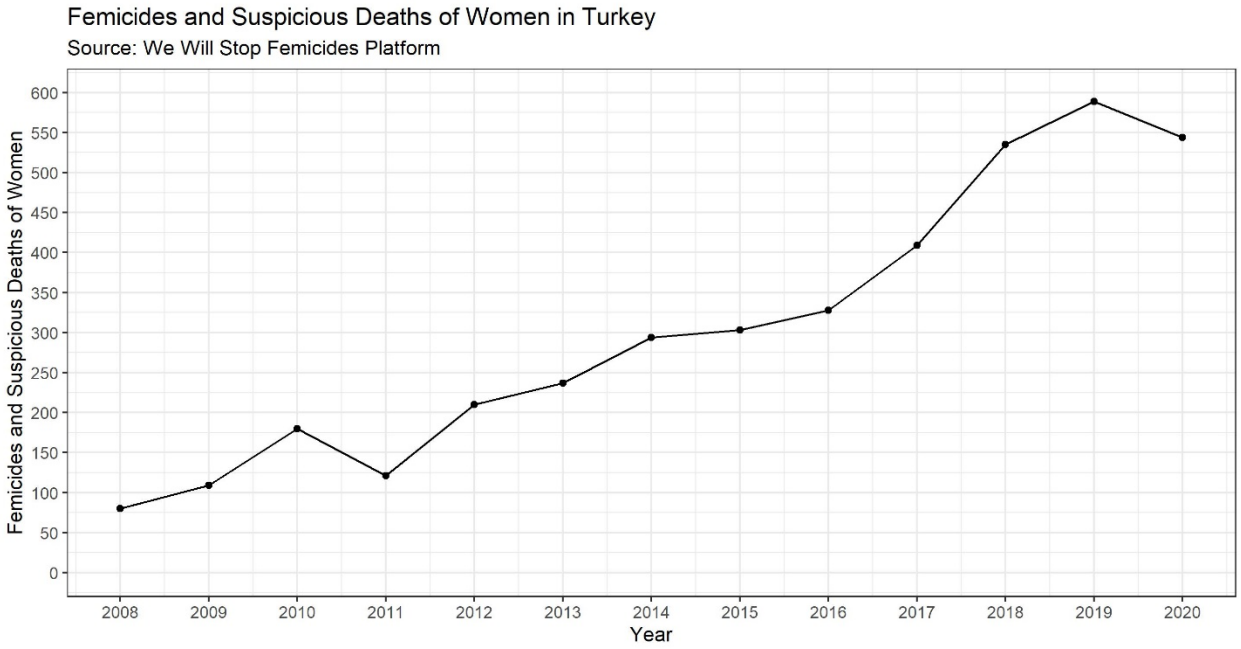
under the European Convention on Human Rights (Council of Europe 2009). The international support from women's NGOs and the ECtHR itself shifted power toward womens' claims for protection, combining international resources and attention with the domestic organizations that support women's legal claims to pressure the Turkish government to change their policies.

Policy concession while abuses continue in the private sphere (Claim 3b). In March 2012, Turkey became the first country to ratify the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention. Aimed at tackling violence against women, the convention was in part brought about by the increased attention to violence against women following the Opuz ruling.

Although the ratification was an official Turkish policy response to women's demands, their rights did not improve in practice, even after the convention entered into force in August 2014 (Claim 3b). The We Will Stop Femicide Platform tracks yearly cases of femicides and suspicious deaths of women within Turkey. They reported in 2022 that femicides continued to rise since the ratification, increasing from 294 women killed in 2014 to 497 in 2021 (see Figure 7). The pattern reflects a situation of continued societal repression, with no improvement in women's actual protections despite policy accommodation. Members of the dominant group were still allowed, and perhaps expected to, continue violating the rights of women—killing them—in private. Just after the convention came into force, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was quoted as saying, "You cannot put women and men on an equal footing. It is against nature," during a meeting on women and justice, contributing to an official government narrative of women being lesser to men (*Agence France Presse* 2014).

[Figure 7 about here.]

Figure 7: Yearly estimates of femicides and other suspicious deaths of women in Turkey, as tracked by the Turkish feminist group We Will Stop Femicides.



Because both private repression and government refusal to enforce protections continued after the Convention ratification, women continued to protest for proper reforms and protections. On February 16th, 2015, thousands of protesters nationwide, predominantly women, protested the killing of Özgecan Aslan, a Turkish university student murdered five days prior after resisting an attempted rape on a minibus. News outlets described the protests, known as the "Black Monday" protests, as the first mass movement for Turkish women. Some protests featured instances of male violence against protesters, and media coverage engaged in victim-blaming, suggesting Aslan's "non-conservative" ways were responsible for her fate. In Turkey, the state and state-run media encourage this connection by contributing to societal norms that devalue women and emphasize the need to keep women "in their place," both legally and in practice (*Agence France Presse* 2014). Women who fall outside of these established norms are then seen as "deserving" of attack by the dominant group. Protesters alleged that the government

did not effectively protect non-religiously conservative women, including by reducing the sentences and protecting perpetrators of violence against women, a theme that continues through subsequent protests. Protesters demanded the establishment of the "Özgecan Law," intended to stop reductions in sentences for perpetrators of violence against women on grounds of "good behavior" and "unjust provocation."

Increase in coercive capacity and Turkish withdrawal of policy concession (Claim 3a). Facing continued mobilization for protections, police repressed the protests for women's rights. This repression attempted to constrain women from mobilizing, dissenting, and collectively coercing the repressive cohort. Women worked to increase their coercive capacity by, for instance, forming alliances with student and LGBT activists and becoming involved in larger political struggles within the country (*Associated Press* 2021b). What began as demands for protections for women has grown into incorporation with much broader anti-government discourse and activism. In response to the growing coercive capacity, government agents began to repress protesters with both bureaucratic and violent actions. In 2017, authorities attempted to prevent the annual peaceful Women's Day march from occurring, refusing to grant organizers authorization for the protest but ultimately allowing it to continue without a permit (*Associated Press International* 2017). In a 2019 escalation, authorities reportedly used tear gas and plastic bullets to disperse the annual Women's Day protest (*Agence France Presse* 2019).

Protests continued and women's coercive capacity swelled with organizational efforts until the government reverted entirely, denying demands to implement laws to protect women's rights by formally withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021. This moved the state out of Claim 3b and back to the region predicting policy and practical repression (Claim 3a). The government claimed that the Convention went beyond addressing violence against

women, instead normalizing homosexuality, and thus was incompatible with Turkey's cultural family values (*Associated Press* 2021a). This allows for the continued societal repression of women and the acceleration of government repression of women and other minoritized groups deemed as threatening to the regime's characterization of Turkish family values.

Violence against women is a problem that remains persistent for women in Turkey, with increasing mobilization against the regime from both conservative and liberal women that threatens the patriarchal status quo. In the face of further mobilization, including the 2022 Women's Day protests and lawsuits, Turkey has moved to further repress the movement by suing to shut down the We Will Stop Femicides platform, which has been integral to the fight against male violence (*Agence France Presse* 2022). The move shows an increased willingness to directly repress the movement and further constrain the ability of women to mobilize around their demands for protections.

Conclusion

In this article, we argue that women's rights are violated not only by the governments obligated by law to protect them but also by private repressors in their homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces. It is no innovation on our part to claim that people—especially but not only men—discriminate against women in economic settings and use violence in social settings. Where we tread new ground is to point to the political cooperation that makes societal repression possible.

Government authorities allow private citizens to repress women because it gives the dominant group—men—personal and group-level benefits from continued social supremacy. Those beneficiaries support the authorities that allow them that leniency, maintaining their own connections to political power and furthering the reach of the government. This relationship

within the repressive cohort helps to explain why governments adopt seemingly progressive policies to protect women's rights and include them in political conversations while they continue to suffer wage, education, health, social independence, and physical security gaps.

Specifically, we claim that societal repression is a function of women's ability to make public, credibly coercive demands for change to the social and political status quo. In contexts of lower women's coercive capacity and meaningful demands, the government and men work in tandem to repress and undermine that coercive ability. Women in Bangladesh grew in organizational ability through the 1980s and early 1990s while the government failed to protect their right to an education denied by their patriarchal families. As women become stronger, authorities will accommodate some improvements in policy to try and placate loud organizations but allow private abuse and discrimination. The Bangladeshi government placated NGOs' demands to incentivize girls' enrollment in school in 1994, but families still did not support their education, removing them from school before they could obtain its benefits. The private repression is an extension of the state's ability to undermine women's coercive capacity for further improvements. This version of societal repression characterizes Turkey over the past decade: After joining the Istanbul Convention, societal abuse of women undercut their collective capacity enough that the government could later rescind its legal obligation to protect them. In other cases, when the government accommodation has the effect of reinforcing women's coercive capacity, as happened with girls' education in Bangladesh, that capacity continues to build enough to force societal accommodation in both policy and practice.

The case of Turkey differs from that of Bangladesh in the government's ability to directly manipulate the coercive capacity and threat that women pose to the regime. Whereas a government would be hard pressed to roll back socially accepted progress made in educating

women in Bangladesh, women's capacity in Turkey primarily grew through international support and resources. The Turkish government could remove itself from the Istanbul Convention, which removed the leverage the international law gave to women's claims for protection from violence. Though women's rights groups made legal challenges that withdrawal from the Convention was unlawful (*Associated Press International* 2022), Turkey did so anyways, allowing the government to increase its repressive policies to align with societal practice.

This concept of societal repression draws attention to private repressors as key players in a complicated process of repression. Private actors commonly contribute to group-level inequalities and abuses, but legal and social scientists focus so intensely on government behaviors that they tend to treat private repressors as criminals or bad apples rather than accomplices in human rights abuse. Our argument is that systematic social repression is explicitly a political action, one that benefits the government and the dominant group members at the same time.

Identifying multiple actors with distinct objectives in the repressive cohort, we intentionally define *threat* in the interaction between the marginalized group and the members of the repressive cohort. Where the size of women's demand affects the dominant group's position of power, their capacity to collectively impose consequences on the government challenges the government. Their interaction determines whether the government can support the dominant group's position with repressive policies or must concede to collective demands while repression continues privately.

Our study points to an overlooked and critical aspect of rights abuse--that which occurs privately and is therefore pervasive and unseen. Men abuse women at home or at work and threaten them to keep them silent. Authorities refuse to respond when women report the abuse.

How are scholars and activists to measure and combat it? Where can we look for evidence of the political interaction that tolerates and encourages it?

We have made an initial attempt here by looking for patterns and behaviors in line with our expectations. We can observe changes in the number of protests on women's Issues, but they rarely make headlines or protest datasets. We look for changes in the number of women's NGOs as resources for and measures of women's collective capacity to coerce, but there are relatively few to focus on. We perceive cases of abuse with no attempt to prosecute or punish abusers, but such cases often are not even recorded. We look for government statements of support for the dominant group or clear requests from the dominant group for policies in their interest, but it is difficult to connect such expressions with solidarity in rights violations.

Our focus on women is one of the starker examples of a repressive cohort engaging in societal repression, but it is not the only one. In racial hierarchies, dominant castes benefit from government leniency regarding discrimination and violence and politicians benefit from their supporting votes. Colonizing populations attack, kidnap, and steal from first peoples with colonial government support, and both benefit from economic gains. These are extreme illustrations of the concept, but societal repression also occurs as employment discrimination, access to services or goods, educational resources, and unprosecuted violence. Scholars must shine bright lights on private repressors, and people—especially members of dominant social groups of all intersections—should hold their peers accountable for actions that discriminate and abuse: To assume rights abuses are entirely a government-perpetrated problem is to ignore most of the problem.

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