Repressing Contention in Hybrid Regimes: Tools of Repression in The Gambi

Matengu, Saniah

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Saniah Matengu (2200201)

Dr Köhler

Introduction

Political contention and its counterpart political repression are phenomena citizens are confronted with daily, be it through global news, on social media or in their own lives. Many would picture social movements or violent state repercussions upon hearing these terms. However, scholarship on the topics has explained that much more is encompassed by these definitions, and there are far more complex mechanisms at play. Their interaction and ultimately their outcomes are capable of influencing political events at the national and the international level, and occasionally even causing regime transitions (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996). Aside from political consequences, political contention and repression can be seen as directly influencing the quality of individual lives.

Contention is often sparked out of grievances that a population experiences, which can be traced back to decisions made by a government. For instance, poor policy making might worsen an economic recession, which in turn increases unemployment. Individuals affected by this may then either withdraw from political participation or choose to express their dissatisfaction in a multitude of ways. Should the latter be the case, this is often referred to as political contention (Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; McAdam et al., 1996). Political repression, for its part, often aims to defeat the threats or manifestations of protest in order to maintain public order and regime stability (Carey, 2010; Shadmehr, 2014; Tarrow & Tilly, 2015; Davenport, 2007a). Different regimes employ different methods of repression. This can depend on the specific situation, their structural or institutional possibilities, and the political environment. To varying degrees, such restrictions affect the public and private lives of citizens. Thus, the topic of political contention and repression has implications for many aspects of society, which has made it all the more intriguing to study.

While the analytical and descriptive literature on dissent and repression is expansive, a number of questions remain unanswered. This is particularly true concerning its nature in non-democratic regimes, which do not benefit from a so-called 'domestic democratic peace' (Davenport, 2007b). The following paper is going to explore political repression within the category of hybrid regimes, focusing specifically on how such regimes counter dissent and which tools of repression they employ. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the patterns of repression typically found in such systems and, further, to outline how a regime's political structure influences and explains their application. To this end, I begin by outlining the existing literature on both political contention and repression, defining the terms and describing how their relationship has thus far been explained. This is followed by an in-

depth analysis of political repression in a characteristic hybrid regime, The Gambia. The West African state is a representative example of how a regime can perceive contention as a threat, and what it does to counter or prevent it. The findings of this study show that hybrid regimes employ a wide array of repressive tools, including both peaceful and violent means. Further, it becomes evident that the hybridity of the regime's structures and institutions influenced the types of tools used, but also when and how they were implemented. Finally, it is outlined how the results of this study contribute to the greater understanding of political repression and what this means for the interpretation of events of political contention in regimes across the globe.

Political Contention

As has already been indicated, state repression is intrinsically linked to political contention. The repressive mechanisms I aim to explore are those which precede, follow, or counter an action of dissent. Therefore, I will first outline how political protest is defined and how it is generally understood to function. Then the paper will address how repression has been explored in context with contention and will be conceptualized in my own research.

There are a number of studies on political contention and social movements, and many of them are extensive. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) define contentious politics as the "public and collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects", whereby at least one government must be a party and the claims, if achieved, "would affect the interests of at least one of the claimants" (p. 5). Tarrow and Tilly (2015) emphasize that most contention happens outside the realm of politics, and only becomes political when government agents are involved (p. 8). It should be noted that, while they are considered a subcategory of political contention on the whole, social movements are often treated as a separate field of study. Tarrow (2011) distinguishes them from other forms of contention, arguing that confrontations have to be sustained over longer periods of time before they can be labelled a 'social movement'. This paper, like most analyses of contention, focuses specifically on political contention, but does not explicitly distinguish between its different forms.

Over time and across disciplines including, but not limited to, political science, different theoretical affiliations have developed four pillars on which (sustained) political contention is founded (Tarrow, 2011; McAdam et al., 2001; McAdam et al., 1996). These are: political opportunities, resource mobilisation structures, repertoires of contention, and framing processes. Political opportunities are understood to encompass how contention interacts with its political environment, specifically the political system and its constraints. Models of

resource mobilisation have emphasized the significance of organisational bases and the accumulation of resources (for instance funding) for the collective coordination of political dissidents. Repertoires of contention are the culturally encoded ways in which people aggregate their grievances through collective action. The framing of claims, opponents and protest identity are crucial to any protest movement and therefore form the final element (McAdam et al., 2001). An analysis of the interaction of these four components can provide valuable insights into the mechanisms of political protest. Further, observations can be categorised as contained and transgressive forms of contention. The former refers to dissent which takes place within an established regime. All parties are previously known actors and utilize established institutional routines. Transgressive political contention, by contrast, often challenges conventional methods of collective action and usually includes newly identified actors (McAdam et al., 2001; Tarrow and Tilly, 2015). Looking at regimes' possible incentives to repress political protest, the latter type of contention often poses a greater (perceived) threat to governments. This implies a larger likelihood of repressive methods being applied (Tarrow and Tilly, 2015; Carey, 2010; Regan and Henderson, 2002).

Political Contention in Hybrid Regimes

While the ideas and models outlined above are plausible and empirically supported by a multitude of examples, scholars such as Robertson (2010) or Vladisavljević (2016) have argued that they cannot be applied to all cases. Specifically, it must be pointed out that existing theories draw heavily on knowledge inductively obtained from Western histories. For instance, on the examples of the French and Industrial Revolutions, the fascist developments of the early 20th century, or the later Civil Rights movements (see Tarrow, 2011). The authors argue that they therefore cannot fluidly or without caution be applied to protest witnessed across different regime types, cultures or societies that may have a substantially different background. To remedy this gap, the theories should be tested on examples that are distinct from the typical case studies in their structural set up and thus in the grievances and societal features they exhibit.

A number of scholars have set out to do this. Relevant for this paper are three works outlined below which illustrate the mechanisms of political protest in hybrid regimes. Hybrid regimes were selected in particular because they have been rarely studied in this context: protest is most studied within democratic systems and often compared to contention in authoritarian systems. Perhaps hybrid regimes have been left out of the broader literature due

to their ambiguous nature and the fact that they were only recognized and defined as a separate type around the turn of the millennium.

To this end, Diamond (2002) contributed a ground-breaking new system of regime classification, supporting a shift away from the traditional dichotomy of 'democratic vs. authoritarian'. Finding that an increasing number of regimes adopted a democratic form following the third wave of democratization and subsequent pressure on states to democratize, he argues that many countries actually appeared to be "pseudo-democracies" (p. 24) rather than authentic, consolidated ones. Diamond (2002) configures a scheme according to which regimes can now be distinguished as either fully democratic, hybrid or authoritarian. According to this, typical features of hybrid regimes include, among others, elections that are not entirely fair or free, high levels of regime instability and/or instances of political violence. Levitsky and Way (2002; 2010) expanded this notion considerably in subsequent years, highlighting such regimes' often 'competitive authoritarian' nature.

Vladisavljević (2016) assesses political contention in this particular subtype of hybrids, analysing the methods of protest using the example of Serbia. His work draws much on existing social movement frameworks, finding that competitive authoritarian regimes, as a type, facilitate protest and autonomous social movements in two ways. Firstly, by causing political grievances which incentivize contention and secondly, by providing institutional resources to such opposition. Similarly, De Waal and Ibreck (2013) set out to define the nature of social movements across African countries, claiming that most of these states are "hybrid in their own way" (p. 305). They find that regime change and system transformations in these cases are usually dependent on factors such as strategic leadership, alliances and social networks, and vast repertoires of non-violent contention.

While both of these works provided valuable insights, Robertson's (2010) extensive study of the relationship between hybrid regimes and political protest, and his subsequent creation of a new framework for understanding it, provides the academic field with a new direction. Basing his theoretical implications primarily on the case of Russia, Robertson (2010) argues that hybrid regimes exhibit hybrid forms of protest. He identifies three key pillars which differ from those of classical social movement theory mentioned above. These are: organisational ecology (i.e., the types of organisations found in the political realms and their respective interactions), state mobilisation strategies, and patterns of elite political competition. He further maintains that it is not necessarily true that more or less authoritarian hybrid regimes exhibit less or more political protest, respectively, but rather that this depends on the particular

dynamics of the regime, society and political contention. The states, for their part, may contain this contention using a broad spectrum of political strategies (Robertson, 2010).

It is apparent that the literature on political contention is focused heavily on the details of protest and its agents, asking what opportunities it finds to grow, how people mobilise resources or how the political elite become involved (see Tilly, 1978; Davenport et al., 2005; Robertson, 2010; Tarrow and Tilly, 2015;). Inevitably, the regime around these events comes under scrutiny. However, it is often examined as a secondary factor or merely as the enemy to be outmanoeuvred by a movement. Switching the perspective, and instead examining how regimes can and do counter political contention, allows for a more nuanced understanding of political contention and its interaction with state repression.

Political Repression

Political repression is a phenomenon perhaps even more ambiguous than political contention. The term is used widely not only among scholars, but also in the public forum. 'Repression' by itself is defined as "any action by another group which raises the contender's cost of collective action" (Tilly, 1978, p. 100). Repression is often described as 'political' when at least one party involved in such activities is a government or state-affiliated agent. Political repression differs from other kinds of repression because governments specialise in the control of mobilisation (by deploying the police, military, spies etc.) (Tilly, 1978). As the aim of this paper is to identify the tools employed by hybrid regime-types, it focuses explicitly on political repression.

Political repressive actions can be divided into two broader categories: civil liberty restrictions and personal integrity violations. The former involves activities such as arrests, the imposition of bans or curfews, censorship or surveillance. In many cases, such methods are described as 'peaceful'. This is because, in contrast to personal integrity violations, they do not necessarily cause physical harm to individuals. The latter often poses direct threats to individuals and encompasses, for example, torture, killings or disappearances (Davenport, 2007b). For this reason, such activities are often described as violent repression. Arbalti, Bayulgen and Canbolat (2018) further distinguish between selective and widespread methods of repression. The first are restrictions that target particular groups or individuals in a subtle way, i.e., through harassment, intimidation or denial of certain political freedoms. The second

refers to coercive measures taken against a large number of people and includes visible suppression of dissident activity (Arbalti et al., 2018, p. 350).

States and Repression

A prominent scholar in the field of state repression, Davenport contends that "states do not repress their citizens without just cause" (2009a, p. 78). Though not expressly discussed by the author, it should be noted that this "just cause" is often a very subjective interpretation of the situation. Some reasons may seem perfectly valid to one party and absolutely illegitimate to another. Disagreement on the methods of and justifications for repression is often a key element in the interaction between political contention and repression. While Davenport (2009a) was referring to democratic regimes in particular, the assumption that states always have a reason for repressing dissent is foundational to most theories of political repression. It is often argued that states employ restrictive measures in order to secure their interests in the face of political contention (Regan and Henderson, 2002; Davenport, 2007b; Carey, 2010; Shadmehr, 2014; Sullivan, 2016). This stems from the interdependent nature of the relationship between political contention, a regime and political repression.

Theories which attempt to explain this interaction can broadly be assigned to two overarching camps. The first is a rational choice or rational actor perspective, whereby the focus is on the costs and benefits for either side. The second is a structural perspective, whereby the opportunity structures which either facilitate or demobilise contention are key. It is probable that a combination of both theoretical assumptions explains why regimes resort to repression. The main arguments of both theories are briefly outlined below.

There is a longstanding consensus that regimes feel threatened by political contention. The reasons for this threat perception, and the extent to which certain forms of dissent will trigger it, are still up for debate and are seen to vary from case to case (Tarrow and Tilly, 2015, p. 61). If a regime feels threatened by the developments or claims of political contention, it is likely to resort to repression (Regan and Henderson, 2002; Davenport, 2007b; Carey, 2010; Sullivan, 2016). Regimes experiencing higher levels of political instability are prone to perceiving dissent as threatening (Carey, 2010) and thus repression becomes more likely (Carey, 2010; Regan and Henderson, 2002). Most studies explore this causal effect only with regard to violent instances of confrontation. Often this means that both the protests have escalated, and the methods of repression are targeted at and violate the personal integrity of dissidents. In these cases, repression is seen as a direct response to perceived threats and/or

challenges to the reigning political order (Sullivan, 2016). Before a regime resorts to repressive methods, however, it is maintained that it weighs the costs and the benefits of its actions. To this end, a state evaluates the probability of a threat turning into overt collective challenges. Then, the cost of dealing with overt contention, should it materialise, is weighed against ignoring the challenges or finding another way to handle it (e.g., mediation). Included in these calculations must be the state's coercive capacity, its coercive expertise, and legality or legitimacy considerations (Davenport, 2007b; Keith, 2011).

Alternatively, it can be argued that the nature of a regime's repressive methods is shaped by its structural composition. Carey (2010) maintains that regime structures reflect the norms and institutions which in turn guide political interactions, including which type of repression and how much of it can legitimately be enforced by the government against its citizens (p. 169). Part of these 'rules' are reflected in opportunity structures. These are comprised of six properties: a structure's number of centres of power, its openness to new actors, the (in)stability of current political alignments, the availability of influential allies (for challengers), and the extent to which collective claims are facilitated (Tarrow and Tilly, 2015, p. 59). The sixth property is somewhat ambiguous as it is a factor that prescribes decisive changes in any of the other five properties. In any regime, a political opportunity structure channels what forms of contention can be initiated by claim makers (p. 231) and how these are likely to be received. Further, the degree to which an opportunity structure is open or closed to dissent is key, because it defines the possibilities for and likeliness of political contention occurring (Tarrow and Tilly, 2015).

Political Repression and Regime Type

The fundamental incentives which may drive states to adopt a repressive response to contention can be linked to their regime type. While the literature on this topic is rather sparse, some assumptions have been made and empirically tested. These studies have primarily focused on the nature and frequency of personal integrity violations across different regime types.

Davenport (2007b) compares the levels and methods of repression across different authoritarian regimes. 'Levels of repression' refers to the sheer number of instances in which such methods were employed by a government. To this end, Davenport (2007b) differentiates between personalist, single-party and military authoritarian regimes, as well as the same respective subtypes for hybrid regimes. He finds that the type of (autocratic) regime impacts

both the likelihood of repression occurring as well as its form, that is, the tools of repression being used. Thus, the two variables are clearly linked.

Comparing the occurrence of repression across different countries, Regan and Henderson (2002) and Carey (2010) have both found statistically significant differences in levels of repression depending on the regime type. Regan and Henderson (2002) concluded that the relationship between regime type and level of violent repression is negative between democracies and repression, and positive between autocracies and repression. Ultimately, however, they surmise that the relationship between the two variables is in fact an inverted-U shape. Democracies and autocracies both exhibit lower levels of violent repression than semi-democracies, with democracies showing the lowest levels of repression overall. Carey (2010, p. 178) arrived at almost the exact same conclusion: regimes that are neither a consolidated democracy nor a stable autocracy, are most at risk for state terror (state terror is used in place of 'violent political repression'). Both articles similarly explain this phenomenon, arguing that: firstly, democracies are rarely faced directly with threatening oppositional behaviour because the regime and opportunity structure channels political dissent. Secondly, autocracies similarly rarely face threats from contention because claimants anticipate a violent retaliation to any form of dissent and thus do not (overtly) engage in it. Lastly, hybrids possess an unstable regime and opportunity structure based on their mixed forms of institutions. This means it is unclear how contention would be handled and thus such regimes exhibit a more sensitive threat perception, leading to high levels of violent political repression (Carey, 2010).

Research Design

While the findings of previous studies cannot always be generalised without caution, they have highlighted the connection between regime type and levels of repression. They have also found evidence that there is in fact a correlation between these two variables. Furthermore, they underline that there are distinct differences in the politics of repression between democracies, hybrid regimes and autocracies. Connecting this argument to the findings of Robertson (2010) on political contention in hybrid regimes, this would imply that hybrid regimes differ not only in their systematic set-up, but also in the ways that they conduct domestic politics. In that case, what remains unanswered from the previous studies is how exactly the tools of repression and their application differ between regime types. A variety of scholars have already answered this question to some extent for democratic regimes (see Davenport, 2007b; 2009a; Boykoff, 2007; Fernandez, 2008; Keith, 2011), and a smaller number has looked at repression in authoritarian

regimes (see Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014; Blaydes, 2018). However, barely any scholar has delved into how hybrid regimes employ repressive methods; and if they have, it was not the primary focus of the study (see e.g., Kwong, 2018; Arbalti et al., 2018). This paper aims to fill this gap in our collective knowledge by asking: How do hybrid regimes repress political contention?

My hypothesis draws on the arguments of Robertson (2010), Carey (2010), and Regan and Henderson (2002). If the mixed nature of hybrid regimes' institutions affects their opportunity structures, and thus the forms of political contention exhibited, then the tools and patterns of repression employed by such regimes will equally be affected. Further, I presume that hybrid regimes exhibit a repertoire of repressive tools that spans the spectrum of methods usually reserved for democracies or autocracies, respectively. This means that I expect they will resort to both peaceful (civil liberty and/or selective restrictions) and violent (personal integrity violations) tools of repression.

This research essentially aims to assess how regime type, and consequently the opportunity structure, affect the tools and patterns of repression that are employed in hybrid regimes. To examine this relationship, a qualitative research design has been chosen. Specifically, a single case study of a typical hybrid regime will serve to showcase the repressive practices within this regime category. The criteria for the case selection are twofold: primarily, the case needs to unquestionably be identified as a hybrid regime. Secondly, the case needs to clearly exhibit political contention and repression.

In order to fulfil the first condition, a state must be classified as 'hybrid' (or an equivalent label) by a respectable index of democracy or regime type. I have chosen to make use of the Polity V indicator, where countries are rated on a twenty-point scale from -10 to +10. Scores of a -6 or lower represent autocracies, scores ranging between -5 and +5 represent closed or open anocracies (hybrid regimes), and scores of a +6 or higher represent democracies. Thus, the case must have a score between -5 and +5, preferably over multiple consecutive years to ensure a thorough analysis of the regime structures and contention. Additionally, the regime should fit Diamond's (2002) broad definition of hybrid regimes, previously outlined.

To check for the second criterion, I made use of the Political Terror Scale database (2020), which measures violations of political integrity rights carried out by states. Countries receive a score from 1 to 5. A score of 1 represents very few, if any, violent repressive measures. The higher the score, the more personal integrity violations are witnessed, with 5 representing unlimited application of such tools by a regime. Further, preliminary research into

the political events of cases that fulfil the first criteria can determine the satisfaction of the second condition.

Fulfilling both criteria, the case selected for the following analysis is The Gambia. On the Polity V scale, the state had an average score of -5 between 1995 and 2013, and a recent score of +4. Its institutional structures fit the definition of hybrid regimes, as will be described below. On the Political Terror Scale, it continually obtained scores of 2 or 3. This means that imprisonment, brutality and political murders may have been common (Haschke, 2019). Further, the country has experienced multiple contentious events as well as widespread political repression.

Political Repression in The Gambia

The Gambia is a sovereign, secular republic in West Africa. Following its independence in 1965, The Gambia was often seen as one of few multiparty democracies in Africa (Tomini, 2017). Elections were fair and free and human rights widely respected by the government and its agents (Perfect, 2010). However, in 1994, a bloodless coup d'état led by Yahya Jammeh resulted in the dissolving of the previous government, and two years later a new constitution was introduced. The first elections under this new constitution, which is still in effect today, marked the beginning of President Jammeh's twenty-two-year rule (Perfect, 2010; Saine, 2020). In the 2016 elections, Jammeh unexpectedly lost the presidency to Adama Barrow. He initially refused to concede the election, only stepping down weeks later due to mounting pressure of the international community, including involvement of the Senegalese army, and lack of legal support for his actions (Africa Research Bulletin, 2017; Helal, 2017; Nije and Saine, 2019). This analysis focuses primarily on the period of Jammeh's rule between 1996 and 2017.

While, constitutionally, The Gambia remained a participatory democracy following the 1994 coup, the country's politics show clear indications that in reality it is a hybrid regime. For instance, elections were not fully fair or free, though they often appeared to be so. Fraud in these instances took various forms. Common activities included the manipulation of state resources in favour of the incumbent government, the harassment of opposition candidates and their supporters by state agents or supporters of Jammeh's party, the APRC (Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction), vote buying, and allowing non-citizens to register and deliver a vote in favour of the incumbent (Nije and Saine, 2019; Perfect, 2010; Saine, 2008). Besides this disregard for the democratic electoral process, the government was further

involved in extensive corruption, including nepotism. Human rights violations were also common. They encompassed widespread harassment of critical media outlets and journalists, unjust arrests of dissidents and surreptitious cases of torture or killings (Senghor, 2018; Perfect, 2010). For these reasons, I maintain that The Gambia appears as a democracy in title only and is better classified as a hybrid regime. It should be noted that, while the examples of contention described in this case study span a period of over two decades, The Gambia has not consistently been described as a hybrid regime; neither by scholars nor by the press. Nevertheless, I argue that for most of its existence this categorisation is accurate, and it remains a representative example of a hybrid regime.

Political Opportunity Structure

Previous literature on political contention has highlighted the importance of political opportunity structures (Vladisavljević, 2016; Tarrow and Tilly, 2015) – or, alternatively, 'political ecology' (Robertson, 2010) or 'social networks/alliances' (de Waal and Ibreck, 2013). While these terms are not synonymous, they all refer to the structures, institutions, organisations and political environment of a regime. These are key not only in facilitating political contention, but also in shaping the way it can be, or is, repressed (Carey, 2010). The following section will therefore first outline the political opportunity structure of The Gambia, highlighting the elements defined by Tarrow and Tilly (2015), before describing the ways in which this has influenced political contention and repression in the country.

The Gambia's political opportunity structure can be categorised as predominantly closed. Political dissent has not been very welcome, even though the constitution provides a number of rights and procedures meant to channel it (Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, 1997). There is only one independent centre of power in The Gambia, namely the president. For most of Jammeh's rule, this was especially consolidated as his rise to power was supported by the military and the armed forces stood behind him throughout his time in office (Saine, 2020). Furthermore, existing political alignments under Jammeh's rule were secure and stable. This was not naturally so, however. Over the years, Jammeh consolidated his grip on power by cultivating the loyalty of the military and fellow government agents. However, he also employed the services of "vigilante groups" and expanded the powers and tasks of organisations such as the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) (Saine, 2020). The so-called "Green Boys" and "Junglers", as well as the NIA, all became an extension of Jammeh's government. They were tasked with identifying, punishing and eliminating any disloyal

individuals or oppositional dissidents (Saine, 2020, pp. 15-16). Both of these factors, the singular centre of power and secured alignments, imply that there were very few, if any, opportunities for dissidents to find influential allies for their cause within the regime.

However, the oppositional parties should not be underestimated; especially since their collective effort ultimately led to Jammeh's demise (Kora and Darboe, 2017; Hultin, 2020). Over the years, and primarily during election years, oppositional parties were the main channel for political dissent. New candidates were rarely prohibited from participating in the electoral process; though that does not mean that they stood a chance of winning a mandate, and they were still frequently subjected to intimidation. This is perhaps the only aspect of the political opportunity structure which facilitated political contention, as new actors could enter the political arena this way and (theoretically) bring about instability and change. As will be seen in the following section, however, any collective claims which went against the incumbent government were met with large scale political repression, both peaceful and violent. Thus, very few opportunities were left for citizens to express their dissatisfaction with the regime.

This appears to support the thesis of previous scholars that hybrid regimes, due to their mixed institutions and norms, face greater uncertainty when anticipating political contention and thus are more sensitive to perceiving dissent as a threat. They therefore more readily apply repressive tools, but also aim to 'secure' the political opportunity structure by closing any avenues for contention to manifest.

Of course, the political opportunity structure of The Gambia was not consistently the same. It was not always equally closed to dissent. Neither did the oppositional parties, on the other hand, consistently have equal opportunities to disagree with the government. The above outlined political environment is meant to provide a summary of how the situation looked most of the time. However, a wide combination of repressive tools was also implemented in order to maintain the stability of this regime structure. They also kept opportunities for overt dissent to manifest to a minimum. The total crimes, human rights violations, and general rights and freedoms infringements committed by Yahya Jammeh and his government over the duration of his rule are still being uncovered. While recounting every instance of repression and personal integrity violations would exceed the scope and purpose of this paper, key events and practices will be highlighted in order to explore the patterns of repression employed by Jammeh's regime. Since The Gambia qualifies as a typical hybrid regime, this analysis further aims to show how such a system applies tools of repression to maintain its regime stability and power and neutralise any threats to these.

Civil Liberty Restrictions

As was discussed earlier, political repression and its tools are broadly divided into two categories. Civil liberty restrictions are in this analysis understood as 'peaceful' repressive tools, since they do not encompass harm to the physical person of individuals. Yahya Jammeh's regime widely imposed such limitations on the Gambian population. Most notably, perhaps, are the restrictions of freedom of expression and press freedom, as well as the open discouragement of public assemblies and demonstrations. Elsewhere, these liberties comprise a channel of dissent within democracies and are a means of holding the government or elites accountable for their actions (Tarrow and Tilly, 2015).

Within a hybrid regime such as that of The Gambia, news articles opposing the government were seen as a threat to the regime. Therefore, journalists, newspaper owners, publishers, and editors were severely inhibited from the very beginning of Jammeh's rule. For instance, in 2000, the private broadcaster Radio 1 FM was attacked. The property was severely damaged, and the owner arrested. This ultimately led to its closure. In 2004, the premises of the *Independent* newspaper in the capital city, Banjul, were destroyed and burned down. This followed an article publication on the government's wrongdoings. A year later, the paper was forced to completely shut down after no other news outlets would agree to print for them. It is assumed that these other newspapers were threatened not to do so by the government or feared being the next target of 'unexplained' property damages (Pambazuka News, 2005). Individuals were also arrested and/or fined for publishing articles deemed too critical of the government. One example is the arrest of journalist Fatou Jaw Manneh in 2007 for "insulting [the president], deformation of character and peddling false information to potentially undermine [the government]" (AllAfrica.com, 2007). Following this imposition of a "culture of silence" (Saine, 2020, p. 15), it became increasingly difficult for news to be reported within and outside of The Gambia. The growing number of self-exiled journalists, however, attempted to continue their struggle against Jammeh's repression by creating new Gambian news outlets in the diaspora (Abughaida, 2016). For the most part, these were difficult for the Gambian government to police. However, in some instances, silence was incurred by threatening the lives of the families of journalists, who had remained in The Gambia (Jammeh, 2013).

Next to restrictions of the press freedom, Jammeh's government frequently undermined citizens' right to assemble and demonstrate. As is discussed in the next section, overt political contention was thwarted violently on multiple occasions. On others, warnings issued by government officials or President Jammeh himself sufficed to discourage dissidents from

taking to the streets. A prominent example was the president's statement prior to the 2016 elections, where he claimed that "there is no reason that anybody should demonstrate" and that "demonstrations will not be allowed" (Al-Jazeera, 2016). When oppositional politicians spoke out anyways, or, worse, encouraged people to protest in the streets, they were often arrested and detained without clear charges (Perfect, 2010). This for instance occurred in 2016, when the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) organised a peaceful march. They demanded the release of previously detained activists and justice for others who had been tortured and killed in police custody. At the very outset of the demonstration, UDP leader Darboe and at least twenty other protesters were arrested by the police (Kandeh, 2016).

Personal Integrity Violations

The peaceful repressive tools ensured that, in the words of typical political contention theory, the collective action costs for dissidents were high to begin with and that political protest did not overtly manifest. Where the peaceful repressive tools did not hinder dissidents from voicing their grievances, however, the Gambian government resorted to violent repression. Violent repressive tools include the aforementioned personal integrity violations, and any other actions intended to harm the mental or physical wellbeing of individuals. Over the years, these tools were implemented in an increasingly systematic manner, and separate bodies specialising in the torture and killing of "state enemies" were instated (Saine, 2020). As with the peaceful tools of repression, violent methods were employed by the Gambian regime both in a retaliatory and pre-emptive manner. Further, citizens of all professions and positions were possible targets of these measures. The key groups outlined here are the media, oppositional party members and activists, and the security forces.

As was previously described, the press was a major target group for all types of political repression under Jammeh's rule. Aside from the property damages and threats inflicted on journalists, the regime detained, tortured, forcefully disappeared or killed individuals on various occasions (Perfect, 2010; Jammeh, 2013; Saine, 2020). One notorious case is the arbitrary arrest of journalist Ebrima Manneh in July 2006, who worked for the independent newspaper *The Observer* at the time. No reason was officially given for his arrest and it is believed that he was detained by the NIA. He was not seen again in public for years and government authorities only acknowledged his death nearly a decade after his arrest. Details of his time in prison and his subsequent death have still not been uncovered (Amnesty International, 2017). Deyda Hedara, former editor of *The Point*, was another victim of

Jammeh's violent repression of the press. He was murdered in December 2004 by unknown agents, though they are believed to have been state sponsored (Saine, 2020, p. 25). The list of individuals believed to be murdered, tortured and detained by the regime is long (Saine, 2020) and serves to show how Jammeh ruled through fear and terror.

Openly oppositional citizens were equally targeted by the regime in a violent and widespread manner; so much so, that for years it was unthinkable for individuals to protest or demonstrate in the streets of Gambia (Kora and Darboe, 2017). In April 2000, following the killing and rape of two peers, widespread student demonstrations took place. These were brutally repressed by police and security forces, resulting in the death of fourteen students (Saine, 2020). It wasn't until early 2016, when oppositional parties were rallying against the president in preparation of the elections that year, that protestors took to the streets again in large numbers. Led by activist Solo Sandeng, the first peaceful demonstration of that year protested the unfair electoral reforms Jammeh had previously implemented. However, the demonstration was interrupted by security forces, who allegedly fired live ammunition into the crowd, and police, who arrested and abused a large number of protesters. Sandeng was killed in police custody within forty-eight hours of his arrest (Kandeh, 2016; Amnesty International, 2016). Others arrested alongside him were brutally tortured or raped by security personnel (Saine, 2020) and many were only released after months of international pressure.

A third target group of Jammeh's violent repression were dissidents within the security forces. While the majority of the military was unquestionably loyal to the president, groups of opponents attempted to remove him from power on various occasions. Testimonies from the Gambian Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) revealed that many of the failed conspirators were tortured and killed, and the evidence subsequently buried. This was true, for instance, in the case of Ndure Cham. He had led a coup attempt against Jammeh in 2006, and initially escaped capture. However, members of one of Jammeh's vigilante groups, the "Junglers", subsequently lured him back into the country and murdered him on orders from the government (Saine, 2020, p. 52).

Findings

The descriptions above have served to outline the particular ways in which the hybrid regime of Yahya Jammeh repressed, both reactively and pre-emptively, any political contention in The Gambia. The key repressive tools employed included: arbitrary arrests or arrests without a legitimate judicial process, intimidation, threats, property damages, physical and mental abuse

in detainment, forced disappearances, torture and killings. This spectrum includes both peaceful and violent instruments of repression, which was intentional. The regime primarily resorted to civil liberty restrictions in order to limit the beginnings of contention and intimidate citizens. This resulted in most of the civilian population withdrawing from the political arena and leaving Jammeh's rule unchallenged. A select number of groups, however, did not retreat. These were mainly news and media outlets, the political opposition parties, and individuals in the security forces. Where the peaceful methods did not work, the Gambian regime resorted to violent tools. Physical integrity violations, which very often included killing, succeeded in eliminating specific challengers of the regime.

I maintain that there was one essential reason for the application of such political repression in The Gambia: the government's goal was to maintain its hold on power. Dissent, in whatever form, was interpreted as a threat to this aim. Therefore, primarily, the political opportunity structure of The Gambia was constructed in such a way that dissent was prevented from manifesting. The secondary aim of the government was then to keep this system in place. The array of repressive tools described above served this purpose.

The fact that overt actions of protest, such as the student uprisings in 2000 or the demonstrations in 2016, were repressed through violent means indicates that they were perceived as a large threat to the government. It is also clear, however, that violent actions incurred greater costs for the regime's legitimacy and stability. International actors, as well as Gambians in the diaspora, loudly decried widespread acts of violent repression. Brave local Gambians also protested; though the stakes were significantly higher for them and they feared fierce repercussions. For these reasons, it may have been preferable for the Gambian government to stifle dissent before it became public and the costs of containing it would be higher. In order to tackle both of these tasks, the regime employed a repertoire of repressive tools which encompassed both widespread peaceful, and selective violent tactics.

Arguably, the regime was right to fear protests and other forms of overt dissent. Following the events of early 2016 (the detainment, torture and/or killing of various opposition activists), President Jammeh faced extensive condemnation both domestically and internationally. This not only eroded his support base, but also the regime's advantages of ruling a fearful society. Citizens were so appalled by the events that they were willing to risk their safety in order to demonstrate and fight for a regime change (Kora and Darboe, 2017). This contributed largely to Adama Barrow's victory in the presidential election of December 2016 and, ultimately, Jammeh's loss of power.

The real reasons for political repression as seen in The Gambia remain partially hypothetical, however. The hearings currently underway in the TRRC could, in time, show whether the assumptions made within this paper are in fact truthful. Until then, in line with arguments and theories developed by previous scholars, I maintain that the primary reason behind Jammeh's politics of repression was power consolidation and preservation.

This analysis has provided a detailed account of the repertoire of repressive tools at a government's disposal. In particular, it has highlighted how the opportunity structure of a hybrid regime such as The Gambia influences when and how dissent is repressed. It has corroborated the hypothesis of this paper. Hybrid regimes do in fact employ mixed methods of repression. Both peaceful and violent tools are utilised, and this pattern is clearly influenced by structural factors. The hybrid nature of the regime means that certain channels for dissent are closed, while others remain strictly policed by those in power in order to secure their rule and maintain stability. The regime upholds a sensitive threat perception so as to catch dissent before it has a chance to fully manifest. To this end, widespread tools of repression are employed.

Conclusion

This study has shed light on the question of how states, and hybrid regimes in particular, employ methods of political repression. Combining the theoretical foundations of different theories on political contention and regime structures, it emphasized the connection between regime type, political opportunity structure, political contention and repression as interdependent variables. It was argued that hybrid regimes utilise patterns and tools of repression which encompass peaceful and violent tactics, methods usually typical for democracies and autocracies, respectively. This is influenced by hybrid regimes' political opportunity structure, which in turn is affected by the regime type.

The analysis of the Gambian case has, as a characteristic example of a hybrid regime, provided evidence for this argument. Under Yahya Jammeh's rule, the country's opportunity structure remained closed to political protest, save for the contained dissent of oppositional political parties. Even these, however, were subjected to the widespread civil liberties restrictions the government utilised to minimise overt contention. Specific tools of repression used for this purpose included arrests, intimidation, personal and public threats, and property damages. In the numerous cases where the regime felt that individuals or their actions threatened to evolve into contention, it resorted to violent repression. This included forceful

arrests and physical abuse, disappearances, torture, and killings. It is argued that political repression was employed in order to maintain the stability of the political opportunity structure and, further, the power of the incumbent.

The findings of this study have certain implications for the broader academic field. Firstly, this research further emphasizes the fact that hybrid regimes function differently from, for instance, fully authoritarian or democratic regimes. It has also shown that this is due to their institutional and political structures. Secondly, it has provided further empirical support for arguments of scholars such as Robertson (2010), who contend that political contention in hybrid regimes has a unique form. If the political opportunity structure and repressive tools employed by a hybrid regime are distinct from those in other regime types, then the political contention must be distinct too. It should be noted, however, that this analysis only assumes this to be true, as a comparative case study would be needed to fully support this claim. Finally, the arguments made here can influence the way that political events are analysed within hybrid regimes in the future. Structural factors clearly affect the politics within such states and thus need to be accentuated.

Though The Gambia is a representative example, it would be wise to conduct a similar analysis for other characteristic hybrid regimes. This would consolidate the claims made in this study and thus increase its external validity. A suggestion would be to select cases with slightly higher scores on the Polity V scale, since The Gambia's score was very low within the hybrid category. In order to fully expand the relevance of the claims made in this research, however, the case should also be compared to examples typical for regimes from other categories, such as full democracies or autocracies. This sort of comparative case study could further explain how the regime type and structural differences affect patterns of repression. Ultimately, this could contribute to a better understanding of the interaction between political contention and repression, and perhaps also better explain trends such as those described by Carey (2010) or Regan and Henderson (2002).

Overall, this analysis has served to explore and explain the dynamics of political repression and how this is affected by the regime type and structure. It stresses the importance of understanding the bigger picture. Further, it has outlined how a government's threat perception can lead to vast repression, including violations of human rights. Some insights could be useful in identifying where such abuses could potentially come to fruition in a hybrid state, and aide the prevention or at the very least the uncovering of them.

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