In the shadow of empire: The long-term influence of colonisation on state repression

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IN THE SHADOW OF EMPIRE: THE LONG-TERM INFLUENCE OF COLONISATION ON STATE REPRESSION

How does colonisation affect state repression?

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1. Introduction

Colonialism and its long-term consequences have garnered much interest in social sciences with scholars seeking to understand the reasons why contemporary states differ from one another (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2017). One of the primary reasons colonialism remains relevant is that it can be seen as a critical juncture in the history of states, distinguishing them from those without colonial pasts (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Due to path dependency, the choices made during critical junctures can block off other possibilities and lead to the establishment of institutions that are later challenging to change (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007).

Many scholars across various disciplines agree that because of institutional persistence, colonialism and its long-term influence should be studied more extensively (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2017). Consequently, various scholars have explored the influence of colonialism on violence and conflict, as most scholars agree that colonialism can be considered a universal source of civil violence (Lange & Dawson, 2009). However, the association between colonisation and state-sanctioned repression and violence has received little attention. Therefore, investigating whether colonisation's long-lasting influence affects state repression is crucial for furthering our understanding of state repression and the underlying factors that influence state decision-making.

Studying the current-day implications of colonialism is not only important from an academic perspective but is also significant for policymakers and development practice. Acknowledging the variation and context that needs to be taken into account is essential when deciding on policy or development assistance aimed at influencing institutions affected by path dependency stemming from colonial institutions. For instance, Lowes and Montero (2021) demonstrate the long-term effects of colonialism through their findings. Colonial

policy of forced injections in French colonies led to an increased distrust in medicine, directly affecting current-day health initiatives and foreign aid (Lowes & Montero, 2021). Acknowledging the enduring implications of colonial history on the decision-making processes of leaders can help us better account for what needs to be considered when dealing with states with different pasts. Thus, this research will focus on the question: *How does colonisation affect state repression?*

In this study, I will argue that colonisation by Western overseas powers has led to enduring negative consequences, which continue to affect state decision-making and state repression, still to this day. Colonialism has been associated with negative implications, such as lack of economic development, and despotic rule as well as increased violence and disruption (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2004; Lange & Dawson, 2009). As the regime faces persistent challenges and grievances that increase the likelihood of dissent, they are more likely to use force to maintain the status quo (Moore & Jaggers, 1990). In addition, this study will argue that the underlying mechanism for why colonisation influences repression is through low state capacity.

The study will be structured in three parts to examine the correlation between colonisation and state repression. First, an overview of existing literature will be presented to establish an understanding of how the relevant concepts have been studied previously. Second, a theoretical framework and argument will be introduced. The theory section focuses on defining concepts as well as developing a framework of theories leading from colonisation to the occurrence of state repression, ultimately arriving at the central hypotheses. Third, a research design and empirical analysis are presented and interpreted to assess whether the findings support the theoretical argument and answer the research question. The paper

concludes with a brief summary as well as a consideration of limitations and suggestions for further research.

2. Literature review

Although the association between state repression and colonisation has not been directly researched, the existing state repression literature has studied various associations and fundamental questions to understand the effectiveness of state-sanctioned repression. One central question has been to determine the conditions under which repression is most likely to be successful (e.g. Siegel, 2011). Another central question has been to examine why some states repress more than others (e.g. Henderson, 1991). Some authors argue that the degree of repression depends on the extent to which dissidents threaten the status quo and those in power (Gartner & Regan, 1996). Similarly, others contend that the amount of repression depends on strategic calculation, where both insufficient and excessive amounts of action can lead to negative consequences (Davenport, RezayeeDaryakenari & Wood, 2021). Despite an some mixed results within the state repression scholarship, most scholars agree that regimes tend to respond to threats through coercive action, while democratic institutions are found to decrease the likelihood of repression (Davenport, 2007).

Most recently, scholarship has focused on decision-making, cost-benefit analysis and probabilities of success (Davenport, 2007). Some authors, such as Poe (2019), have created and used modelling to illustrate the decision-making process of authorities. Their research suggests that the decision to repress is dependent on the regime's own perceived strength as well as the perceived threat to the regime, while also being constrained by the availability of options and willingness to enact their choices (Poe, 2019). Likewise, Gartner and Regan (1996) argue that the decision to repress is determined by the dynamics of international and

domestic costs, leading them to find a non-linear relationship between government and opposition use of violence.

Due to the mixed results of existing literature, state repression scholarship has garnered extensive interest and plenty of associations have been analysed to understand repression more comprehensively. However, despite the wide-ranging interest and studies available, links to historical legacies, such as colonialism, and the subsequent likelihood of state repression have not been studied as extensively. Therefore, acknowledging and studying the historical contexts that have shaped contemporary political landscapes is necessary.

Despite the little attention to historical legacies within state repression literature, colonialism has been studied within a large range of disciplines, such as history, economics, political science and sociology, analysing the intricacies and consequences of colonialism to uncover fundamental differences between states (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2017). One of the main reasons why colonial legacies have gained so much scholarly interest is the increasing evidence of institutional persistence and the enduring influence on state development (Acemoglu et al., 2004). According to the rational choice approach, institutions are created to benefit certain actors and persist as long as either the majority or a powerful elite perceive the costs of changing the current status quo higher than the possible benefits (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2017).

The importance of institutional development after colonialism has also led to increasing interest in the economic and political development of ex-colonies. Colonial histories have been widely analysed in the context of economic development to explain diverse post-colonial economic outcomes. Some have found evidence that the length of time under colonial rule has significant effects on economic development (Grier, 1997), while others contend that different coloniser powers set up varying economic institutions based on the

feasibility of settlement, with some states developing more extractive institutions (Acemoglu, Johnson & Robinson, 2000).

Several authors have distinguished colonialism as the main reason for the development of inefficient states (e.g. Lange & Dawson, 2009; Berman, 1998). Scholars have found that the indirect rule, especially by British colonisers, led to the development of weak states (Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaako & Robinson, 2014). In comparison to the more centralized French colonial rule, British colonialism undermined state centralization and state-building in Africa (Ali, Fjeldstad, Jiang & Shifa, 2018). Colonialism has also been linked to the emergence of despotism, which according to Acemoglu et al. (2014) became an enduring feature of post-colonial states, characterized by power concentrated to local elites accountable to the colonial power rather than the local population.

Colonial indirect rule and despotism have also been linked to conflict and ethnic partitioning (Berman, 1998). However, the common assumption of colonialism as a comprehensive explanation for civil violence has been disputed by Lange and Dawson (2009), as they contend that the relationship is conditional on the type of colonialism. Post-colonial ethnic conflict has been found to be associated with more indirect and decentralized colonial strategies (Blanton, Mason & Athow, 2001; Wucherphennig, Hunziker & Cederman, 2016; Ali et al., 2018) while ethnic partitioning has been linked to the development of long-lasting rule of patronage and clientelism (Berman, 1998).

The existing literature has largely relied on qualitative comparative studies, at the expense of more large-scale global studies comparing ex-colonies with states without colonial histories (Lange & Dawson, 2009). The importance of comparing countries with and without colonial histories has been disregarded in existing scholarship despite providing a crucial way to understand whether colonial histories can be linked to more violence in comparison to non-

colonised states (Lange & Dawson, 2009). The lack of analysis stems from the anti-colonial consensus and widespread belief that colonialism increases violence both before and after independence (Lange & Dawson, 2009).

Despite the broad interest in colonial histories and their implications, the possible association with state-sanctioned violence has not been considered. Roberti (2019) studies the link between state capacity and state repression, through a model of colonial rule but focuses on repression during colonial rule. The author suggests that colonial investments in state capacity were complementary to the amount of state repression needed as larger state capacity increased incentives to rebel (Roberti, 2019). However, the findings suggest a link between state capacity and repression rather than associating colonial history with subsequent state repression.

Thus, the purpose of this study will be to consider the association between colonial history and state repression, in an attempt to fill gaps in existing literature by providing a theoretical as well as an empirical investigation into the link between colonialism and state-sanctioned violence. *How does colonisation affect state repression?*

3. Theoretical framework

In order to empirically investigate the association between colonialism and state repression, a theoretical framework will be established during this section. Ultimately this section will lead to the development of hypotheses that will later be examined through empirical analysis. By connecting different theories, models and ideas, such as rational choice, cost-benefit analysis, law of coercive responsiveness and state capacity, this study will present two hypotheses to answer the proposed research question.

3.1 Colonisation and state repression

Since many scholars have taken interest in studying colonialism, various definitions and conceptualisations have emerged from the literature. For the purposes of this study, colonialism will be examined from the perspective of Western overseas colonialism, distinguishing it from settler colonialism, European internal colonialism and colonialism by non-Western powers. This distinction is important as Western overseas colonialism differs essentially from other types of colonialism (Bernhard, Reenock & Nordstrom, 2004), as explained later in the research design section. Thus, a state is considered to have a colonial history if they have been colonised by another state outside of the colonised territory through invasion, conquest or settlement (Olsson, 2009). According to Becker (2019), a colonial legacy can be a history of diverse types of dependencies but is mainly characterized by a lack of control by the colonised. Therefore, since this study is focused on comparing the variation between states that have been colonised and those that have not, the concept of colonised state indicates a history of being colonised by an overseas Western power.

As discussed in the literature review of this study, colonialism has been found to be associated with various long-lasting negative consequences. When taking over control of colonial territories, colonisers had little incentive to set up long-lasting, stable and efficient institutions. In some cases, colonial powers would inherit and manage existing hierarchical institutions, which discouraged subsequent development (Acemoglu et al., 2004). With the limited resources available, colonial powers prioritised extracting as much economic profit as possible from their acquired territories, thus giving little attention to the development of inclusive and efficient state institutions (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2018).

One of the main enduring consequences of the resulting institutional inefficiency is a lack of economic development. Colonialism has been found to be associated with an

exceptional economic reversal of fortune in colonised states, due to its long-lasting influence on economic institutions (Acemoglu et al., 2004). Extractive colonial practices also led to other negative consequences. The more colonisers advanced the development of the political economy, the more the colonised societies suffered disruption, threatening stability and safety (Berman, 1998). Thus, coloniser powers established regional and fragmented rule, led by existing chiefs and leaders to achieve domination as inexpensively as possible (Lange & Dawson, 2009).

As the maintenance of law and order was challenging, colonisers relied on decentralized rule through local elites to ensure political control over the acquired territory (Berman, 1998). Simultaneously, they pursued a divide-and-rule strategy to fragment the colonised population to minimize the likelihood of rebellion and resistance to coloniser authority (Berman, 1998). However, colonial ethnic fragmentation and decentralization have been found to be linked with increased violence (Lange & Dawson, 2009). Additionally, colonised states tend to suffer from a higher tendency of disorder and conflict, as well as the lack of state capacity to address and control violence in their territory (Lange & Dawson, 2009).

Furthermore, the lack of domestic economic development as well as colonial decentralized rule have both been linked to the establishment of despotic leadership as well as the creation of clientelism and patronage networks (Berman, 1998). Despotism is characterized by the ability of the state elite to engage in actions without regular consultation with the population and the distributive power they hold over society (Mann, 1986). After independence, the authority of the new despotic elites ultimately led to the abuse of their powers and uprisings against the exploitation of the population (Lange & Dawson, 2009). Due to the issues brought on by the lack of economic development, increased violence as

well as despotic rule, formerly colonised states were forced to rely on violent coercion to counter these challenges and maintain control (Lange & Dawson, 2009).

State-sanctioned actions and violence have been defined in many ways but for the purposes of this study, state repression is defined as the threat or use of physical sanctions by the state against individuals or organisations to pose costs and deter activities perceived as challenging to the regime within the jurisdiction of the state (Davenport, 2007). According to Poe (2019), the state's main strategic decision to repress or not to repress is based on the regime's own perceived strength and the perceived threat to the regime. The decision to repress is also influenced by a cost-benefit analysis where authorities weigh the possible losses and advantages as well as the probability of success of repressive actions (Davenport, 2007). Furthermore, regime decisions are strategic and subject to both internal and external constraints, which may also create further costs if the actions are deemed inadequate or excessive (Gartner & Regan, 1996). This study assumes that repression is not a choice between whether to repress or not, but a continuous outcome with varying degrees of repression.

One of the main findings agreed on by state repression scholarship is the law of coercive responsiveness (Davenport, 2007). The law of coercive responsiveness entails that states that encounter challenges to the status quo will respond with repressive actions to preserve the prevailing conditions and counter the perceived threat (Davenport, 2007). According to mobilisation literature, grievances across the population will increase the likelihood of dissent (Moore & Jaggers, 1990). Due to the enduring negative consequences of colonisation, state repression is expected to increase, as the lack of welfare creates grievances which according to coercive responsiveness will be met with repressive retaliation.

However, repression is not only a strategic reaction to increased dissent but can also be a preventive act in the expectation of dissent and protest that could challenge those in power (Ritter & Conrad, 2016). In fact, repression can occur in the absence of dissent and protest if those in power feel threatened. With the expectation of repression, it is also possible that the population self-censors, leading to the absence of both dissent and repression (Ritter & Conrad, 2016). This leads to the issue of endogeneity as both repression and dissent are strategically dependent on each other (Ritter & Conrad, 2016). Therefore, the challenge of observing the absence of repression is that it does not necessarily equate to better human rights conditions but instead the apprehension of the population against a state that is expected to engage in repression in reaction to mobilisation.

Given Poe's (2019) model of state decision-making based on their relative strength and threat perception, colonised states can be expected to have both a decreased sense of strength and an increased threat perception. The lack of economic development of colonised states is likely to increase the regime's perception of threat, as the inability to finance basic functions and to offer basic services to citizens is probable to lead to increasing grievances and deprivation in the population (Besley & Persson, 2010). Wide-ranging common grievances increase the likelihood of mobilisation as shared deprivation gives the population a reason to overcome their collective action problem (Moore & Jaggers, 1990). Lack of economic development can also influence the regime's perception of their strength as the state is unable to accommodate the needs of the population and struggles with the scarcity of international and domestic financing (Poe, 2019). Colonised states are also expected to be more likely to engage in repressive actions because of their inability to accommodate demands due to the lack of resources and accumulation of rents to the despotic elite networks, thus lacking the ability to choose accommodation.

Despotic leadership, stemming from colonialism, can influence state decision-making as political elites are unrestrained by democratic institutions and consultation with civil society. State repression scholars have found broad consensus that democratic institutions are associated with less state repression (Davenport, 2007). The domestic democratic peace theory states that due to the increased costs of repressive action, the fear of being voted out of office and the alternative channels to voice dissent, democratic states are less likely to repress (Davenport, 2007). Colonised states, which are likely to develop inefficient institutions and despotic rule, are less likely to become democracies. Consequently, these states are more likely to engage in state repression as they are not constrained by domestic democratic institutions or civil society and leaders do not have to fear losing political power through elections.

As discussed earlier, colonisation has also been linked to increased violence and disruption. Faced with persistent conflict, colonised states are more likely to rely on one-sided violence, coercion and repression to remain in power (Lange & Dawson, 2009). Continuous violence and conflict will also lead to an increased threat perception as instability and insecurity will lead to increasing grievances in the population and consequently to mobilisation against the regime as they are unable to protect the population and maintain control in their jurisdiction. Thus, state leadership is more likely to choose repressive actions as they attempt to maintain their power and the status quo against possible challenges, as explained by the law of coercive responsiveness.

Therefore, colonised states are more likely to face discontent that challenges the status quo as the deprivation of the population is widespread due to lack of economic development, despotic rule and persistent violence (Besley & Persson, 2010; Lange & Dawson, 2009). As

the enduring negative consequences of colonialism increase the likelihood of regimes choosing repressive action as they face dissent, threats and challenges, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Colonised states are more likely to engage in state repression.

3.2 Colonisation, low state capacity and state repression

To increase our understanding of colonialism and state repression, an second hypothesis is presented where the correlation is theorized to occur through the mechanism of low state capacity[1]. States with low state capacity, or weak states, are characterized by their lack of monopoly on legitimate violence within their territory, the absence of modern bureaucracy and the inability to collect taxes, and are thus not capable of governing effectively (Acemoglu et al., 2014). Inefficient states are sometimes preferred because they provide more opportunities for rent-seeking for those in power (Acemoglu et al., 2004; Acemoglu, Ticchi & Vindigni, 2011) and serve as a political strategy to gain support and maintain political control (Acemoglu et al., 2014). Low state capacity tends to persist after independence since institutions that benefit the powerful are likely to endure (De Juan & Pierskalla, 2017). Because of institutional persistence, weak states endure beyond the independence of colonised states and continue to influence the decision-making of states in the long term, including the decision to use state-sanctioned violence.

Colonised weak states struggle with fiscal constraints due to their inability to collect taxes, leading to a shortage of resources. This heightens the regime's threat perception as the widespread deprivation caused by the inefficient state's inability to offer basic services, safety or stability to their citizens, will lead to public mobilization. As introduced by Poe

[1] Low state capacity, weak state, inefficient state and state fragility will be used interchangeably

(2019), weak states are likely to experience low perception of strength due to economic challenges and lack of control in their jurisdiction, while also encountering high perceptions of threat due to high likelihood of dissent due to broad-ranging grievances.

In addition to the inefficient governance of weak states, low state capacity is also associated with the lack of monopoly of violence within the regime's jurisdiction. As discussed earlier, colonised states are more likely to experience persistent violence and conflict within their territory (Lange & Dawson, 2009). However, states with low state capacity are unable to protect their citizens due to their inability to address and control violence, especially in rural regions (Acemoglu, Robinson & Santos, 2013). Increased violence perpetuated by the state's inability to address and control disorder, decreases the regime's perception of its strength, while also giving reason for the population to revolt due to the grievances caused by violence and insecurity, leading to an increase in the regime's threat perception.

State fragility has also been found to create a conducive environment for insurgency (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Weak states are more likely to foster insurgency since insurgents are better able to survive under a relatively fragile government, lacking resources, governed inefficiently or politically fragmented, as the regime is incapable of retaliating or suppressing opposition efficiently (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Weak local policing and the inability to govern rural areas often include the use of brutal force in retaliation, which leads citizens and noncombatants to join rebel forces (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Weak states are thus favourable to insurgency, creating further disorder, deprivation, mobilisation and challenges to the regime, increasing the threat to the status quo.

Colonised states are likely to develop into weak states with low state capacity as colonisers' interests did not include the long-term stability and efficiency of state institutions,

while institutional persistence ensured the perpetuation of ineffective governance. Weak states face an alarming strength-to-threat ratio due to their key characteristics, inability to collect taxes, lack of monopoly on violence as well as government inefficiency, which expose the state to a higher likelihood of insurgency. Therefore, states with low state capacity are likely to choose repression to counter the challenges they face as they attempt to increase the strength-to-threat ratio in their favour, thus leading to the second hypothesis:

H2: Colonised states are more likely to engage in state repression due to low state capacity.

4. Research Design

To explore the hypotheses and study the association between colonisation and state repression, this study will first utilise an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) linear regression model to examine whether colonisation is correlated with state repression. Then, a two-stage least squares regression analysis will be used to examine whether colonisation affects state repression through the intervening mechanism of low state capacity, as discussed in the second hypothesis. In the first stage of the regression, the influence of colonisation on state capacity is estimated with an OLS linear regression, producing predicted values of state capacity based on the independent variable. These predicted variables are then used in the second stage to analyse their effect on state repression again with an OLS linear regression to estimate whether the theory and hypothesis are supported by the empirical analysis. Considering that colonisation, due to its historic nature, is not affected by the other variables in the analyses, and is thus an exogenous variable, further improves the explanatory value of both regressions. Both the linear and the two-stage regression models will be run with fixed effects to account for potential omitted variables and reduce bias.

All the indicators used to estimate the relationship were found and compiled in the Quality of Governance dataset (QoG), from the University of Gothenburg, which assembles an abundance of existing datasets of political science and governance variables into one dataset (Dahlberg et al., 2024). The data covers country-year observations from 1946 to 2023, with varying availability depending on the specific variables and datasets. The case selection is based on the available information for each variable, with the aim to include as many cases as possible. Ultimately the regressions measure nearly 4700 cases in the linear regression and over 4500 cases in the first stage and almost 4700 in the second stage of the two-stage regression globally. A brief discussion of the F-statistics and assumptions can be found in the appendix.

4.1 Dependent variable – Physical Integrity Rights

The dependent variable, *state repression*, will be measured with the *Physical Integrity Rights Index* originally from the CIRIGHTS Data Project (Mark, Cingranelli, Filippov & Richards, 2023), obtained from the QoG dataset. The CIRI Physical Integrity Rights index, is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 8, with higher values indicating more respect for human rights (Mark et al., 2023). The index covers data from 1981 to 2021, from 202 historical and current states (Dahlberg et al., 2024).

For the purposes of this study, measuring state repression will focus on the lack of respect for the physical integrity rights of citizens by the state, which includes state-sanctioned violence such as extra-judicial killings, disappearances, torture and political imprisonment (Mark et al., 2023). Due to the limited availability of data as well as the difficulty of gathering data on other types of state repression such as threats of use of force, this study will focus on state-sanctioned violence. The Physical Integrity Rights Index focuses on violent actions by government officials, making it preferable for our purposes as

the main focus is on state-sanctioned repressive actions rather than policy or human rights conditions in general or repression by other entities. This indicator is also preferable for the purposes of this study, as it not only focuses on the actions of states but is also largely based on qualitative accounts, meaning the data can provide a more holistic view of state repression rather than only focusing on frequencies of violent actions (Cingranelli & Richards, 2010).

4.2 Independent variable – Colonised by Western overseas power

Colonisation, or colonial history, will be measured with the *Colonial Origin* indicator originally from the Authoritarian Regime Dataset (Hadenius & Teorell, 2007; Wahman, Teorell & Hadenius, 2013). The original variable is categorical, indicating if a country has not been colonised by a Western overseas power, or in the case of colonisation, by which coloniser (Dahlberg et al., 2024). The indicator excludes European internal colonisation, such as Ireland, as well as British settler colonialism, like the United States and Australia, and considers them as non-colonised states. Only Western colonisers are considered, thus excluding colonialism by non-Western powers, such as the Japanese, from the sample.

The focus on Western overseas colonialism is due to the fundamental differences between Western overseas colonisation and other types of colonialism. For example, European internal colonies did not experience the same expectations and imposition of modernity as the overseas colonies (Bernhard et al., 2004). Studies of colonial history have also broadly agreed to study Western overseas colonialism as its own distinct phenomenon and thus distinguishing between regions of the world to do so (Bernhard et al., 2004). Western overseas colonialism also differed largely from settler colonialism as the new settler territories were largely inhabited by European elites, justifying why they should be examined in separation of overseas colonialism (Bernhard et al., 2004).

The original categorical variable was recoded into a dichotomous variable, where a value of 0 indicates that a country has not been colonised by a Western colonial power, while a value of 1 illustrates a colonial history. The indicator includes values for 211 states for both historical and current nation-states, including measures for all countries colonised after 1700, with the values starting from the year of independence while pre-independence years are coded as system-missing (Dahlberg et al., 2024).

4.3 First stage dependent variable – Comprehensive State Capacity

State weakness, state capacity or fragility will be measured with the O'Reilly & Murphy *Comprehensive State Capacity Index* (CSCI) (O'Reilly & Murphy, 2022), aggregated from six measures originating from the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge et al., 2019). The indicator measures state capacity as an index consisting of measures of "the rule of law, the authority of the state over its territory, the rigorousness and impartiality of public administration, whether public expenditures are on particularistic or public goods, the modernity of the state's source of its revenue, and the universality of the provision of education" (O'Reilly & Murphy, 2022). The CSCI is rooted in state capacity literature and includes variables considered vital dimensions of state capacity advocated by multiple authors (e.g. Hendrix, 2010; Savoia & Sen, 2015).

As mentioned earlier in this study, state weakness is also defined with similar indicators, namely the inability to collect taxes, lack of monopoly of legitimate violence as well as the inefficiency of bureaucracy, which is why the CSCI is a suitable proxy to measure our explanatory variable. Compared to other state capacity indicators, the index has a more comprehensive time range as well as includes more variation as the values are not restricted to whole numbers. The CSCI covers 181 countries between the years 1946 and 2021, as limited by the Quality of Governance dataset, whereas the original index begins in the year

1789 (O'Reilly & Murphy, 2022). The indicator values range from -6 to +4, with higher values signifying higher state capacity.

4.4 Control variables

To control for the effects of confounding variables, several control variables will be added to increase the accuracy of the estimated association. An important variable in terms of state repression is population size, as overpopulation is expected to increase the likelihood of repressive action (Davenport, 2007). Bigger populations are also linked to a higher likelihood that people who can successfully form social movements will be present (Poe, 2019). *Population* will be measured with the *World Development Indicators' total population variable* by the World Bank (World Bank, 2023). The indicator counts the size of the population "regardless of legal status or citizenship", covering 201 states between the years of 1960 and 2022 (Dahlberg et al., 2024). For the purposes of this study, the total population indicator is recoded into a logged variable to reduce skewness and facilitate interpretation.

The influence of domestic *economic development* has been widely examined in existing literature (Davenport, 2007). However, the effects of economic factors and why they tend to influence repressive behaviour have still not been adequately understood but existing literature tends to agree that domestic economic development decreases the likelihood of state repression (Davenport, 2007). To control for domestic economic factors, an indicator for *GDP per capita* will be used as a proxy for measuring economic development. The World Development Indicators, found in the QoG dataset, include a measure for GDP per capita in constant 2015 US dollars to measure the gross domestic product divided by population each year (World Bank, 2023). The variable is recoded into a logged variable to reduce skewness while covering 196 countries from the year 1960 to 2022 (Dahlberg et al., 2024).

The influence of *international agreements*, proxied by memberships in military alliances, will be measured through *the number of alliances indicator*, originally from the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions Project (Leeds, Ashley, Ritter, McLaughlin & Long, 2002). The effects of international agreements on state repression are not understood comprehensively since existing literature has only begun to consider the connection recently while disregarding existing knowledge in their analyses (Davenport, 2007). However, some findings that claim an association between alliances or international agreements and state repression have been discovered, with links to the influence of international law (Davenport, 2007). Thus, controlling for these possible effects is crucial. The number of alliances indicator measures how many military alliances countries are a part of, covering 199 countries from 1946 until 2018 (Dahlberg et al., 2024).

Economic alliances or external economic factors will be controlled for with the *economic globalisation* indicator, from the KOF Index of Globalisation (Gygli, Haelg, Potrafke & Sturm, 2019). External economic factors have been found to have an ambiguous effect on state repression, often depending on particular contexts (Davenport, 2007), which is why controlling for their influence is necessary. The KOF Index, beginning in 1970 to 2021, covers 191 countries and measures both trade and financial flows on a scale from 1 to 100 (Dahlberg et al., 2024).

Finally, to control for the effects of the *level of democracy*, the *Revised Combined Polity Score* indicator will be used, originally found in the Polity V Annual Time-Series dataset (Marshall & Gurr, 2020). The revised and unified polity score indicates levels of democracy on a continuous scale from -10 to +10, where higher values signify higher levels of democracy (Marshall & Gurr, 2020). The data covers years beginning from the start of the QoG dataset, 1946 to 2020, covering 182 countries (Dahlberg et al., 2024). As mentioned in

the literature review section of this study, democracy and democratic institutions have been widely found to decrease the likelihood of repression (Davenport, 2007; Poe, 2019).

5. Results

Table 1: Linear regression model: Influence of colonisation on state repression with and without control variables (with fixed effects [2])

	Model 1	**Model 2**
(Constant)	5.970***	9.760***
	(0.160)	(0.341)
Colonisation	-1.382***	-0.521***
	(0.057)	(0.060)
lnpopulation		-0.505***
		(0.016)
lnGDP per capita		0.324***
		(0.024)
Number of alliances		-0.008*
		(0.004)
Economic globalisation		0.014***
		0.002
Polity score		0.084***
		(0.004)
R^2	0.125	0.502
Adj. R^2	0.118	0.497
N	4672	4672

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

[2] Fixed effects run only with year-dummy variables as including country-dummy variables excludes the predicted values variable from the second stage of the two-stage regression analysis due to multicollinearity issues

The results of the linear regression, found in Table 1, estimate the relationship between colonisation by a Western overseas power and state repression. The R-squared values signify that without the addition of control variables, colonisation explains only approximately 12% of the variation in the dependent variable, while the addition of the control variables increases the explanatory value to around 50%. The findings of the linear regression analysis indicate a statistically significant negative association between colonisation and state repression. Countries that have been colonised are associated with a 0.521 ($p<0.001$) unit increase in state repression or decrease in respect for human rights, holding other indicators constant. These results are compatible with the theoretical argument and first hypothesis.

The findings also indicate a statistically significant negative association between population and state repression ($b=-0.505$, $p<0.001$). As the population increases, state repression also increases since lower values indicate less respect for human rights. This finding supports the findings of earlier literature as overpopulation and population growth are both associated with an increase in state repression (Davenport, 2007; Poe, 2019). Both GDP per capita ($b=0.324$, $p<0.001$) and the polity score ($b=0.084$, $p<0.001$) coefficients have a statistically significant positive correlation with state repression. Both indicators signify that an increase in the coefficients is associated with a decrease in state repression. These results are in line with earlier literature as both economic development and democracy have been found to be associated with less repression (Davenport, 2007). The number of military alliances ($b=-0.008$, $p=0.031$), has a statistically significant negative association with state repression, where more military alliances are associated with increasing state repression. Economic globalisation ($b=0.014$, $p<0.001$), on the other hand, has a statistically significant positive association with state repression. More trade and financial flows are thus correlated with less state repression.

Table 2: First stage of two-stage linear regression model: The influence of colonisation on state capacity with control variables

	Model 1
(Constant)	-4.599***
	(0.217)
Colonisation	-0.941***
	(0.041)
lnpopulation	0.030**
	(0.011)
lnGDP per capita	0.532***
	(0.016)
Number of alliances	-0.031***
	(0.003)
Economic globalisation	0.011***
	(0.001)
Polity score	0.090***
	(0.002)
R^2	0.726
Adj. R^2	0.723
N	4533

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

The results of the first stage of the two-stage linear regression, presented in Table 2, indicate the estimated effect of colonisation on state capacity. The R-squared value indicates that the model is able to predict approximately 72% of the variance in state capacity. According to the regression model, colonisation and state capacity have a statistically significant negative association, which supports the arguments made in the theoretical

section. States with colonial histories are associated with decreased state capacity, thus indicating they are more likely to suffer from state weakness. Former colonies are associated with a 0.941 ($p<0.001$) decrease in state capacity when holding other indicators constant.

The regression model also indicates a statistically significant positive association between population and the dependent variable ($b=0.030$, $p=0.006$). State capacity and economic development, illustrated by GDP per capita, are also found to have a statistically significant positive association ($b=0.532$, $p<0.001$). As the total population and GDP per capita increase, state capacity grows. However, a statistically significant negative association between the number of military alliances and state capacity is found ($b=-0.031$, $p<0.001$), meaning that the more military alliances a state is a member of, state capacity decreases. For every one-unit increase in the polity score, the state capacity index is expected to increase by 0.090 ($p<0.001$). Additionally, economic globalisation ($b=0.011$, $p<0.001$) has a statistically significant positive association with state capacity.

Table 3: Second stage of two-stage linear regression model: The estimated effect of colonisation-state capacity predicted values on state repression with and without control variables (with fixed effects)

	Model 1	**Model 2**
(Constant)	4.583***	12.308***
	(0.135)	(0.530)
Predicted value, colonisation-state capacity	0.762***	0.554***
	(0.015)	(0.064)
lnpopulation		-0.522***
		(0.016)
lnGDP per capita		0.030
		(0.048)
Number of alliances		0.009**

		(0.003)
Economic globalisation		0.008**
		(0.002)
Polity score		0.034***
		(0.007)
R^2	0.357	0.502
Adj. R^2	0.352	0.497
N	4672	4672

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 3 presents the results of the second stage of the regression analysis, with an OLS linear regression with fixed effects. According to the R-squared value of the first model, the predicted values explain approximately 35% of variation on their own. The first model indicates a statistically significant positive association between the predicted value and state repression (b=0.762, p<0.001). With every one-unit increase of the predicted colonisation-state capacity value, state repression is expected to decrease by 0.762 since higher values of the Physical Integrity Rights Index signify more respect for human rights (Mark et al., 2023). This result contradicts the hypothesis presented earlier in this study, as a positive association between the variables indicates that a history of colonialism is expected to decrease state repression through the mechanism of weak state capacity.

The second model of the hierarchical regression displays an improvement in the explanatory value of the model as the R-squared value is higher than without the inclusion of control variables. The second model explains approximately 50% of the variation in the dependent variable, indicating a 15% increase in the explanatory value. The addition of control variables did not change the direction of the association between the predicted values

and state repression. A one-unit increase in the predicted value is expected to decrease state repression by 0.554 ($p<0.001$). The results of both models, thus, signify a contradiction with the hypothesis.

From the control variables, population has a statistically significant negative correlation with the dependent variable, where a one percentage increase in population is associated with a 0.522 ($p<0.001$) unit increase in state repression. GDP per capita is associated positively with the dependent variable, but due to lack of statistical significance, the indicator does not have a meaningful effect, holding other variables constant. Both the number of alliances coefficient and the polity score are statistically significant and positively associated with the Physical Integrity Rights Index, meaning that an increase in the number of military alliances ($b=0.009$, $p=0.009$) and higher polity scores ($b=0.034$, $p<0.001$) are associated with more respect for human rights. These results support the findings of earlier literature. Every one-unit increase in economic globalisation is associated with a 0.008 ($p=0.002$) unit increase in respect for human rights. Thus, external economic factors are correlated with a decrease in state repression.

6. Discussion

The findings of the empirical analyses conducted in this study indicate that, as suggested by our first hypothesis, colonisation is associated with increased state repression. Countries that have been colonised are associated with a 0.521 ($p<0.001$) unit increase in state repression, compared to countries that have not been colonised. This finding can be considered large as the Physical Integrity Rights Index is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 8. However, when testing if colonisation increases state repression through low state capacity, the findings are reversed.

In contradiction to the theory and second hypothesis of this study, engagement in state repression does not increase but instead is expected to decrease according to the two-stage regression model. The predicted values of colonisation-state capacity do not provide the expected results but instead go against the theoretical framework. According to the statistical analysis, the theoretical argument and mechanism of low state capacity, suggested in this paper, are not related to increased repression in formerly colonised countries. These results indicate that the mechanism through which colonisation increases state repression is not through state weakness or low state capacity.

Thus, the first hypothesis is supported by the results of the first analysis, as presented in Table 1, while the predicted values in the second stage of the two-stage analysis are associated with more respect for human rights, contradicting the hypothesis. Additionally, the positive association found between the predicted values and the dependent variable is relatively strong as not only is the relationship statistically significant but considering the range of the Physical Integrity Rights Index from 0 to 8, an increase by 0.554 ($p<0.001$) is considerably large. These contradictory results present an interesting puzzle as colonisation seems to be associated with increased state repression, but the reason why and through which mechanism cannot be answered in the confines of this study.

7. Conclusion

The empirical analyses conducted in this study offer an answer to the proposed research question while also presenting a puzzle. The first analysis reveals that colonisation has a negative effect on state repression, as suggested by our first hypothesis. Colonisation is associated with an increase in state repression in comparison to states which do not have a history of colonisation by a Western overseas power. This result is supported by the theoretical section and answers the research question as it indicates that colonisation

increases the likelihood of state repression. However, the second analysis resulted in more puzzling findings.

The second hypothesis, which suggested that colonisation increases state repression through the mechanism of low state capacity was not supported by the empirical analysis. The predicted values of colonisation and state capacity contradicted the suggested theoretical framework and were associated with a decrease in state repression. These findings suggest that colonisation does not lead to more state repression because of low state capacity, but rather raises important questions about the underlying mechanisms driving the association. Based on earlier literature, there is no clear reason for this result which cannot be further investigated within the scope of this research. However, this finding helps us rule out low state capacity as the underlying mechanism of increased state repression as a result of colonisation.

One of the main takeaways of these results is to investigate further the correlation between colonialism and state repression to understand the underlying processes. However, the study concluded here is subject to some limitations. Measuring colonialism dichotomously limits the research conducted here as the study cannot disaggregate between different periods, strategies or colonisers, which may influence the correlation with state repression. For example, Olsson (2009) argues that because of the fundamentally different types of colonialism practised during different waves of colonialism, colonisation should be studied divided into eras. Thus, further research should disaggregate between different types and times of colonialism to increase our understanding of whether a certain period, coloniser or colonial strategy is more likely to lead to increased state repression.

When studying colonialism, it is also essential to acknowledge the Western bias that comes from studying colonialism from a Western perspective. For example, according to

Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2018), Western research on African development largely reproduces the views and biases of Western scholars contributing to a "neo-colonialist" notion. It is also necessary to acknowledge the academic consensus of anti-colonialism which may lead to overly strong predictions and findings based on moral intuition (Lange & Dawson, 2009), which this study has attempted to address by comparing colonised states with those with no colonial history to establish a basis of inference from which to make general claims. Future research should strive to address these limitations and ensure that Western bias or academic anti-colonialism do not impede studying colonialism's long-term consequences, create biased measurement or continue to add to the study of colonialism without a sufficient basis of inference.

Further, measuring state repression creates some limitations as the indicator used to measure state repression only includes violent actions by states and does not account for non-violent repression or threats. Measuring state repression is challenging due to the endogeneity of dissent and repression, as discussed earlier. Since state repression does not necessarily occur as the population may self-censor in expectation of the possibility of state repression (Ritter & Conrad, 2016), observing repression is challenging and may not occur even though human rights are not being sufficiently respected. Thus, further research should attempt to create and use more comprehensive data to measure state repression to include non-violent actions as well as threats to increase the precision of measurement and the findings.

Thus, the study executed here contributes to both colonisation and state repression scholarships, as it offers a novel finding of an association while providing grounds for further research. The results can also be useful for policymakers. Based on the findings of this study, policymakers and practitioners alike should make sure to take into account whether a state has a colonial history or not as it may affect their likelihood of choosing repression and thus,

may impact the general human rights conditions of the state as well. Studying the underlying mechanisms explaining why colonisation affects state repression is important since our understanding of the association is still immensely limited. Therefore, considering the results of this research, identifying the reasons why colonised states are more likely to repress is the essential subsequent step.

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Appendix

To improve the spelling and phrasing of this project some generative AI was used.

F-statistic

Linear regression: colonisation – state repression

The first model finds a statistically significant F-statistic ($F=17.448$, $p<0.001$), meaning the model improves the predictive ability of the data (Field, 2018). While the second model increases the predictive ability as the F-statistic is relatively larger ($F=108.509$, $p<0.001$).

Two-stage regression

First stage - The F-statistic of the regression is statistically significant and larger than 1 ($F= 1927.667$, $p<0.001$), signifying that the model improves the predictive ability of the model.

Second stage - The F-statistic ($F= 67.650$, $p<0.001$) is quite high and statistically significant. While the F-statistic of the second model is higher than the first model meaning that the inclusion of control variables increases the fit to the data compared to just the main independent variable and is still statistically significant at the 99-percent significance level ($F=108.509$, $p<0.001$).

Assumptions

Linear regression: According to the additional statistics obtained in the second stage of the analysis, the model shows no signs of issues with heteroskedasticity seen in the linear and even scattering of cases in the scatterplot. There is little issue with outliers and influential cases as presented with the standardized residuals. Only eight cases out of over 4 600 exceed the highest threshold of 3.29 while 5.2% of cases exceed the lowest threshold of 1.96, indicating that outliers should have little influence our analysis. The analysis shows no signs

of multicollinearity, as VIF-values stay below 5. The analysis displays serious issues of positive autocorrelation as the Durbin-Watson value is significantly below the desired value of 2 (d=0.686).

Two stage regression, first stage: According to the additional statistics obtained in the first stage of the analysis, the model shows some issues with heteroskedasticity as seen in the slight funnelling of the scatterplot. There is little issue with outliers and influential cases as presented in the standardized residuals and Cook's distance statistics. Only six cases out of over 4 500 exceed the highest threshold of 3.29 while 5.0% of cases exceed the lowest threshold of 1.96, indicating that outliers should have little influence our analysis. The analysis shows no signs of multicollinearity, as VIF-values stay below 5. The analysis displays serious issues of positive autocorrelation as the Durbin-Watson values are significantly below the desired value of 2 (d=0.133).

Two stage regression, second stage: According to the additional statistics obtained in the second stage of the analysis, the model shows no signs of issues with heteroskedasticity, seen in the linear and even scattering of cases in the scatterplot. There is little issue with outliers and influential cases as presented in the standardized residuals. Only eight cases out of over 4 600 exceed the highest threshold of 3.29 while 5.3% of cases exceed the lowest threshold of 1.96, indicating that outliers should have little influence our analysis. According to the Cook's distance statistics, there are no influential cases in our analysis. The first model of the second stage shows no signs of multicollinearity, as VIF-values stay below 5. However, in the second model of the second stage multicollinearity seems to be an issue as the VIF-value of the predicted values indicator is as high as 23, exceeding the conventional threshold remarkably, while the GDP per capita indicator also presents some concern at almost 11. The

analysis displays serious issues of positive autocorrelation as the Durbin-Watson value is significantly below the desired value of 2 (d=0.686).