Explaining Urban Social Unrest and Violent Civil Conflict: Basic Needs Deprivation, Political Opportunity Structures, and Coercive Government Repression

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EXPLAINING URBAN SOCIAL UNREST AND VIOLENT CIVIL CONFLICT:
BASIC NEEDS DEPRIVATION, POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES, AND
COERCIVE GOVERNMENT REPRESSION

By

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This dissertation is dedicated to the Lord for his direction and guidance in my life with all its twists and turns, to my loving husband Edward J. Borden, Jr. who has supported me through this process, to my parents Fatima and Laurent Gillot for leaving all that they knew behind to give me the opportunity of a future, and to our baby girls, Anna and Aveline, for providing the motivation to finish this scholarly goal.
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ABSTRACT

Under what conditions do economic grievances – stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities – effect the likelihood of urban social unrest? And additionally, under what conditions will a state experience violent escalation leading to civil conflict? This dissertation seeks to bridge the gap in existing literature and provide a fluid theoretical argument explaining the causal story from economic grievances stemming from broader basic necessities deprivation to violent civil conflict. I argue that economic grievances stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities increases the likelihood of urban social unrest, and this effect is conditioned by the political opportunity structures of a given regime. Secondly, I argue that in regimes that experience mass mobilization of dissent, the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict is contingent on coercive government response.

This scholarly work adds to the existing literature in several ways. First, this dissertation broadens the conceptualization of basic necessities deprivation to include access to potable water, housing security, food prices and food security, and access to affordable fuel. Building on the work of Levitsky and Way (2010) and Varieties in Democracy database project (2016), I forward a more appropriate conceptualization and operationalization of regime type – political opportunity structures. Lastly, whereas previous scholarly work has studied nonviolent dissent or violent civil conflict in isolation, this work attempts to analyze these two forms of contentious politics together – as part of a strategic process.

I utilize a nested research analysis or mixed-methods strategy – the use of both small-N, case study analysis and large-N, cross-sectional statistical analysis – in order to examine the theoretical arguments and expectations. The results from the cross-sectional, large-N empirical analysis suggests that indeed basic needs deprivation – measured as global food prices – increases the likelihood that a given state will experience urban social unrest, and that the effect is dampened in states in which the political opportunity structure is less open. Secondly, the results support my theoretical argument that urban social unrest will escalate to violent civil conflict in regimes that choose to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. Moreover, this dissertation adds to previous empirical research by utilizing two differing methodological approaches when examining the two outcome variables in question – urban social unrest and violent civil conflict. In examining
urban social unrest, I argue that a moderating model is more appropriate, while when examining the escalation to violent civil conflict a mediating model is better able to examine the causal mechanism at play. To my knowledge, this scholarly work is the first to examine this strategic process utilizing both mediation and moderation.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.
Grosse Pointe High School, March 1968

Drastic global food price fluctuations and widespread social unrest in much of the Middle East and North African (MENA), Sub-Saharan African and Asian regions have renewed academic debate and popular interest concerning the role in which international food commodity prices play in explaining contentious politics – particularly in the wake of the Arab Spring (Smith, 2014; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015). Over 30 countries between 2007 and 2008, for example, have experienced food commodity price related protests, demonstrations and riots – both nonviolent and violent in nature (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). Between 2010 and 2011, shocks in global food prices were among the stated grievances of Arab Spring dissenters. Import-dependent nation-states were particularly vulnerable to protests, demonstrations and riots related to global fluctuations in food prices – both in the Middle East and North African region (e.g., Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Morocco, and Algeria) and Sub-Saharan African region (e.g., Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda) (Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). Incidences of social unrest were not limited only to the Middle East and North African and Sub-Saharan African nation-states – demonstrations, protests and riots occurred in Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand (Salehyan et al., 2012; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015).

Spiraling global food prices alone were not the only stated grievances of dissenters; many demanded remediation for provisions of broader basic necessities – secure housing, potable water, and stable, household energy. Following the announcement of Brazil’s successful bid for the \textit{Fédération Internationale de Football Association} (FIFA) World Cup in 2014 and for the Summer
Olympic Games of 2016, the Brazilian government created and implemented the Unidade de Policia Pacificadora (UPP, translated as Pacification Police Units) program with the objective of securing and cleansing large slum cities (known as favelas), predominantly controlled by gangs of armed drug traffickers and inconveniently bordering wealthy, prominent neighborhoods and sporting stadiums. To the Brazilian government, this was seen as the first-step solution in dealing with the urban cycle of violence that has plagued Brazil’s inner cities for decades, particularly in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Within seven years, the Brazilian government had effectively pacified over three dozen favelas and slum districts through forced relocation, securitization, and government-planned razing (Peet-martel, 2014). While at times these pacification policies and programs were implemented peacefully and, in general, successfully (e.g., Lins favela and the Zona Norte of Rio de Janeiro), other slum districts and territories experienced widespread, violent clashes between UPP forces and residents (Peet-martel, 2014). In the pacification of the Complexo do Alemão favela, for example, 1,300 state and federal police surrounded the slum district in an effort to secure the favela. Known as the PAN Massacre of June 2007, the incident ended with nineteen residents killed (Peet-martel, 2014). The residents of these slum districts and territories are, in many regards, the poorest segment of Brazilian society – with limited or no access to potable water and stable, household energy. In Manaus, a remotely-located, jungle city of two million, the Brazilian government spent an estimated $3.6 billion to renovate and build sporting stadiums, including the Arena Amazonia, criticized for being the most glaring example of government waste (Manfred, 2014). Yet according to Brazilian government sources, approximately 20.2 percent of residents of Manaus lack basic, suitable plumbing. Nationally, 15.1 percent of Brazilian children under the age of four-years old live in district where sewage still runs outdoors (Peet-martel, 2014). In 2009-10, violent confrontations between favela residents and Brazilian paramilitary police escalated with the destruction of a paramilitary police helicopter by armed residents and guerilla militia using surface-to-air missiles (Peet-martel, 2014). In 2013-14, government waste and corruption, lack of government provision of basic necessities, and allegations of police brutality were among the stated grievances of the Brazilian Spring dissenters – in which thousands of Brazilians took to the streets throughout 2013 and 2014 demanding remediation for economic and political grievances (Watts, 2013). In 2015-2016, a series of mass demonstrations and protests culminated in Operação Lava Jato (translated Operation Car Wash) – an investigation of the state-
controlled energy company Petrobras for allegations of a money laundering scheme – and impeachment proceedings against President Dilma Rousseff over charges of manipulating government accounts (Watts, 2013). These incidents are not isolated events; in South Africa, over 20,000 slum district residents mobilized against the state, following the KwaZulu-Natal Elimination and Prevention of Reemergence of Slums Act of 2007 – which sought to eliminate slums in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and initiate forced relocation programs for its resident prior to the FIFA World Cup of 2010.

Mass demonstrations and protests alone are not the only responses to economic and political grievances – an escalation to armed, violent conflict can be a reaction to denied demands for remediation for government provision of basic necessities. Yemen illustrates the complex interplay between drastic fluctuations in basic commodity prices, social unrest, and further escalation to armed, violent conflict. Increased water scarcity and widespread food insecurity following the influx of Somalian refugees from the six-year Somalian Civil War and from years of natural disasters were among the economic and political grievances of Yemeni dissenters in the Yemeni Revolution of 2010-11 (Jirdeh, 2015). The subsequent escalation from the Yemeni Revolution to the Yemeni Civil War in 2015 is a multifaceted story involving longstanding economic and political grievances, state repression and drastic shocks in basic commodity prices. In 1980s and 1990s, Yemen experienced rapid democratization, opening its political system to mass democratic participation by its largely, poverty-stricken citizens. The early 2000s were marked by decreasing oil exports following a continued downturn in domestic oil production and drastic decrease in global oil prices. Dependent on government revenues from oil exports, the Yemeni government removed energy and food commodity subsidies, relaxing price controls on a variety of basic commodities. In 2010 - 11, Yemeni citizens, in response, mobilized against the regime, publically displaying their dissatisfaction with the government response to the dire economic situation. By July 2014, the Yemeni government had increased the price of gasoline by approximately 60 percent and diesel by over 95 percent – in an effort to offset declining government oil revenues; while food commodity prices had climbed by over 20 percent within a few weeks (Kulcsar, 2015). Further, Yemeni farmers struggled to plough their fields as global energy prices matched highly-inflated black market rates. The Yemeni government – with its declining government revenues – was incapable to meet the demands for remediation by Yemeni dissenters through subsidization,
price controls or other economic policies to offset the spiraling basic commodity prices. As frustrations mounted, the Yemeni government initiated rounds of government repression in order to quell the uprising – only exacerbating an already dire economic and political situation (al-Hajj, 2012). Yemen spiraled downward – from social unrest to a costly, deadly civil war.

The dynamic that explain the effect of demands for remediation for provisions of basic necessities – food security, potable water, stable, household energy, and secure housing – on the likelihood of armed, violent conflict is multifaceted. Regimes facing dissenters must choose between utilizing coercive government repression or accommodating the demands of dissenters. Historical examples show that coercive repression of social unrest by governments may sometimes be an effective tool – by weakening opposition groups, deterring the likelihood of future unrest, and to reaffirm the regime’s grip on power. Conversely, other historical cases point to an increase in violence when regimes choose to utilize coercive repression against regimes – radicalizing its populace, providing incentives for armed revolt against the current regime, and increasing the likelihood of complete regime collapse (Pierskalla, 2010). These challenges are not limited to only authoritarian or anocratic regimes, but well established democracies – who must answer demands for political change with either compromise or repression (della Porta, 1995; Pierskalla, 2010).

What do we know about the conditions under which citizens will demand political reform relatively peacefully – through mass demonstrations, protests, and riots? When will dissenters resort to violence as a means of acquiring remediation for provisions of basic necessities? Similarly, when will governments resort to repression rather than compromise? Previous literature mostly has sought to answer these questions by examining the role in which basic needs deprivation influences the likelihood of mass dissent and political violence, while the role of coercive repression has largely been examined separately. I seek to theoretically disentangle the complex relationship between the deprivation of basic necessities, urban social unrest, and violent escalation. From a theoretical perspective, I first pose the question of whether the lack of government provision of basic necessities – more broadly incorporating food security, potable water, stable, household energy, and secure housing – are a contributing factor, or catalyst of urban social unrest, ranging from peaceful, mass demonstrations to violent, spontaneous riots. Secondly, I seek to unravel the role in which regime plays in explaining the effect of lack of provisions of basic necessities on the likelihood of urban social unrest. What aspects of the regime alter the
likelihood of urban social unrest? Thirdly, I seek to examine under what conditions will dissenters choose an escalation to violence. I finally seek to unravel the role of regime coercive repression, rather than compromise, as a mechanism by which urban social unrest leads to a subsequent escalation to violence.

My dissertation consists of four theoretical parts that seek to build upon and inform the existing literatures. Although each of these theoretical parts draws from its own distinct literature, the express goal of this dissertation is to better understand how a lack of government provision of basic necessities explains armed, violent conflict – incorporating regime attributes, urban social unrest, and coercive repression. More specifically, I aim to reconcile distinct literatures by uncovering conditions under which (1) the lack of government provision of basic necessities leads to urban social unrest, (2) differing regime attributes can alter the likelihood of urban social unrest stemming from these conditions, (3) urban social unrest escalates to violent civil conflict, and 4) coercive government repression rather than compromise as a mechanism by which social unrest results in violent escalation. In Chapter 2, I highlight the five distinct literatures which my theoretical arguments draw from – economic deprivation, regime attributes and political opportunity structure, social unrest and dissent, coercive government repression, and violent civil conflict.

Chapter 3 focuses broadly on how a lack of government provision of basic necessities explains violent civil conflict. More specifically, this broad focus is dissected into four theoretical parts – (1) the effect of lack of government provision of basic necessities on urban social unrest, (2) the moderating effect of differing regime attributes on the likelihood of urban social unrest, (3) the effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict, and (4) the mediating effect of coercive government repression on violent escalation from urban social unrest. I argue that a two-step process occurs that relates government provision of basic necessities to violent conflict in developing countries. The first step forwards that the meeting of basic necessities – whether secure housing, potable water, food security, and stable, household energy – effects the likelihood of urban social unrest, conditional on the presence of civil liberties, free and fair elections and an even playing field (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Populations in which basic needs are not being met are more likely to express economic grievances towards their government by engaging in demonstrations and protests. Further, the effect of the lack of government provision of basic
necessities on the likelihood of urban social unrest is conditional on the presence of civil liberties, free and fair elections and an even playing field. In countries marred with electoral abuses – such as electoral manipulation, unfair media access for incumbent candidates and parties, and varying degrees of harassment and violence against oppositional candidates and parties, citizens will be more hesitant in making demands on their government and to display public dissatisfaction with government policy. For one, they may not have the avenues to make their demands public and secondly, the lack of civil liberties creates fear that perhaps the government would respond with repression to such demands. Secondly, I argue that urban social unrest escalates to violent civil conflict in developing countries in which the government chooses repression rather than compromise as a response to demonstrations and protests. My theoretical argument seeks to causally link public demands of remediation for provisions of broader basic necessities, coercive government repression, and the likelihood of a developing country experiencing violent civil conflict – thereby combining three literatures that in the past have been researched separately.

This dissertation utilizes a mixed-methods or nested research approach – a synthesis between a large-\(N\), cross-sectional statistical analysis and small-\(N\), case study analysis. There are significant benefits in integrating the two methodological approaches simultaneously. It improves the quality of conceptualization and measurement of indicators, analysis of competing explanations, and increases overall confidence that the principal findings of the statistical analysis withstand historical narratives (Lieberman, 2005). In Chapter 4, I present a small-\(N\), case study analysis – focuses on a small sample of historical case studies of nation-states that elucidate the causal relationships at play.

I present a large-\(N\), empirical analysis testing my theoretical arguments and the hypotheses that follow (i.e., those presented in Chapter 3). The empirical findings bolster the case-study analysis presented in Chapter 4. In order to examine the effect of the lack of government provision of basic necessities, I use global consumer food price indices as a primary independent variable. The overall theoretical argument is that populations in which basic needs are not being met are more likely to express economic grievances towards their government by engaging in demonstrations and protests. Food prices serve as a suitable measure of individual economic well-being and of potential economic grievances towards the regime. Fluctuations in food market prices are common, although recent fluctuations have been severe. Global and domestic food prices effect
the welfare of impoverished individuals and households considerably, particularly those in developing countries, and as such, provide model insight into the casual mechanisms at work. I find that global fluctuations in food commodity prices increases the likelihood of urban social unrest in developing countries. Further, this effect is dampened in developing countries marred with civil liberties violations, and general lack of free and fair elections and even playing field. Secondly, I analyze empirically under what conditions incidences of urban social unrest escalate to violent civil conflict. I employ causal mediation analysis in order to identify intermediate variables (or mediating variables) that lie in the casual pathway between the treatment and the outcome – in this case, from urban social unrest to armed conflict through coercive government repression (Imai et al., 2010). I find that, in developing countries, government repression will lead to an escalation to violent civil conflict since citizens receive information that the state is unable to successfully and fully repress its population or by creating further grievances within the opposition.

In the final chapter of the dissertation, I finish by drawing out the theoretical and policy implications of my research. Since research is never truly completed, I also propose future areas of productive discussion – specifically distinctions between coercive capacity and coercive repression – and how these differing conceptualizations may allow scholars to better understand under what conditions violent escalation is more likely occur.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

My dissertation consists of four theoretical parts that seek to build upon and inform the existing literatures. Although each of these theoretical parts draws from its own distinct literature, the express goal of this dissertation is the better understand under what conditions public dissatisfaction with government responses and policies regarding basic commodity price shocks and fluctuations explains violent civil conflict – incorporating urban social unrest, political opportunity structures and coercive government repression. In this chapter, I highlight the five distinct literatures which my theoretical arguments draw from – urban social unrest, basic needs deprivation, violent civil conflict, regime type and political opportunity structures, and mass dissent and coercive government repression literatures.

2.1 Determinants of Urban Social Unrest

The literature on social unrest and dissent has a strong empirical current. A myriad of qualitative and quantitative studies has attempted to parse the dynamics of protests cycles, coercive repression, and further violent escalations – as well as the role of economic and international factors that increase the likelihood of state violence and violent opposition (Davenport 2007b). Numerous potential responses to state economic conditions has coalesced into two broad areas of empirical analysis, based on intensity of the conflict (Weinberg and Bakker, 2015). As discussed previously, much of the preceding literature has primarily either focused on high-level events – such as civil war, revolutions and internal coups, or on low-level events within contentious politics paradigm – such as demonstrations, protests and riots. There has been a general understanding by scholars that violent civil conflict and contentious politics literatures share many theoretical constructs (Regan and Norton, 2005). Lower-level events are conceptualized as incidences of dissent – protest, demonstrations, and riots – and are framed under the umbrella terminology of social unrest. These incidences can either be altogether nonviolent or otherwise may not reach the level of violence that appears in deadly civil conflict. Empirical work on fluctuations of basic commodity prices often focus on lower-level events, since the assumption is that these fluctuations or shocks more directly affect the individual (Smith, 2014; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015; Weinberg
and Bakker, 2015). Little empirical work analyzes relative intensity of conflicts or the probability of violent escalation (Eck, 2009; Pierskalla, 2010). Eck (2009), for example, argues that civil conflict is more likely to violently intensify when rebels mobilize along ethnic lines as compared to nonethnically mobilized conflicts. The argument forwarded by the author is that ethnicity facilitates the growth of the opposition by making potential rebels more easily identifiable – thereby increasing the risk of civil war. Pierskalla (2010) causally links dissent, coercive government repression, and further escalation to violence. This research argues that further escalation to civil war, internal coup, or violent rebellion – actions that incur multiple deaths – are largely dependent on the response of the government to low-level events – such as demonstrations, protests and riots (Pierskalla, 2010).

The argument that economic grievances are potential causes for social unrest – both nonviolent and violent – is relatively noncontroversial within the existing literature. Some debate, however, remains about the capabilities of citizens to recognize macro-level economic conditions – such as changes and trends in trade balances, inflation, or gross domestic product. Some scholars argue that consumers simply do not have sufficient knowledge about the domestic economic policies and conditions to make accurate evaluations about the economic situation of the country or how these general economic trends influence personal finances (Lohmann, 1999; Duch et al., 2000; Blattman and Miguel, 2010). A large amount of existing research suggests that citizens instead base their perceptions and further their political actions on their own personal or household finances, rather than broader economic situation within their country or general economic trends (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000). Within this framework of economic grievance and opportunity, analyzing global or domestic food prices presents a compelling option for researchers in that consumers are more likely to perceive correctly their personal financial situation than broader economic woes of their country. For an average citizen, price fluctuations and drastic shocks in basic necessities – such as food, fuel, or clothing – are much easier to understand and to connect to individual or household finances. While basic necessities are purchased weekly if not daily, luxury commodities are purchased infrequently. As such, basic commodities are better micro-economic indicators of personal financial health and provide researchers a direct assessment of perceived personal economic grievances.
A long tradition of academic research on food security and dissent exists – particularly analyzing food insecurity in Britain and France (Tilly, 1971; Snyder and Tilly, 1972). Tilly (1978), for example, analyzed trends in 17th and 18th century Britain and France and argued that food-related social unrest was not a crisis of failing production, but rather was due to food inaccessibility and instability of food prices. Tilly (1978) forwards that individuals had become increasingly dependent on national markets for food, thereby increasing the significance of national markets over local markets. Further, many local controls of food distribution and food prices were dismantled – leading to inaccessibility of basic food commodities. Much like Britain and France in the 17th and 18th century, recent food-related demonstrations, protests and riots are not due decrease in food production, but rather food inaccessibility and the instability of food prices. In contrast to institutional changes during the late 18th century at the national level, the late 20th century period has seen a drastic increase in structural adjustment policies, which have significantly altered food production and prices on the international level (Walton and Seddon, 1994). Structural adjustment policies – for example, reduction in government subsidies – affect domestic food prices often increasing food inaccessibility and making food increasingly unaffordable to the local consumer (Bienen and Gersovitz, 1986; Walton and Seddon, 1994; Abouharb and Cingranelli, 2007). For example, in the two years preceding the Arab Spring, many import-dependent countries – such as Egypt – experienced a dramatic increase in domestic food prices commingled with other forms of economic grievances – such as soaring unemployment (Bush, 2010). Berazneva and Lee (2013) find that higher levels of poverty, poorer governance and government repression were associated with higher likelihood of riots – albeit their research focused primarily in Africa during the 2007-08 global commodity prices spikes.

Other research has focused on understanding how global macroeconomic shocks influences domestic politics and policy (Gourevitch, 1986; Bates, 1998). Recent literature has turned its focus on the political effect of basic commodity price shocks and fluctuations, emanating from global markets (Bellemare, 2015; Lagi, Bertrand and Bar-Yam, 2011). Bellemare (2015), for example, finds that international food commodity prices are a significant determinate of protests, demonstrations, and riots – particularly focusing on food-based grievances as a significant motivation of dissenters. He does not, however, address how shocks and fluctuations in international food commodity prices might also be related to broader forms of political unrest –
not only food-related riots. In contrast, Arezki and Brückner (2011) find that higher international food commodity prices increased the likelihood of anti-government demonstrations, protests, and riots – generally rather than food-related only – in low-income, developing countries. Additionally, more recent research has analyzed food shortages, inaccessibility and insecurity through indirect measures – such as farmland availability, rainfall, climate change and environmental degradation (Kahl, 2006; Nel and Righarts, 2008; Hendrix and Salehyan, 2012). This literature has sought to link climate change to contentious politics and violent civil conflict. Building on this literature, Smith (2014), for example, examines the complex relationship between rising food price and social unrest by utilizing two instrumental variables – international grain commodity prices and local rainfall scarcity. He finds that a sudden increase in domestic food prices – as compared to international food prices – increases the likelihood of social unrest. Likewise, Weinberg and Bakker (2015) utilize a domestic-level measure of food prices rather than standard global market prices in order order to show that a positive and significant relationship between food prices and the incidence of social unrest exists. Lastly, Hendrix and Haggard (2015) argue the effect of global food prices on the likelihood of urban social unrest – measured as protests and rioting – is conditioned by regime type. The authors find that during periods of high domestic food prices, autocratic regimes are less prone to urban social unrest than their democratic counterparts.

In sum, previous literature on determinants of social unrest demonstrate that periods of social unrest are often a result of a synthesis between drastic shocks and fluctuations on food commodity prices – whether global or domestic – and structural changes in economic and political systems that influence the distribution and accessibility of food. These economic grievances stemming from food shortages and insecurities are often coupled with broader economic grievances, such as the rise of unemployment and the provision of other basic necessities – secure housing, potable water, and stable, stable fuel energy (Goldstone, 1982). These changes, fluctuations, and shocks are perceived as unjust to consumers who then must choose to demand changes from those perceived to be responsible for or profiting from these injustices – the state.

2.2 Determinants of Violent Civil Conflict

Much of the existing literature on mass dissent draws from the longstanding violent civil conflict literature. Despite that much of the previous literature on economic deprivation examines
contentious politics, many do not differentiate between mass mobilization of dissent and violent civil conflict. As discussed in the preceding section, mass mobilization of dissent encompasses protests, demonstrations, and riots – both nonviolent and violent. These forms of contentious politics should be distinguished from violent civil conflict – armed rebellions, revolutions, civil war, and internal coups, which are all aimed at overthrowing the government or altering the power structure within a regime. In this dissertation, I explore some important differences between mass mobilization of dissent and violent civil conflict – arguing that although similarities in the causal mechanisms exist, these two broad typology of contentious politics should be examined as distinct outcomes. As such, I examine under what conditions the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent will occur in a given regime, and subsequently, under what conditions a violent escalation to civil conflict will then follow.

Past empirical work has utilized economic, social, political and even meteorological indicators as determinants of the likelihood of violent civil conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Esteban and Ray, 2008; Hendrix and Salehyan, 2012). Within the civil conflict literature, two broad explanations exist in analyzing the causes of violent civil conflict: the grievance-based or the opportunity-based approach – famously framed as grievance versus greed by Collier and Hoeffler (2001). In the grievance paradigm, the argument is that certain societal conditions exist within the country, or alternatively certain actions forwarded by the government, incentivize citizens into active violent opposition against the regime. Havard et al. (2001), for example, argue that the likelihood of violent civil conflict increases in regimes that are both transitional – those that have elements of both varying political openness and coercive government repression – and there exists ethnic heterogeneity. Contrastingly, Collier and Hoeffler (2001) forward that the probability of violent civil conflict is more likely in countries in which opportunities for rebellion exists. In the opportunity story, rebels extract or extort resources thereby decreasing their their opportunity costs for violent rebellion. Fearon and Laitin (2003) – within the opportunity-based approach – argue that in countries in which conditions favor insurgents are present, civil war is most likely to occur. These condition include financially weak states, rough terrain, large populations, and the relative newness of a particular state. This argument suggests that structural conditions – such as the presence of mountains and large populations – rather than societal conditions and actions of the state increase the strength of opposition groups, thereby increasing the likelihood of civil war.
Within this paradigm, financial weakness, often proxies as GDP per capita, is crucial in understanding the ability of the state to use coercive government repression, perform counterinsurgency and provide local policing – all of which reduce the effectiveness of potential rebel opposition. Financially weak states, or resource-poor states, are more prone to civil war since these regimes lack the resources needed to decrease the incentives of insurgents and to thwart violent rebellion.

Although recent empirical work has argued a casual link between fluctuations in basic commodity prices and urban social unrest (i.e., Smith, 2014; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015), the relative absence of research on the effect of basic commodity price fluctuations on civil conflict is surprising, especially given the fact that it is the theoretical foundation for much of this literature. The relationship between economic conditions and the likelihood for civil conflict is expounded upon in depth in the seminal work of Gurr (1970) – well-known as relative deprivation. Within the concept of relative deprivation, citizens are motivated to mobilize over their grievances that stem from economic conditions – specifically when they perceive a dissonance between what they are receiving and what they know is attainable. Structural economic conditions may be aggravated by temporal fluctuations – such as price shocks in global commodity prices – or by societal inequalities (Gurr, 1970; Gurr and Lichbach, 1981). Another seminal work – Parvin (1973) – examines the macro- and micro-economic factors that provide a casual link between citizen dissatisfaction with economic conditions to political retribution – or demands for political and economic remediation by citizens. Parvin (1973) suggests that citizens are motivated to political action by their personal interpretations of national economic performance, in addition to their household or individual financial health. Within this model, citizens reward the state during prosperous economic times and punish the state during downturns in general economic conditions – well-known as the reward-punishment hypothesis (Key, 1966). Citizens who are dissatisfied with general economic conditions will hold the state accountable for their actions and further punish the government in some fashion – whether through the ballot box, peaceful protest, violent riots or even armed conflict (Anderson, 2007; Blattman and Miguel, 2010).
2.3 Previous Conceptualizations of Regime Type and Political Opportunity Structures

The causal chain running from basic needs deprivation to contentious politics – whether urban social unrest or armed violent conflict – can pass along a number of different paths. Previous literature has focused on regime type as an important first cut at the relative costs of displaying economic grievances publically and the political opportunity structure (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001). Goodwin (2001), for example, argues that highly repressive autocratic regimes should be better positioned to thwart public demands for retribution – emanating from grievances stemming from dire economic conditions – and to repress them if they transpire. These particular forms of mass mobilization of dissent should be more common in states in which aggrieved citizens are legally allowed to engage in public demonstrations and protest – countries in which these manifestations are considered legitimate mechanism for expressing economic and political grievances. In democratic or anocratic regimes, political entrepreneurs have incentives to mobilize supporters and civil society around popular grievances and do so with low costs – in the form of state coercive repression (Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). Hegre et al. (2001) argue that mixed regimes, or anocracies, which are neither fully democratic nor extremely repressive, are more likely to experience violent civil conflict. The argument here is that the capability of the state to repress or accommodate political demands forwarded by dissidents is crucial in understanding why violent civil conflict occurs. Highly authoritarian states experience fewer domestic conflicts because potential dissidents are less likely to mobilize against the regime when they perceive the coercive repression capacity of the state – thus, the cost of mobilizing is high. Another avenue in which regime attributes dampen the likelihood of contentious politics is that highly consolidated regimes provide institutionalized channels through which dissident groups can be accommodated – whether highly consolidated authoritarian or democratic regimes (Tilly, 1978). In the middle range of regime attributes are regimes which are insufficiently repressive to prevent mobilization, while also not accommodating enough to channel opposition groups through institutional mechanisms.

Other literature has found a parabolic inverted-U shaped relationship between continuous measures of democratic institutions and the likelihood of violent civil conflict. Hibbs (1973), for example, found an inverted-U shaped relationship between economic development and collective
social unrest, but not violent civil conflict. While Muller and Weede (1990) forward that an inverted-U relationship exists between coercive government repression and political violence. Both of these findings lend support to the argument that particular regime attributes influence the likelihood of collective political protest and civil conflict through an inverted-U hypothesis. Much of the previous research utilizes the Polity index as a means of measuring political opportunity structure and various regime attributes that increase the likelihood of either urban social unrest or armed violent conflict -- largely finding that democracies have a pacifying effect on domestic conflict (Gurr, 1974; Hegre et al., 2001; Marshall and Jaggers, 2011). Hegre et al. (2001) find, by utilizing the 21-point Polity2 scale, states at the two ends of the scale (consolidated autocracies and democracies) are less likely to experience violent civil conflict. Fearon and Laitin (2003) use a dummy coding for anocratic regimes – in which a value of 1 signifies a country score between -5 and 5 on the Polity2 scale – also find that in regimes with inconsistent regime qualities (i.e., having some regime attributes of democratic regimes and other regime attributes from autocratic regimes), violent civil conflict is more likely to occur. In contrast, others argue that extremely nondemocratic societies can also discourage violent civil conflict by more coercive and repressive methods. Trier and Jackman (2008) find a quadratic relationship with decreased conflict among both the highly democratic and highly autocratic regimes, and an increase in conflict in anocratic – of middle-ranged – regimes. Gates et al. (2006) forward a new measure Scalar Index of Polities (SIP), which incorporates executive recruitment, levels of electoral participation, and constraints on executive authority. Using this new measure, the authors find institutionally consistent regimes (e.g., democracies and autocracies) endure longer than inconsistent ones (e.g., anocracies). In this paradigm, regimes characterized by elections with repressed participation, and regimes characterized by non-competitive executive recruitment with insignificant checks on the executive, are the most likely to experience political instability. Buhaug (2010) estimate the effect of democracy and autocracy – utilizing dummy codings based on the SIP data – on the likelihood of civil conflict. Buhaug finds little evidence that democracies effect the likelihood of violent civil conflict, although in autocracies the likelihood of violent civil conflict is less as compared to transitional regimes. Finally, Hendrix and Haggard (2015) argue that these regimes – anocracies -- provide the political opportunity structure necessary for contentious politics – particularly urban social unrest. Regimes that provide some contestation and opportunity for collective action provide
greater opportunity for public displays of dissatisfaction with government policies – through demonstrations, protests, and riots.

2.4 Coercive Government Repression as Response to Mass Dissent

The last segment of my theoretical argument seeks to casually link economic deprivation, dissent, coercive repression, and further escalation to violence. Little empirical work to date exists analyzing relative intensity of conflicts or the probability of violent escalation (Eck, 2009; Pierskalla, 2010). As previously discussed, Pierskalla (2010), utilizing game theoretic modeling, causally links dissent, coercive government repression, and further escalation to violence. This research argues that further escalation into civil war, internal coup, or violent revolutions – actions that incur multiple deaths – are contingent on the response of the regime to these low-level events and other existing dynamics within the country (Pierskalla, 2010). The question is whether government repression is successful in thwarting the violent escalation from dissent – and ultimately the collapse of the regime.

A large and growing body of research investigates under what conditions will governments repress dissidents – focusing largely on the role that institutions and threats to governments play in explaining coercive government behavior (Cingranelli and Richards, 1999; Davenport, 2000; Davenport et al., 2005; Landman, 2005; Bohara et al., 2006; Poe et al., 2006). This literature builds upon and informs how regimes respond to violent and nonviolent acts perpetuated by dissenters and rebels against the regime (Gurr and Lichbach, 1986; Gupta et al., 1993; Davenport, 1995; Gartner and Regan, 1996; Krain, 1997; Moore, 2000). In an insightful survey article, Davenport (2007b) provides an extensive overview of the literature with regard to what we know about the impact of economics, institutions, and the international sphere on level of coercive government repression. Two primary insights can be drawn from this work. The first is the Law of Coercive Responsiveness – which states that regimes will almost always respond with repression when they are challenged by opposition (Davenport, 2007b). The second being the Domestic Democratic Peace theory– which shows a relationship exists between democratic institutions and low levels of state repression (Henderson, 1991; Fein, 1995; Regan and Henderson, 2002; Davenport and Armstrong, 2004; Davenport, 2007a). Apart from these two findings, there has been varying
arguments about the effect of coercive government repression on mass mobilization of dissent (Hibbs, 1973; Muller and Opp, 1986; Muller and Weede, 1990; Rasier, 1996).

Within the Law of Coercive Responsiveness story, if the regime is challenged, it uses repressive measures to eradicate the domestic threat to power. Regan and Henderson (2002), for example, analyze developing countries between 1979 and 1992 and find that the level of threat a government perceives is positively associated with an increase in coercive repression. Along this line, several studies find that as dissent becomes more violent and widespread, government reacts disproportionality more harshly with the use of force and coercive repression (Gurr and Lichbach, 1986; Gupta et al., 1993; Regan and Henderson, 2002). Davenport (1995) argues that governments distinguish between different forms of threat when choosing to employ coercive repression. Davenport finds that when faced with a higher number of dissent incidences, when varying forms of dissent are employed, and when dissent attributes are different than the norm for that country, regimes will increase the level of coercive repression. In contrast, Mason (2004) suggests that governments in developing countries often will respond to dissent with a disproportionate amount of violence and repression in the face of nonviolent dissent since institutional mechanisms for accommodating grievances – whether economic or political – are underdeveloped or altogether missing. In this paradigm, citizens – who become dissatisfied with global or domestic food prices and government policy or inaction – determine the utility of actively pursing their economic grievances (Gurr, 1970). This cost-benefit analysis draws from similar model on behavior of firms in Hirschman’s (1970) Exit, Voice and Loyalty and Nel and Righarts’s (2008) most recent work – in which the potential for political punishment relies on the consumer’s incentive and opportunity to act. Unlike firms, hungry citizens do not have the luxury of exiting in regard to the food market – this thereby increases the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent under dire economic situations and further coercive government repression. Further, Moore (2000) argues that states tend to substitute accommodation for repression and repression for accommodation whenever either method was previously met with opposition. While Gartner and Regan (1996) argue that a non-linear relationship exists between violent mass dissent and further coercive government repression. Their study focused on eighteen Latin American countries and suggested that as demands of dissidents increased, governments reacted with more restraint rather than less.
Conversely, governments overreact with violent coercive repression to occurrences in which dissidents demands are relatively low.

Despite the consensus that a state will most definitely respond to domestic threat by coercive repression, a large literature on dissent and collective action has found mixed results in regards to the actual effectiveness of government coercive response of being successful in thwarting social unrest. Some research finds an inverted-U relationship (Muller and Weede, 1990), some a positive relationship (Muller and Opp, 1986), some a negative relationship (Hibbs, 1973), some find mixed results (Rasier, 1996), or altogether different concept of substitution effects (Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 1998). Recently, experimental research forwards the hypothesis that coercive government repression increases mass dissent and social unrest (Dickson, 2007).

Secondly, the role of political regimes has been an important pathway in explaining a government’s decision to employ repressive tactics against dissidents within the existing literature—often within the umbrella of the Domestic Democratic Peace theory. Political regimes determine the levels of power and force that governments can legitimately use against citizens or how capable governments are in accommodating economic and political grievances held by dissidents. Previous research has found support for the argument that democratic regimes are less likely to utilize coercive government repression since democratic norms and institutions provide nonviolent means for accommodation and conflict resolution (Davenport, 1995; Henderson, 1991; Mitchell and McCormick, 1988; Poe and Tate, 1994; Poe et al., 1999). Conversely, others have questioned the linear relationship between democracy and coercive government repression. The murder in the middle hypotheses suggests that mixed regimes – those who are neither fully democratic nor fully autocratic – are more likely to utilize coercive government repression than both democracies and autocracies (Henderson, 1991; Fein, 1995; Regan and Henderson, 2002). The argument forwards that stable democracies are less likely to utilize forms of coercive government repression since incumbents feel less threatened and dissidents have legitimate avenues to seek remediation. In stronger autocracies, the government and its elite have a secure hold on power and generally do not fear social unrest, which further increases the likelihood that dissenters will remain silent (Fein, 1995). Further, mixed regimes (e.g., anocracies) have an unstable balance of power and unrested institutional avenues in which dissenter may voice public dissatisfaction against the regime – thereby making anocracies more disposed to to cycles of
protest and violence. This hypothesis dovetails nicely with Hegre et al.’s (2001) and Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) research on civil wars (as previously discussed) – showing that anocracies are more likely to experience an increase in incidences of civil war.

While an emerging consensus seems to be that a set of democratic institutions is associated with a decrease in coercive government repression, it is less clear which actual factors determine the likelihood of human rights violations in varying types of regimes. Davenport and Armstrong (2004), for example, suggest that a threshold (Polity score of approximately 7) exists that explains the level of repression utilized by regimes – in which a negative linear relationship with coercive repression exists above the democratic threshold and no significant relationship exists below the democratic threshold. The argument is that within countries with thoroughly institutionalized democratic procedures the positive impact of government repressive behavior is most felt. Another stream of existing research has focused on the moderating effect of regime type on dissent and further coercive repression – analyzing how regime type modifies government response to domestic threats. Davenport (2007a), by disaggregating democracies, finds that although different attributes of democracy decrease repressive government behavior, not all do so to the same degree. Human rights violations, for example, are especially responsive to electoral participation and competition. Within democracies, varying types of repression are reduced, but not at comparable levels – for example, personal integrity violations are decreased far more than civil liberties restriction. Gupta et al. (1993) suggests that in democratic regimes, coercive government repression increases with increasing dissent, while in anocracies and autocracies the relationship between dissent and coercive repression follows an inverted U-shaped relationship. Regan and Henderson (2002) likewise find support for this nonlinear relationship in which anocracies are more repressive than both democratic and autocratic regimes – albeit their research suggests that the level of dissent threat is more important than regime type in explaining coercive government repression (i.e., higher levels of threat are associated with higher levels of coercive government repression). In analyzing the relationship between domestic threats, coercive government repression, and the role of regime type, previous studies have either limited their sample to developing countries (Moore, 2000; Regan and Henderson, 2002) or predominately forward a linear relationship between regime type and coercive government repression (Lichbach, 1987; Davenport, 1995; Gupta et al., 1993). Previous research also has not distinguished between varying
types of internal threats – whether nonviolent demonstrations and protests to more violent riots and possible escalation to violent, internal conflict (Poe and Tate, 1994; Regan and Henderson, 2002).

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I summarized the existing literatures that this dissertation draws from – mainly the urban social unrest, basic needs deprivation, violent civil conflict, regime type and political opportunity structures, and mass dissent and coercive government repression literatures. Several gaps in these literatures emerge, and as such, I seek to bridge the gap in the existing literature and provide a more fine-grained theoretical argument explaining the causal story from economic grievances stemming from broader basic necessities deprivation to violent civil conflict. First, existing literature has generally ignored how broader economic deprivation of basic necessities – such as access to potable water, housing security, food prices and food security, and access to affordable fuel – influence the likelihood of a state experiencing varying forms of political violence and civil conflict. Further, much of the existing literature is dichotomized between two streams of research – either seeking to explain nonviolent dissent or violent civil conflict – however rarely seeking to explain both. Third, an examination of the role in which regime type plays in explaining mass mobilization has been peripheral in the literature – often merely a control variable with often contrary theoretical expectations. Most of the existing literature examining regime type is interested rather in how regime type influences the likelihood of violent civil conflict, rather than urban social unrest. Lastly, the existing literature on coercive government repression has largely been examined within the protest–repression cycle, but has not attempted to causally link repression to basic necessities deprivation, regime type or violent civil conflict. I now turn to presenting the theoretical framework for this dissertation.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As numerous scholars have argued, basic commodity shocks and fluctuations increase the likelihood of nonviolent dissent and violent opposition – particularly in inconsistent regimes. However, this literature has generally ignored how broader economic deprivation of basic necessities influence the likelihood of a state experiencing varying forms of political violence and civil conflict. Further, much of the existing literature is dichotomized between two streams of research – either seeking to explain nonviolent dissent or violent civil conflict – however rarely seeking to explain both. Little research has sought to provide a more comprehensive theoretical argument explaining under what conditions a state will experience nonviolent dissent and/or a violent escalation to civil conflict (Eck, 2009; Pierskalla, 2010). Though the literatures on nonviolent dissent and civil conflict have strong empirical currents, few studies have attempted to parse the complexities of protest cycles, coercive repression, and further violent escalations – as well as the role in which economic grievances and regime attributes play in increasing the likelihood of state violence and violent opposition. I seek to explore empirically under what conditions do economic grievances -- stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities – effect the likelihood of social unrest and additionally, under what conditions will a state experience violent escalation leading to civil conflict. This work also seeks to distinguish between varying casual mechanisms and pathways that explain the multifaceted interplay between economic deprivation of basic necessities, nonviolent dissent, and violent civil conflict. This chapter considers how political opportunity structures and coercive government repression influence the causal story that runs from economic deprivation of basic necessities to violent civil conflict.

3.1 Explaining Urban Social Unrest: Economic Deprivation of Basic Necessities and Political Opportunity Structure

Previous research suggests that fluctuations and shocks in basic food commodity prices – whether global or domestic – influence the likelihood of social unrest and dissent (Smith, 2014; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015). Though this is accurate, I seek to
theoretically explore how broader economic deprivation of basic necessities influence the likelihood of a state experiencing nonviolent dissent and/or violent demonstrations and riots. Further, this section particularly seeks to consider the influence of a state’s political opportunity structure and regime attributes on the effect of basic necessities deprivation – stemming from dire economic conditions, global basic commodity prices, and general lack of government provision of basic necessities.

3.1.1 Economic Deprivation of Basic Necessities

What role do economic grievances – stemming from deprivation of basic necessities – play in explaining why citizens choose to engage in collective action – whether nonviolent dissent or violent demonstrations and riots – as a means of demanding remediation from the state? Drawing from the democratic survival literature, there is a strong empirical consensus that extreme forms of economic inequality are at the root of citizen motivations to engage in mass demonstrations and protests. Extreme forms of economic inequality are the motivational foundations that provoke popular dissent demanding retribution or remediation for economic grievances, and state resistance to these demands (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001; Boix, 2003). Reenock, Bernhard, and Sobek (2007), for example, argue that as regimes economically develop – particularly democratic ones, any failure to counter basic needs deprivation in its populace could mean democratic breakdown. According to the authors, regimes must respond to basic needs deprivation – a combination the authors term as regressive socioeconomic distribution, while balancing these radical demands for redistribution with elite resistance which is most likely to emerge. Under these circumstances, these regimes will be more likely to experience democratic breakdown. Intense concentration of societal and economic resources in the hands of a narrow elite – whether exemplified by labor repressive modes of government production (Moore, 1966), the rise of bureaucratic authoritarianism (O'Donnell, 1973), or a state’s need to repress wages and social expenditures in order to promote growth (Kurth, 1979; Rueschemeyer, Huber, Stephens, and Stephens, 1992) – is an important cause of democratic failure.

As suggested by Reenock, Bernhard, and Sobek (2007), much of the existing literature solely focuses on the relative distribution of resources, measured by income inequality, and gauges the resource shares controlled by varying groups within society. Conversely, absolute forms of
socioeconomic distribution consider whether all segments of society possess sufficient resources for basic survival – what the authors term a decent life (Reenock, Bernhard, and Sobek, 2007: 680). These absolute measures are drawn from the broader basic needs deprivation literature (Gurr, 1970; Gurr and Lichbach, 1981). Basic needs satisfaction can be understood as the “... material and social requirements of human functioning, such as minimum levels of nutrition, shelter and education” (King, 1998: 385). Further, relative deprivation is based on a complex set of intra- and interpersonal comparisons to the broader economic context – in which citizens perceive a dissonance between what they are receiving and what they know is attainable (Gurr 1970; Gurr and Lichbach 1986; Lichbach 1989; Klandermans, Roefs, and Olivier 2001). Reenock, Bernhard, and Sobek (2007) argue that when basic necessities deprivation persists in the presence of wider economic development, citizens will not only notice deprivation more readily, but also, given the greater economic surplus, will deem it more unacceptable, provoking radical demands for redistributive justice. Feelings of deprivation can also arise not only from inter- and intrapersonal comparisons, but from intergroup and intertemporal comparison -- how an individual assesses the current economic condition as compared to past economic conditions (Sayles, 1984).

On a general level, I suggest dire economic conditions are exacerbated by either temporal global food prices or by structural social inequalities within society. The theoretical story that follows suggests that citizens reward governments during prosperous economic times, while punishing governments during tumultuous economic times. Citizens will essentially hold government elites – whom citizens perceive responsible for economic grievances – accountable for their actions, whether through the ballot box, the streets or the battlefield. Although the motivation to punish the regime is often expressed through voting, it can also be far more reactionary and violent (i.e., protests, riots, and further escalation to violent, armed conflict).

Within the theoretical framework of economic grievance and opportunity, grievances based on economic conditions are often evaluated either through international and domestic-level policies (i.e., macro-level conditions), or individual and household-level initiators (i.e., micro-level conditions). Problematic to analyzing the casual mechanisms associated with citizen motivations in engaging in mass mobilizations is the assumption that citizens, essentially consumers, have the capabilities to perform complicated economic calculations. The assumption in many formal economic models is that consumers can perceive and analyze even small changes
in trade imbalances, inflation, or gross domestic product. For the individual consumer, economic grievances, although to a larger extent may be influenced by macro-level economic conditions, are most perceivable when macro-level economic conditions infiltrate micro-level economic conditions (i.e., the consumers’ personal and household financial situation). Previous literature suggests that individuals base their actions on their own personal financial health, rather than the broader economic situation (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000). For example, this is true in regards to drastic shocks and fluctuations in global commodity food prices; citizens are more likely to perceive these international fluctuations when drastic shocks in global food prices effect domestic food price and food scarcity. In essence, citizens will perceive macro-level economic conditions when they become real to them personally– when they cannot buy a loaf of bread due to high global or domestic food prices or when government relocation programs raze their home. This work seeks to theoretically analyze economic grievances stemming from deprivation of basic necessities – citizens’ personal and household financial situation – and their effect on the likelihood that citizens will mobilize in mass dissent against the regime. The argument here is that personal indicators of well-being – such as access to stable housing, food security, potable water, and fuel energy – provide a more direct assessment of the perceived personal scarcity. An average citizen’s perception of scarcity is immediately visible through these direct economic indicators. Citizens may fail to observe inflation, trade imbalances or even changes in per-capita income level within their country, but they most certainly will perceive individual-level indictors – the lack of stable housing, high global or domestic food prices, limited access to potable water, and inefficient and unaffordable fuel energy.

Arguably, the most obvious dimension of economic grievances is the effect of deprivation of basic necessities on the likelihood of social unrest and mass mobilization against the regime. Citizens within each country must determine the utility of actively mobilizing to publically demand remediation for government failure to provide societal basic necessities (Gurr, 1970). Much like the behavior of firms in Hirschman’s (1970) Exit, Voice and Loyalty, citizens must analyze the cost-benefit of engaging in mass mobilization; political punishment relies on a consumer’s motive, incentive and opportunity to act (Nel and Righarts, 2008: 162). Unlike Hirschman’s firms, however, citizens are not able to exit in regard to basic necessities; basic necessitates means basic survival. This cost-benefit analysis increases the likelihood of mass mobilization when basic
necessities go unmet. This is most certainly the case with basic commodity prices – particularly food prices – in poor households in the developing world. The share of food relative to total household expenditures in developing countries is 49.4 percent, and in some cases may exceed 70 percent (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011; FAO, WFP and IFAD, 2011; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). Essentially citizens have no other choice in order to survive. This is exemplified by mass mobilizations – both nonviolent and violent – and even armed conflict that has spread throughout the developing world in recent years – from mass demonstrations in Latin America, Africa and Asia to the Arab Spring.

Poland’s tumultuous path to democracy in 1989 provides an illustrative example of how citizen perceptions of deprivation – arising from interpersonal, intergroup, and even intertemporal comparisons – may be helpful in examining why citizens engage in mass mobilizations. After more than 40 years of stable Soviet communist rule, Poland transitioned to democracy on June 4th and 18th, 1989 in a national ballot. However, within the first two years of transition, unemployment skyrocketed, significant pressure on Poland’s price structure increased, and fundamental changes to property relations were extensive. Implementation of free market economic policies disturbed economic interests of various social groups and created economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation within the Polish society. Janicka and Słomczyńska (2002), utilizing data from a national sample of citizens in urban areas of Poland in 1990s drawn from the database of the Common Electronic System of Population Register (PESEL), found that significant majorities of Polish citizens were dissatisfied with their current economic situation – particularly the lack of secure and affordable housing coupled with severe financial limitations. Among households lacking financial means to cover all their basic necessities, only 11 percent had affordable housing entirely on their own, acquired either through a one-time purchase on the market or in-part payments. Contrastingly, in almost half of the respondents owning an apartment, only 47.7 percent of respondents had sufficient financial resources to provide for basic necessities. This research not only objectively measured boarder housing conditions, but also citizen perception and evaluation of these conditions. Among the households experiencing the highest level of deprivation, the worsening of their housing conditions was perceived five times more frequently than in the case of the more affluent households (18 percent to 3.4 percent) (Janicka and Słomczyńska, 2002). The authors note that Łódź, a city undergoing a particularly difficult economic and social transition
since democratization in the early 1990s, has seen some of the most drastic dissatisfaction with government provision and policies concerning basic necessities. Citizens do more than just simply punish the regime and will often mobilize based on economic and political grievances. Poland, for example, nearly three decades after democratically transitioning, has experienced waves of mass mobilizations – both nonviolent demonstrations and violent protest and riots. In 2015-16, lack of government provision of basic necessities, allegations of police brutality, and concerns over growing authoritarianism of the Law and Justice (PiS) government were among the stated grievances of Polish dissenters – in which 50,000 Polish citizens took to the streets throughout 2015 and 2016 demanding remediation for economic and political grievances (Sobczyk, 2016).

To recap, central to the relative deprivation theory is that economic grievances arise from discrepancies between what people have, and perceptions of what is attainable. While some scholars argue that absolute poverty may lead to indifference, relative deprivation may inspire radical action against the regime (Davies 1962; Gurr 1970). These perceptions provide motivation for citizen mass mobilization – particularly in developing, urban centers (i.e., where the deprivation of basic necessities is most salient) (Urdal and Hoelscer, 2012). Although relative deprivation can be conceptualized through broader macro-level indicators – such as economic growth, I seek to analyze relative deprivation through personal indicators – such as basic commodity prices. Within developing countries, decades of stagnated economic growth coupled with high global or domestic basic commodity prices create the environment necessary for mass social unrest. The theoretical story being that high global or domestic basic commodity prices will be felt most by the poorest of society as they are the least likely to be capable of insulating themselves against such drastic prices. High global basic commodity prices or soaring unemployment, for example, can disproportionately affect the ability of the poorest of society to ensure their basic survival.¹

The preceding discussion informs the first hypothesis I test empirically in this dissertation:

¹ The theoretical argument here is that high global food prices increases the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent. Previous literature has often conceptualized basic commodity prices through the lens of economic shocks and fluctuations, while operationalized these drastic shocks and fluctuations through measures of global food prices rather than a change in global food prices (Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). Although it is most certainly the case that drastic shocks and fluctuations in global food prices increases the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent as well, for measurement validity sake, this research focus on actual global food prices, and as such, utilizes the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Food Price Index (FPI) – a measurement of actual global food price.
**Hypothesis 1a:** The deprivation of basic necessities will be associated with a higher likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent – ranging from nonviolent protests to violent riots.

### 3.1.2 Previous Conceptualizations and New Critiques of Regime Type

Existing literature, when examining the role of regime type in explaining civil conflict, generally, and mass mobilization or dissent, more specifically, has often relied on traditional conceptualizations of regime – mostly some categorical classification or typology of regime. Bernhard et al. (2016), for example, argue that different ways of conceptualizing democracy – whether object conceptualization (e.g., based on a set of minimal defining conditions: a state either meets those conditions or not), property conceptualization (e.g., views democracy as an attribute that can be more or less present: all countries are more or less democratic), or a hybrid conceptualization (e.g., a synthesis between the two previous conceptualizations) – can alter model specification and empirical results. Since property conceptualizations of democracy depend on the assumption that there is only one particular observable that we can measure that will deem a state democratic – which is often not the case, previous conceptualizations of democracy instead are often based on multiple regime attributes. These properties – that are more or less present – are then aggregated into a single scale. This process is fraught with a range of pitfalls discussed in the existing literature in depth, but nonetheless extensively utilized in previous work (Gleditsch and Ward, 1997, Munck and Verkuilan, 2002; Goertz, 2005; Trier and Jackman, 2008, Vreeland, 2008).

A primary purpose of any measurement instrument is discrimination – providing sensitive gradations in the degree or quality of democracy across countries or through time (Coppedge et al., 2011). At the extreme, binary measures of democracy – such as those forwarded by Przeworski et al. (2010) and Bernhard, Nordstrom, and Reenock (2001) – are useful in analyzing the duration of democratic regimes; however, such dichotomous coding may combine together polities that exhibit quite different regime attributes – which may not be as useful in analyzing causal mechanism at play in explaining political instability. Przeworski et al.’s (2010) *Democracy and Dictatorship* index, for example, makes no distinction between countries that have both competitive elections and occasional leadership turnover. Within the *Democracy and Dictatorship* index, Papua New Guinea and Sweden receive the same score, despite the differences in quality
of elections, civil liberties, and obstructions to electoral competition (Coppedge et al., 2011).

Continuous measures appear to be more sensitive to gradations of democracy and autocracy since they have more ranks, but this perception is deceiving. The two most cited and utilized continuous indices within the political instability literature by far are Political Rights (e.g., Freedom House) and Polity2 (e.g., Polity IV database) (Coppedge et al., 2011). Polity provides a 21-point index of democracy and autocracy – if scales are merged– creating the widely-used Polity2 variable. Freedom House, likewise, scores democracy on a seven-point index and fourteen-point index, if Political Rights and Civil Liberties indices are combined. According to Coppedge et al. (2011), both the Freedom House and Polity scale utilize a flawed aggregation procedure with questionable techniques. The Polity scale, for example, clusters in a few places, particularly at Polity score -7 and +10, suggesting that perhaps the scale is not as sensitive to gradation as it purports to be. Further, the Polity2 variable combines six underlying factors so that a state’s score is the product of its sub score on these six factors, which are also weighted based on these factors. Utilizing this scoring scheme may mean that two states with the same score may actually have varying underlying components – suggesting that the quality of democracy may be in fact quite different. When distinguishing among states at the extreme values of the indices (those countries that have a perfect positive or negative score), there is often no way to distinguish the quality of democracy or autocracy among states. Similarly, Freedom House in 2004 assigned the highest score on the Political Rights index to states such as Andorra, Bulgaria, Denmark, Israel, Mauritius, Nauru, Panama, South Africa, Uruguay, and the United States – states that are substantially different at face-value and even more so in their democratic institutions (Coppedge et al., 2011).

A secondary concern with traditional composite indices (i.e., the Polity2 score from the Polity IV database or the indices from Freedom House) is the aggregation problem: which indicators to combine into a single index, whether to add or multiple them, and how each should be weighted. Of course, different aggregation decisions lead to differing empirical results – ranging from additive rules with an implicit or explicit weighing scheme or aggregating on various subcomponents of democracy. One of the primary difficulties with aggregation rules is that they must be well-defined, operational, and must reflect to researchers an accepted definition of democracy and autocracy (Coppedge et al., 2011). Both Freedom House and Polity indices although having rather definite aggregation rules, are fairly difficult to comprehend and even more
difficult to employ consistently. The Polity index, for example, is disaggregated into five components: competitiveness of participation, regulation of participation, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, and constraints on executive (Coppedge et al., 2011). Despite the fact that these components are described at length in the Polity codebook, it is difficult to say how the stated aggregation principle leads to an overall score for a given state in any given year – making theoretical conceptualization and arguing causal mechanisms underlying theoretical arguments difficult to justify. Even in its pure, disaggregated form, the Polity index is highly abstract and is often open to varying, diverse understandings (Munck and Verkuilen, 2002; Gates et al., 2006; Marshall and Jaggers, 2011). Similarly, the two Freedom House measures – Civil Liberties and Political Rights – are quite difficult to comprehend. Both terms – civil liberties and political rights – are ambiguous, abstract, and commonly utilized interchangeably with democracy. Freedom House in 2006, in an effort to provide reliability and preciseness in measurement, released a coding score for components of both Civil Liberties (e.g., comprised of (a) Freedom of Expression, (b) Association and Organizational Rights, (c) Rule of Law, and (d) Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights) and Political Rights (e.g., the product of (a) Electoral Process, (b) Pluralism and Participation, and (c) Functioning of Government). However, as Coppedge et al. (2011) argues, the inter-correlations among the seven components are extremely high (i.e., Pearson’s r of .86 or higher) – suggesting that, coupled with ambiguous coding procedures – these components are not entirely independent of each other. Further, Freedom House coders are given the ability to assign a final score based on their overall impression of the country – a sort of wild card element – which makes it again more difficult to apply consistently across states. The take-away here is that the lack of reliability of these traditional indices dampens the confidence that they will provide a precise and reliable score – which can provide differentiation between states in regards to democratic institutions.

Despite these criticisms, research must find some way of analyzing regime types through time and across nation-states in order to mark progress, to explain, to reveal consequences, and to ultimately affect future policy decisions. Coppedge et al. (2011), for example, argue for a new approach to conceptualization and measurement – constructing a global index of democracy that provides for a specification that is far more transparent and precise (e.g., Varieties of Democracy (2016) data project). The authors argue that payoffs exist to implementing a new approach in the
conceptualization of democracy – fostering a better understanding of disaggregated components of democracy and forwarding useful conceptualization of regime attributes for testing claims about the effect of regime type on various outcomes (e.g., economic development, social policy, and foreign policy). This new approach seeks to improve specificity in measurement – making indicators of democracy more reliable and more useful in policy evaluations.

Similarly, Levitsky and Way (2010) offer a new conceptualization of regime type through their competitive authoritarianism measure. Competitive authoritarianism can be described as a hybrid regime type, encompassing characteristics of both democracy and authoritarianism. These regimes are distinguished from full authoritarian regimes in that constitutional avenues exist through which opposition candidates and groups may participate in a meaningful way for executive power – elections are held regularly and opposition candidates and parties are not legally barred. Opposition candidates and parties can open offices and organize campaigns. Politicians are rarely exiled or imprisoned. In short, there are legitimate democratic channels in which opposition groups and candidates can meaningfully compete for power. Yet, these competitive authoritarian regimes lack three primary attributes of democracy, according to Levitsky and Way (2010): (1) free and fair elections, (2) broad protection of civil liberties, and (3) a reasonably level playing field. Although these regimes have some semblance of democratic institutions in which opposition groups and candidates may contest for power, they are not democratic in that the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents or the existing regime. In these regimes, competition is thus real but unfair. Full authoritarian regimes are defined in contrast as regimes in which no viable mechanisms exist for opposition to compete legally for executive power. These regimes include both closed regimes – in which national level democratic institutions altogether do not exist (e.g., China, Cuba, and Saudi Arabia) – and hegemonic regimes – in which formal democratic institutions exist on paper, but are reduced to a façade in actuality (e.g., post–Cold War Egypt, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan) (Levitsky and Way, 2010).

3.1.2.1 Free and fair elections. In democracies, elections are free – there is virtually no fraud or intimidation of voters – and fair – opposition parties and candidates are not systematically deprived of access to media or other critical sources, or subjected to harassment or repression

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2 For a full discussion on hybrid regimes, see Howard and Roessler (2006) and Levitsky and Way (2010).

In fully authoritarian regimes, multiparty regimes are either nonexistent or noncompetitive, or elections are considered noncompetitive. In these regimes, elections lack attributes existent in democratic regimes, such as: (1) opposition candidates are formally barred from or all-together excluded on a regular basis from repression stemming from legal, administrative and financial obstacles; (2) repression or legal controls fully prevent opposition parties from running public campaigns; or (3) elections are so marred with fraud that there is virtually no relationship between voter preferences and electoral outcomes (Levitsky and Way, 2010). Competitive authoritarian regimes, in contrast, fall somewhere between these two extremes – with some attributes of free and fair elections consistent with democratic regimes and some attributes of that elections are not fully free and fair as with fully authoritarian regimes. On the one hand, elections are competitive in that major opposition parties are able to campaign publically and elections are competitive in that opposition candidates are not excluded, as in democratic regimes. Nonetheless despite that there is no massive fraud, elections, in some regard, are unfree and, often, extremely unfair. Elections may be marred by fraud or by larger intimidation of opposition groups and candidates. Elections, for example, may experience manipulation of voter lists, ballot-box stuffing, or fabrication of electoral results. These regimes can also create an environment in which opposition groups, voters, and even poll watchers are intimidated. In both cases, although such fraud may alter the outcome of elections and intimidation may discourage opposition groups, voting is still meaningful and abuses are not so severe as to prevent the opposition from running a national campaign, as is the case of fully authoritarian regimes. Mexico’s 1994 election – as many Latin American elections marred by some variation of electoral fraud and/or slight intimidation of opposition groups and candidates – provides an example of how although an election may be technically clean, it may be skewed in the way in which opposition groups and candidates have access to resources (Castaneda, 1995; Levitsky and Way, 2010).

3.1.2.2 Civil liberties. In democracies, civil liberties – such as the right to free speech, press, religion, and association – are fully protected. Although these rights may be violated sporadically, for the most part, such violations are nonexistent and when they do occur, rarely hinder citizens’ capacity to challenge the regime. Contrastingly, in fully authoritarian regimes, basic civil liberties

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are almost always violated so that opposition parties, civic groups, media, and citizens are not even minimally protected. Opposition activity takes place far from the public space – often underground or in exile. In competitive authoritarian regimes, although civil liberties are technically guaranteed and to some extent respected, they are frequently violated. In contrast to fully authoritarian regimes, independent media exists and opposition groups operate publically. Citizens are able to meet freely and even mobilize collectively against the regime. Yet in comparison to democratic regimes, opposition candidates, journalist, and any real critic of the regime are often subject to harassment, arrest and violent attack. Independent media is often threatened and attacked – sometimes even suspended or closed by the regime seeking to control these outlets. These regimes may also utilize repression to a certain extent – not to the degree of fully authoritarian regimes – but, may arrest opposition leaders and coercively repress acts of dissent and mass demonstrations. Of course, where repression is overt, brutal, or all-encompassing, these regimes would push towards full authoritarianism. More often than not, assaults on civil liberties take a far subtler form – including regimes that utilize legal repression to punish opposition through tax, libel and defamation laws. One example of this would be Russia under the Putin administration. After Mikhail Khodorkovsky, owner of Russia’s largest oil company Yukos, began funding opposition groups in 2003, the Putin government utilized legal repression through selective tax laws – seizing all his company’s property and stock (Goldman, 2008; Levitsky and Way, 2010).

3.1.2.3 An even playing field. Levitsky and Way (2010) forward a third regime attribute that informs their competitive authoritarianism measure – an even playing field. Some characteristics of regimes – for example, skewed access to media and finance – have a major impact on elections and yet, are often missed in measurements of whether elections are free and fair or as a clear violation of civil liberties. As such, the Levitsky and Way (2010) argue that the third regime attribute catches these conceptual nuances. The authors provide two examples of how these attributes are often missed in the conceptualization and measurement of indicators. For example, a clear violation of civil liberties would be when a regime coercively closes down a media outlet or newspaper; whereas a governing party controls some aspect of private media and achieves informal or patronage arrangements would not be viewed as civil liberties violation. Similarly, illicit government-business ties – allowing incumbents and the governing party access to vast resources that are not afforded to opposition groups, opposition candidates, and citizens – would
not be viewed as civil liberties violations, but nonetheless skews the playing field in favor of the ruling regime. While all competitive authoritarian regimes are characterized by some aspect of an uneven playing field, one concern is that this conceptualization would not consider that there is some degree of incumbent advantage even in democracies – especially new democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America. These new democracies are often characterized by extensive clientelism and politicization of state bureaucracies, and as such, would make it difficult for research to differentiate such cases from those with real unfair competition. In order to remedy this problem, Levitsky and Way (2010) forward that an uneven playing field is when (1) state institutions are widely abused for political and partisan ends; (2) incumbents systematically have an advantage at the expense of the oppositions; and (3) due to these advantages, the opposition is unable to organize and compete effectively in elections. The key aspect to uneven playing field is the clearly skewed access provided to the governing party, regime, or incumbent – through access to resources, media, and the law. These nuances highlight how regimes may be undemocratic even in the absence of elections marred with fraud, or direct, aggressive civil liberties violations.

Drawing on the critiques of past conceptualizations of regime type and the work of Levitsky and Way (2010), I utilize a new conceptualization of regime type – political opportunity structure. I theoretically build on the work of Levitsky and Way (2010) by conceptualizing an open political opportunity structure as one that has (1) free and fair elections, (2) broad protection of civil liberties, and (3) a reasonably level playing field. The subsequent section seeks to examine the effect of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation on the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent, and how this effect is conditioned by regime attributes – namely, political opportunity structure.

3.1.3 The Conditioning Effect of Political Opportunity Structure on Urban Social Unrest

Drawing on this recent literature and the work of Levitsky and Way (2010), I suggest the use of their new conceptualization of regime type – political opportunity structure – and seek to examine its conditioning effect on economic grievances stemming from basic necessities and the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent – whether nonviolent demonstrations and protests, or violent riots. Recent empirical studies have forwarded a causal link between global basic commodity prices with the mass mobilization of dissent – or some variation of domestic basic
commodity prices (i.e., domestic food price or instrumental variables serving as proxies for domestic food price) (Smith, 2014; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015). A recent empirical piece, Hendrix and Haggard (2015), examines the role in which regime type plays in explaining the effect of global food prices on mass mobilization of dissent – whether nonviolent demonstrations and protests, or violent riots. The authors find that democracies are more prone to urban social unrest during periods of high global food prices than autocracies and anocracies. Beyond this recent scholarly work, an examination of the role in which regime type plays in explaining mass mobilization has been peripheral in the literature – often merely a control variable with often contrary theoretical expectations. Most of the existing literature examining regime type is interested rather in how regime type influences the likelihood of violent civil conflict, rather than urban social unrest – largely finding that democracies have a pacifying effect on violent civil conflict (Gurr, 1974; Marshall and Jaggers, 2011). Other scholars argue that instead autocracies can decrease the likelihood of violent civil conflict – often through coercive repression (Muller and Weede, 1990), while some find that mixed regimes, or anocracies, which are neither fully democratic nor extremely repressive, are more likely to experience civil conflict (Hegre et al., 2001). Whereas others have argued a quadratic relationship exists with civil conflict – in which a decrease in violent civil conflict is expected in both highly democratic and highly autocratic countries and an increase in violent conflict in anocracies (Trier and Jackman, 2008; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015).

Two primary problems emerge from the use of traditional conceptualizations of regime type. For one, as previously mentioned, regime type has played a peripheral role in the mass mobilization literature. Since regime type has often been allocated as a control variable in various models, many scholarly works do not provide a rich conceptualization of regime type backed by a theoretical framework. Instead most utilize standard, traditional conceptualization (i.e., Freedom House, or Polity IV). Secondly, within the violent civil conflict literature, scholars have forwarded contradictory empirical results of the effect of regime type on violent civil conflict. I argue that a new conceptualization of regime type – one that captures the causal mechanisms at play – is needed in order to fully examine the effect of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities on the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent, and the conditioning effect of regime attributes on this relationship. Traditional conceptualizations of regime type (e.g., Freedom House, and Polity
IV)), or proxy variables for regime strength (e.g., per capita military expenditure, and or GDP per capita) provide researchers with indicators that have questionable measurement validity. For example, existing literature has often relied on Polity IV as a valid measurement for civil liberties – assuming that civil liberties is captured in the Polity IV aggregation. Although the concept of civil liberties (i.e., the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens) is tucked into the disaggregated form of the Policy IV score, the coders specifically do not measure civil liberties and state so in the codebook. The problem for researchers is straightforward: Understandably, regimes with serious civil liberties violations do not meet the procedural minimum standards as a democracy, but within the Polity IV measure – the most utilized proxy for civil liberties – many of these regimes may in fact be coded as democracies. Contrastingly, I seek to utilize Levitsky and Way’s (2010) new conceptualization of regime type which provides much needed measurement validity, is a far better measure of regime attributes, and more closely approximates my concepts.

Political opportunity structure is conceptualized with three broad properties: (1) free and fair elections, (2) protection of civil liberties, and (3) an even playing field. Previous conceptualizations of regime type have included some aspects of these properties, but lack a theoretical framework and often utilize Freedom House or Polity IV to measure these concepts. I directly examine these three facets that measure whether a regime has a political opportunity structure. First, elections are free – if there is virtually no fraud or intimidation of voters – and fair – if opposition parties and candidates are not systematically denied access to media or other critical sources, or subjected to harassment or repression. In regimes with a closed political opportunity structure, elections may lack some aspect of free and fair electoral attribute, such as: (1) opposition candidates are formally barred from or all-together excluded on a regular basis from repression stemming from legal, administrative and financial obstacles; (2) repression or legal controls fully prevent opposition parties from running public campaigns; or (3) elections are so marred with fraud that there is virtually no connection between voter preferences and electoral outcomes. Secondly, an open political opportunity structure means civil liberties are fully protected – such as the right to free speech, press, religion, and association. Citizens within regimes with an open political opportunity are not hindered in challenging the regime. This is in contrast to regimes with a closed political opportunity structure in that basic liberties are almost always violated. Opposition parties, civic groups, media, and citizens are not even minimally protected. Due to this,
opposition to the regime does not take place publically; it is almost always underground or when opposition candidates or groups are in exile. Lastly, an even playing field describes a political climate in which access to media and finance is not skewed towards the incumbent or the present regime. This last attribute is often missed in measurements – since it moves beyond whether elections are free and fair or the protection of civil liberties. In a closed political opportunity structure, an uneven playing field is when (1) state institutions are widely abused for political and partisan ends; (2) incumbents systematically have an advantage at the expense of the oppositions; and (3) due to these advantages, the opposition is unable to organize and compete effectively in elections. Thus far, this section has dichotomized regimes as having either an open or closed political opportunity structure. Of course, there exists regimes which fall somewhere between these two extremes in regards to free and fair elections, the protection of civil liberties, and an even playing field. In the existing literature, these regimes have often been labeled mixed, anocratic, or inconsistent regimes. For simplicity, my theoretical argument dichotomizes political opportunity structure to either open (high) or closed (low) instead of relying on traditional regime classifications (e.g., democracies, anocracies and autocracies).

This section argues that the political opportunity structure within a regime conditions the effect of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities on the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent – whether nonviolent demonstrations and protests, or violent riots. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the causes of contentious politics, whether mass dissent or violent civil conflict, draws from two theoretical approaches – grievance-based or opportunity-based approach (Collier and Hoeffler, 2001). Whereas much of the previous scholarly work debates the merits and drawbacks of both approaches, I provide a theoretical synthesis between the two approaches. Firstly, the grievance-based approach argues that there exists certain societal conditions or actions by the regime that push citizens into active violent opposition – whether mass dissent or violent civil conflict. Citizens in nation-states are motivated to mobilize over economic grievances that stem from economic conditions – specifically when they perceive a dissonance between what they are receiving and what they know is attainable. Temporal shocks and fluctuations – such as drastic shock in global commodity prices – can serve only to aggravate long-term, structural economic inequalities. These citizens, dissatisfied with economic conditions, will seek to hold the regime accountable for their actions and further punish the government in some
fashion – whether through the ballot box, peaceful protest, violent riots or even armed civil conflict. I forward that in the presence of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation – stable housing, food security, potable water, and fuel energy – citizens will mobilize in mass dissent against the regime demanding remediation for these economic grievances.

The question still remains why do some regimes experience mass mobilization of dissent, while others remain unscathed by urban social unrest? Drawing from the second theoretical approach, the opportunity-based approach, I argue that citizens must have the opportunity for mass mobilization of dissent. I argue that political opportunity structure serves to explain under what conditions citizens will choose to mobilize in mass dissent against the regime over economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation. According to Fearon and Laitin (2003), civil war is most likely when state conditions favor insurgency – such as financially weak state, rough terrain, large populations, and the newness of a state. This argument suggests that structural conditions rather than temporal conditions and actions of the state increase the strength of an insurgency, thereby increasing the likelihood of civil war. Following the opportunity causal story, it is not enough for citizens to have grievances against the regime, but they must also have the opportunity to mobilize on these grievances. In regimes with a closed political opportunity structure, basic civil liberties are almost always violated so that opposition parties, civic groups, media, and citizens are not even minimally protected. Opposition activity takes place far from the public space – often underground or in exile. As such, citizens are less likely to publically mobilize against the regime – fearing government reprisals. Contrastingly, in regimes with an open political opportunity structure, citizens are able to meet freely and even mobilize collectively against the regime. Independent media exists and opposition groups operate publically. This gives a greater opportunity for citizens to mobilize in dissent against the regime. The theoretical expectation is that regimes with an open political opportunity structure, the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent by citizens in response to economic grievances stemming from basic necessities is greater compared to regimes with a closed political opportunity structure. Of course, there exists regimes which fall somewhere between these two extremes. For example, in these regimes, citizens are still able to meet freely and even mobilize collectively against the regime, and independent media exists and opposition groups operate publically. Yet in comparison to regimes with open political opportunity structure – regimes with free and fair election, broad protection of civil liberties, and
an even playing field – opposition candidates, journalist, and any real critic of the regime are often subject to harassment, arrest and violent attack. Independent media is often harassed and attacked – sometimes even suspended or closed by the regime seeking to control these outlets. Another facet of these regimes is that they may also utilize repression to a certain extent – however, not to the degree of a regime with a fully closed political opportunity structure. These regimes may though arrest opposition leaders and coercively repress acts of dissent and mass demonstrations. Of course, where repression is overt, brutal, or all-encompassing, these regimes would push towards a fully closed political opportunity structure. In this regime, citizens may not mobilize against the regime – depending on how closed the political opportunity structure is in the regime. The take-away point here is that regimes with an open political opportunity structure allow more opportunity for citizens to mobilize in dissent against the regime – demanding remediation for economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation. This effect decreases as the regime becomes more closed – or has a closed political opportunity structure.

The preceding discussion informs the main conditional hypotheses I test in this dissertation:

**Hypothesis 1b:** The presence of a more open political opportunity structure will be associated with a higher likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent – ranging from nonviolent protests to violent riots.

**Hypothesis 1c:** Economic deprivation of basic necessities will be associated with a higher likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent in regimes with a more open political opportunity structure, while the effect is dampened in regimes with a less open political opportunity structure.

As Figure 3.1 forwards, a moderating effect exists in which the effect of basic necessities deprivation on urban social unrest is conditioned by the political opportunity structure in a given regime. Counterintuitively, regimes with an open political opportunity structure – those with free and fair elections, broad protection of civil liberties, and an even playing field – have a higher likelihood of experiencing mass mobilization of dissent by its citizens. A conditional effect emerges: whereas economic deprivation of basic necessities will increase the likelihood of mass dissent in a regime with an open political opportunity structure, in regimes with a less open political opportunity structure, the effect of economic deprivation of basic necessities on the likelihood of mass dissent is dampened. Drawing from Levitsky and Way (2010), I will empirically
examine this theoretical argument by utilizing indicators that directly measure my conceptualization of political opportunity structure – measured as free and fair elections, civil liberties, and an even playing field. The subsequent section examines under what conditions mass mobilization of dissent will further escalate to violent civil conflict – providing a more fine-grained theoretical argument from economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation to the likelihood of violent civil conflict.

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**Figure 3.1** The Conditioning Effect of Political Opportunity Structures

*Note:* The figure depicts the general theory behind urban social unrest (on the left) and the specific theory tested (on the right). This dissertation argues a moderation effect exists in which the effect of basic needs deprivation on urban social unrest is moderated by the political opportunity structure present in the regime (on the left). This work will empirically test this theoretical argument by utilizing indicators that measure free and fair elections, civil liberties, and an even playing field (on the right) (as conceptualized by Levitsky and Way (2010)).

### 3.2 Explaining Violent Civil Conflict: Urban Social Unrest and Coercive Government Repression

This section distinguishes between mass mobilization of dissent – whether nonviolent or violent – with civil conflict. In the existing literature, this distinction has often been overlooked – dichotomizing between two streams of research seeking either to explain nonviolent dissent or
violent civil conflict, however rarely seeking to explain both. While the preceding theoretical section sought to explore under what conditions do economic grievances -- stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities – effect the likelihood of urban social unrest, this section seeks to examine under what conditions will a state experience escalation leading to violent civil conflict. Though the literatures on nonviolent dissent and violent civil conflict have strong empirical currents, few studies have attempted to parse the complexities of protest cycles, coercive repression, and further violent escalations (Eck, 2009; Pierskalla, 2010). The primary contribution of this section is to provide a more precise theoretical argument explaining under what conditions a state will experience a violent escalation to civil conflict after incidences of mass mobilization of dissent stemming from basic necessities deprivation.

3.2.1 Explaining Urban Social Unrest and Violent Civil Conflict: Moderation Effects versus Mediation Effects

The preceding theoretical argument section focused on explaining under what conditions citizens with economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation would choose to mobilize collectively against the regime. The remaining question is under what conditions will mass mobilization of dissent – whether nonviolent protests and demonstrations, or violent riots – escalate to violent civil conflict, which this subsequent theoretical section seeks to answer. Prior to examining these causal mechanisms, a decision on what type of empirical modeling is necessary in order to provide the greatest theoretical leverage – fully examining these causal dynamics at play and answering these far-reaching questions.

Understanding the difference between moderation and mediation effects is essential to increasing researchers’ confidence in the claim of causality. Previous research often has utilized these two terms interchangeably – without making a conceptual, theoretical, or empirical distinction between the two. Many political theories assert that the effects of variables are dependent on the social, political, economic, or strategic contexts, and as such the use of moderation models have been abundant in all subfields of political science. While, the use of mediation causal analysis is far less utilized, but nonetheless is a growing methodological approach to understanding the causal pathways and mechanisms at play. A conditional hypothesis (i.e., moderation effect) can be best described as simply one in which a relationship between two or
more variables depends on the value of one or more variables; or as X has a positive effect on Y that becomes stronger as Z increases (Brambor, Clark, and Golder, 2006; Clark, Gilligan, and Golder, 2006). Put differently, a moderator variable is a variable that changes the impact of one variable on another. Contrastingly, a mediator variable seeks to examine the mechanism by which one variable affects another variable, such that the effect of the independent variable on the outcome variable is significantly reduced by controlling for the mediator. MacKinnon (2011), for example, suggests that a moderating variable is important whenever a researcher wants to assess whether two variables have the same relation across groups, while on the other hand, a mediating variable is useful whenever a researcher wants to understand the sequential process by which two variables are related (i.e., in that one variable causes a mediating variable which then causes an outcome variable). Further, a primary distinction between a mediating and moderating variables is that a moderating variable does not specify a causal relationship, only that the relationship between the independent variable and the outcome variable differs across different levels of the moderating variable. In contrast, a mediating variable transmits the causal effect of the independent variable to the outcome variable – specifying a causal relationship between the two (MacKinnon, 2011). In this dissertation, considering the differences between these methodological approaches, I opted for a moderation approach in the first segment of the theoretical argument, while choosing a mediation approach in the second.

In examining the effect of economic grievances on the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent, a conditional effect emerges: whereas economic deprivation of basic necessities will increase the likelihood of mass dissent in a regime with an open political opportunity structure, in regimes with a less open political opportunity structure, the effect of economic deprivation of basic necessities on the likelihood of mass dissent is dampened. The political opportunity structure – the presence of free and fair elections, broad protection of civil liberties, and an even playing field – within a given regime alters the relationship between economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation and the likelihood of a regime will experience mass mobilization of dissent. This calls for the use of a moderating methodological approach. In contrast, when examining the causal relationship between incidences of mass mobilization of dissent and the likelihood that dissidents will violently escalate to civil conflict, a mediating approach is more appropriate.
Previous empirical research in civil conflict frequently have either conceptually, theoretically, or empirically analyzed the likelihood of mass dissent – whether nonviolent or violent – and civil conflict, in general, through a moderating effect, rather than a mediating effect (e.g., Smith, 2015; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). This is particularly true of scholarly work examining coercive government repression (e.g., Nordås and Davenport, 2013). However, a greater consideration of the suitability of mediation versus moderation models suggests that theoretical arguments suggesting a behavioral response would be better modeled utilizing a mediation methodological approach. Within a single mediator model, the addition of a third variable to a causal relationship between an independent and an outcome variable is included so that the causal sequence is modeled such that X, the independent variable, causes the mediator, M, and M, causes Y, the outcome variable. Mediating variables are utilized to understand the strategic process by which two variables are related. MacKinnon (2011), for example, argues that the use of mediating variables is central in understanding behavioral responses. Drawing from previous theoretical scholarship, I forward that the relationship between mass mobilization of dissent – whether nonviolent protests and demonstrations, or violent riots – and further escalation to violent civil conflict cannot simply be understood through direct causal mechanisms. I build on previous theoretical and empirical work suggesting that governments do indeed respond to popular dissent with repression as argued by the Threat-Response Theory or the Law of Coercive Responsiveness (Earl, Soule, and McCarthy, 2003; Davenport, 2007a), and that further escalation to violent civil conflict by dissenters is in response to coercive government repression. In other words, the effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of escalation to violent civil conflict is mediated by government’s choice to mobilize the security apparatus to repress dissidents. The use of a mediation model captures the causal sequence of the theoretical arguments: dissidents collectively organize and initiate mass demonstrations, protests and riots; at that point, the regime must choose to utilize coercive repression against dissidents and/or the general populace; and then, dissidents must choose to escalate to violent civil conflict or to acquiesce to the regime.

As such, I seek to provide an argument from economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation to the escalation to violent civil conflict – incorporating both moderating and mediating effects in each of the theoretical segments. From my understanding, this work is the first to distinguish between mediation and moderation effects within the mass dissent, violent civil
conflict, and political stability literatures; and this could open fruitful research opportunities into understanding how these conceptual, theoretical, and empirical distinctions alter the likelihood of contentious politics – whether demonstrations, protests, and riots, or further escalation into violent civil conflict.

3.2.2 Explaining Violent Civil Conflict: Coercive Government Repression or State Capacity for Repression

Much of the existing literature on mass dissent, violent civil conflict, and coercive repression lacks consensus over precisely how these three facets of contentious politics are related. In order to understand under what conditions contentious politics occur, scholars have previously examined in what way the structure of the state incentivizes dissident mobilization (Skocpol, 1979; Gurr, 1988 Goodwin, 2001). Within the violent civil conflict literature, state capacity for repression is key in examining potential rebels’ decision to fight against the regime (Tilly, 1978; Hendrix, 2010; Sobek; 2010). The theoretical argument here is that rebels’ decision to take up arms against a regime is based on their perception of the capacity of the regime to repress incidences of violent civil conflict or to likewise accommodate rebels’ demands. In nation-states with considerable state capacity for repression, the regime can impose high costs on potential rebels, and thus deter armed rebellion. Similarly, nation-states with significant capacity for accommodation – whether through redistributive economic policies, or through the incorporation of dissident movements within the party system – decrease the likelihood of facing violent strands of urban social unrest, or further escalation into violent civil conflict.

State capacity is, however, a multidimensional concept (Hendrix and Young, 2014). Generally, state capacity is measured either through military capacity – operationalized as military personnel per capita or military expenditures per capita (DeRouen and Sobek, 2004; Buhaug 2010) – or bureaucratic/administrative capacity – operationalized by a myriad of indicators, such as level of economic development, measures of natural resource dependence or revenue-generating capacity (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; DeRouen and Sobek, 2004; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Humphreys, 2005; Thies, 2010). However, this line of research has reached contradictory empirical findings. For example, military capacity is associated with a lower likelihood of conflict onset, higher likelihood of conflict termination, and shorter conflict duration (DeRouen and Sobek,
bureaucratic/administrative capacity is associated with a lower likelihood of conflict onset, and shorter conflict duration (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; DeRouen and Sobek, 2004; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Humphreys, 2005; Thies, 2010). In order to explain these contradictory responses, Hendrix (2011) forwards the likelihood of civil war onset is negatively associated with bureaucratic capacity – operationalized as tax capacity, while positively associated with military size and military spending. Building on this line of research and likewise hoping to explain these contradictory results, Hendrix and Young (2014) suggest that a multidimensional conceptualization of state capacity is needed to explain these two competing effects of state capacity on violent civil conflict more broadly, and terrorism more specifically. The authors decompose state capacity into two dimensions: military capacity -- or the the ability to project conventional military force -- and bureaucratic administrative capacity. They find that terrorists attacks are more frequent in states with large, technologically sophisticated militaries, but less frequent in states with higher bureaucratic administrative capacity. In contrast to Hendrix and Young (2014), I argue that empirical contradictions have arisen because scholars have not addressed the theoretical nuance between state capacity for repression versus coercive government repression.

Existing literature has sought to explain mass mobilization of dissent, or violent civil conflict by either examining the role of state capacity for repression (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; DeRouen and Sobek, 2004; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Humphreys, 2005; Buhaug, 2010; Thies, 2010), or by examining the role of coercive government repression – utilizing Political Terror Scale (PTS) and CIRI Human Rights Data Project as indicators (e.g., Carey, 2010; Nordås and Davenport, 2013; Young, 2013; Hultquist, 2015). Other recent scholarly work has attempted to examine these theoretical nuances together (Pierskalla, 2010; Ritter, 2014; Conrad and Ritter, 2016). Pierskalla (2010), for example, utilizes game theoretic modeling in order to examine under what conditions mass mobilization of dissent can escalate to violent civil conflict. The author focuses on complete and incomplete information in explaining the likelihood of violent escalation (Pierskalla, 2010: 119).

Pierskalla (2010) argues that dissidents must form beliefs regarding the regime’s capacity for repression, while the regime mostly has a relatively solid understanding of its own capabilities. A regime can be defined as either strong (i.e., the cost of coercive repression is lower than the cost
of policy concessions), or as weak (i.e., the cost of coercive repression is higher than the cost of policy concessions). Dissidents will be less likely to mobilize publically against a strong regime as compared to a weak regime – fearing government reprisals. This incentivizes regimes to outwardly portray a reputation for repression – through state capacity for repression – to thwart any contest over state power through dissident mass mobilization, or violent civil conflict. Pierskalla (2010) offers an *incomplete* information scenario – dissidents are not certain whether the regime can successfully repress mass social unrest, or violent civil conflict. Dissidents evaluate the capacity of the state through signaling (i.e., military personnel per capita, or military expenditures per capita), and further decide whether to engage in mass dissent or armed conflict against the regime. In regimes with brutal, technologically advanced military apparatus, for example, dissidents will be less likely to engage in mass social unrest, or violent civil conflict against the regime – fearing that the regime will mobilize its vast military apparatus to repress dissidents. Pierskalla (2010) also suggests a second scenario – that of *complete* information – in which the regime must choose whether to utilize coercive repression against dissidents, or offer policy concessions as a means of placating dissidents. Dissidents subsequently must choose whether the escalate to violent civil conflict. Contrastingly, the author finds that, in a complete information scenario, dissidents will escalate to violent civil conflict in response to coercive government repression. The result of violent escalation to civil conflict under a *complete* information scenario, as compared to an *incomplete* information scenario, is intuitive. Dissenters who have chosen to publically mobilize against the regime must pay a cost to do this – the cost of possible coercive repression. Regimes that respond to mass mobilization of dissent with coercive repression risk increasing dissident economic, or political grievances. Moreover, these regimes have unintentionally given dissidents valuable information on the actual capability of the regime to successfully defeat opposition groups in violent civil conflict. Within developing countries, this can be especially damaging to regimes – in that the government often does not possess the coercive capacity to *completely* repress dissent, or thwart further escalation to violent civil conflict.

The preceding discussion dovetails nicely with the previous comparison between coercive government repression and state capacity for repression. I forward a model that falls on the side of Pierskalla’s (2010) *complete* information scenario – dissidents are aware of state capacity since the regime has chosen coercive government repression in response to mass mobilization of dissent.
My theoretical expectation is that coercive government repression towards dissenters increases the likelihood of violent civil conflict. Utilizing a measurement of state capacity for repression would forward contradictory results – namely, state capacity for repression decreases the likelihood of violent civil conflict.

3.2.3 The Mediating Effect of Coercive Government Repression on Violent Civil Conflict

The previous theoretical section examined under what conditions citizens with economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation would choose to mobilize collectively against the regime. At this juncture in the causal story, governments are faced with protesters in the streets and must choose between accommodating their demands and mobilizing the security apparatus to repress. Historical analysis suggests that, on the one hand, repression of mass mobilization of dissent can work: decreasing the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict, thwarting future protests, and reaffirm the power of the regime (e.g., the 1989 repression by the Chinese government of student demonstrators in Tiananmen Square). On the other hand, government repression can in actuality lead to the opposite effect: further violent escalation to civil conflict, the radicalization of the populace, increased citizen grievances, and even the full collapse of the regime (e.g., the 2011 repression by Syrian government of Arab Spring dissenters).

Within the existing literatures, some scholars have argued that coercive repression suppresses mass dissent, negatively affecting citizen’s capacity to mobilize (Tilly, 1978). Regan and Henderson (2002), for example, argue that severe repressive responses from regimes with an institutionalized repression apparatus allows these state to rule through fear and thwart dissident behavior at a relatively low-cost to themselves. In contrast, other scholars argue that coercive repression increases dissent by creating new grievances that opposition groups may further mobilize (Hibbs, 1973). There is little empirical consensus about the effect of coercive repression on urban social unrest apart from two findings: the Domestic Democratic Peace finding and the Law of Coercive Responsiveness. The Domestic Democratic Peace finding suggests a relationship between democratic institutions and low levels of coercive repression (Regan and Henderson, 2002; Davenport and Armstrong, 2004; Davenport, 2007b). More pertinent to this dissertation, the

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5 Davenport (2007a) describes the state of the literature in regards to what we know about coercive repression and mass dissent.
Law of Coercive Responsiveness states that governments will almost always respond with coercive repression when challenged by mass dissent. This theoretical section seeks to assess under what conditions do regimes choose coercive repression against mass dissent, and further under what conditions will mass mobilization of dissent against the regime escalate to violent civil conflict.

In this context, dissent is defined as a coordinated attempt by nonstate actors within the jurisdiction of the state to influence political outcomes (Ritter, 2014). These forms of dissent can range from nonviolent — such as peaceful demonstrations and protests — to very violent forms of dissent — such as violent rioting. Previous literature has examined how dissent begins at the individual level (e.g., Gates, 2002; Regan and Norton, 2005; Bennett, 2008) or as a response to economic and social grievances (e.g., Gurr, 1970; Tilly, 1978; Heath et al., 2000). Although throughout this dissertation, dissidents are described as a group, the underlying assumption is that the process described is the decision process of even a single actor — a citizen, for example — to join a movement and as a response to individual economic and social grievances. Coercive repression, in contrast, is defined here as the coercive actions of the state to inhibit the will or capacity of people within their jurisdiction to influence political outcomes (Davenport, 2007a; Ritter, 2014). Civil, political and personal integrity rights violations fall within the purview of coercive repression and are classified as clear violations of international norms and standards (cf. Davenport 2007a: 3).

Regimes — whether those with an open or closed political opportunity structure — face a critical choice when incidents of mass demonstrations, protests and riots occur. Regimes must choose to accommodate dissident demands or mobilize the security apparatus to repress the opposition. In accommodating dissidents, these regimes must dedicate an adequate portion of the economic and social surplus towards lessening basic necessities deprivation or utilize this surplus for other ends (i.e., growing the economic prosperity of elites, improving national military apparatus, or reinvesting wealth to promote further economic growth) (Reenock, Bernhard, and Sobek, 2007). When these governments are not capable or willing to commit sufficient resources in alleviating economic deprivation, the pressure for remediation through government policy will continue to grow.

Governments that oppose reform or policy concessions will either accept the prospect of leader removal of office (e.g., electoral loss in democracies is, or an internal coup in autocracies),
or being convinced that the costs of *not* providing these accommodations are less than that of the prospects of leader removal from office, will resist reform and perhaps seek coercive repression as a means of establishing their will by force. Reenock, Bernhard, and Sobek (2007) argue that, in order for patterns of socioeconomic distribution to threaten the survival of the regime, citizens must perceive differences in distribution, deem them unjust and unacceptable, and then demand their alleviation. Haggard and Kaufman (2012) argue the wider the income disparities in society, the more government leaders fear reprisals from citizens demanding remediation for perceived economic inequality and likewise, the greater the incentives for the regime to repress challenges from below. In the face of economic inequality, the persistence of basic necessities deprivation will invoke *radical* demands for redistributive justice – triggering violent escalation into civil conflict depending on the response of the regime (Reenock, Bernhard, and Sobek, 2007: 685). The simplifying assumption here is that choices within contentious politics are dichotomous: citizens must choose whether to mobilize publically against the regime or not, governments must choose to accommodate dissident demands or mobilize the security apparatus to repress dissidents, and citizens must then choose to escalate to violent civil conflict or not (e.g., Moore, 1998; Lichbach, 1987; Shellman, 2006; Pierskalla, 2010).

Although regimes and dissidents can disagree over a variety of policies, violations of civil liberties, or even allocation of goods and services, one disagreement can be economic disparities stemming from government policies that favor a particular group within society – economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation, for example. When citizens choose to mobilize publically against the regime, the legitimacy of the regime may be undermined – for example, suggesting to third-party opposition groups that perhaps the regime cannot sufficiently control its population (Davenport, 1995). Mass mobilization does not only impose costs to the regime, but threatens the political survival of the leader. Supporters of a leader (i.e., regime elites) may believe that the leader cannot effectively control the population, and as such, be less likely to

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6 Ritter (2014) presents a bargaining model of policy allocation in the context of domestic conflict and its potential to influence executive political survival. Rather than modeling dichotomous conflict choices as much of the existing literature, the author models the choices leading to the onset of coercive repression and mass dissent as well as how severe those actions will be on a continuous scale. For the sake of simplicity, I assume that conflict choices are dichotomous. Future research could extend these theoretical arguments to examine these actions on a continuous scale.

7 According to Ritter (2014), the regime sets a policy within a policy space – either closer to the ideal policy of the regime or the ideal policy of dissidents. Within this paradigm, the policy is set and the opposition can either accept the policy or publically dissent in attempts to change it.
support him, instead shifting support to the opposition. A regime or leader concerned with the loss of power will have a greater incentive to mobilize its security apparatus against dissidents – in hopes of destabilizing efforts of dissidents engaging in social unrest and further thwarting the possibility of escalation to violent civil conflict (e.g., the response of former Egyptian President Mohommad Morsi to June 2013 Egyptian protests, and the subsequent 2013 Egyptian internal coup). Despite these efforts to thwart the escalation to violent civil conflict on the part of the regime, coercive repression only serves to further increase dissident grievances against the regime. Citizens who choose to publically mobilize against the regime have often paid a significant cost in doing so. The regimes response of coercive repression only perpetuates the belief that dissidents have essentially nothing to lose in escalating to violent civil conflict.

I forward that the relationship between mass mobilization of dissent – whether nonviolent or violent – and further violent escalation to civil conflict cannot simply be understood through direct causal mechanisms. I build on previous theoretical and empirical work suggesting that governments do indeed respond to popular dissent with repression as argued by the Threat-Response Theory or the Law of Coercive Responsiveness (Earl, Soule, and McCarthy, 2003; Davenport, 2007a), and that further escalation to violent civil conflict by dissenters is in response to coercive government repression. In other words, the effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict is mediated by government’s choice to mobilize the security apparatus to repress dissidents. Figure 3.2 forwards the theoretical argument explaining the direct effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict, as well as the mediating effect of coercive government repression on the likelihood of a regime experiencing violent escalation to civil conflict. The theoretical argument suggests that the causal pathway between mass mobilization of dissent and coercive government repression is positive (pathway \(a\)), and that the causal pathway between coercive government repression and violent civil conflict (pathway \(b\)) is likewise positive. Therefore, a state that is experiencing mass mobilization of dissent stemming from economic grievances is thought to likely experience coercive government repression against dissents, which subsequently increases the likelihood of civil conflict – such as internal coups, revolution, or civil war.

The preceding discussion informs the second set of hypotheses I test empirically in this dissertation, more specifically, in this section:
**Hypothesis 2a (pathway a):** Mass mobilization of dissent – ranging from nonviolent protests to violent riots – will be associated with a higher likelihood of coercive government repression against citizens.

**Hypothesis 2b (pathway b):** In regimes in which the government responds to mass mobilization of dissent with coercive repression, the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict increases.

The previous discussion also yields an additional hypothesis regarding the causal mechanisms mediating the effects of mass mobilization of dissent (*indirect effect*):

**Hypothesis 2c (pathway a*b):** The effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict is mediated by government’s choice to mobilize the security apparatus to repress dissidents.

In sum, a state that is experiencing mass mobilization of dissent stemming from economic grievances based on basic necessities deprivation is thought to be more likely to experience coercive government repression against dissidents, and subsequently increases the likelihood of

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**Figure 3.2 The Mediating Effect of Coercive Government Repression**

*Note:* The figure depicts the mediating effect of coercive government repression on the likelihood that mass mobilization of dissent will violently escalate to civil conflict.
violent civil conflict – such as internal coups, revolution, or civil war. Although a direct relationship exists between mass mobilization of dissent and the likelihood of violent civil conflict, this theoretical argument seeks to explore the indirect causal mechanisms. In Figure 3.2, the dashed line between mass mobilization of dissent and the likelihood of violent civil conflict represents the direct causal relationship. This is included in order to acknowledge that coercive government repression may only partially mediate the effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of civil conflict.

3.3 From Economic Deprivation of Basic Necessities to Violent Civil Conflict: Theoretical Framework and Expectations

This dissertation seeks to explore theoretically and empirically under what conditions do economic grievances – stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities – effect the likelihood of urban social unrest and in turn, under what conditions will a state experience escalation leading to civil conflict. Secondly, I also seek to distinguish between varying casual mechanisms and pathways that explain the multifaceted interplay between economic grievances stemming from deprivation of basic necessities, mass mobilization of dissent, and violent civil conflict. More specifically, this chapter has sought to consider how both the political opportunity structure of a given regime and coercive government repression in response to mass dissent explain the causal story that runs from economic deprivation of basic necessities to violent civil conflict. Drawing from the preceding theoretical discussion, Figure 3.3 illustrates the general theory from economic grievances stemming from deprivation of basic necessities to violent civil conflict – separated into a two-step process. The first portion argues that economic grievances – stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities – effect the likelihood of urban social unrest. This effect is moderated by the political opportunity structure in a given regime. Although economic deprivation of basic necessities will be associated with a higher likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent – ranging from nonviolent protests to violent riots, this effect will decrease in regimes with less open political opportunity structures – as measured by broad protections of civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field. This dissertation adds to the existing literature by using Levitsky and Way’s (2010) new conceptualization of regime type rather than relying on traditional measures (e.g., Freedom House, and Polity IV). As Figure 3.3 forwards, the second
portion of the theoretical argument seeks to examine under what conditions regimes will experience a violent escalation from mass mobilization of dissent to violent civil conflict. The theoretical argument presented in the preceding discussion is that mass mobilization of dissent –

**Figure 3.3 Combined Theoretical Framework**

*Note:* The figure depicts the general theory behind urban social unrest (on the left) and the general theory behind violent civil conflict (on the right). This dissertation argues a moderation effect exists in which the effect of basic needs deprivation on urban social unrest is moderated by the political opportunity structure present in the regime (on the left). Secondly, the likelihood that violent escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict is mediated by government coercive repression (on the right). The combined theoretical argument is depicted at the bottom.
ranging from nonviolent protests to violent rioting – increases the likelihood that a regime will use coercive repression against dissidents. Regimes responding to mass mobilization of dissent with coercive government repression are most susceptible to escalation to violent civil conflict. Put differently, the effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict is mediated by the choice of the regime to mobilize the security apparatus to repress dissidents.

Figure 3.4 depicts the theoretical expectations derived from the combined theoretical framework. This dissertation argues a moderation effect exists in which the effect of basic needs deprivation on urban social unrest is moderated by the political opportunity structure present in the regime (on the left). Secondly, the likelihood that violent escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict is mediated by coercive government repression (on the top). This combined theoretical framework creates a 2x2 table that forwards four sets of theoretical expectations on the likelihood of urban social unrest, and a further escalation to violent civil conflict. As Figure 3.4 forwards, regimes with a closed – or low – political opportunity structure are less likely to experience urban social unrest, as compared to states with an open – or high – political opportunity structure. Secondly, regimes that respond to mass mobilization of dissent with high coercive government repression are more likely to experience escalation to violent civil conflict, as compared to states that respond to mass mobilization of dissent with low coercive government repression. The top-left cell elucidates this theoretical expectation – in regimes with a low political opportunity structure and low coercive government repression are less likely to experience urban social unrest, and a subsequent escalation to violent civil conflict. This is contrast to the top-right cell in which regimes respond to urban social unrest, when they rarely occur, with high coercive government repression. In these nation-states, the likelihood of the regime experiencing urban social unrest stemming from basic necessities deprivation is less likely, but when they do occur, the choice of the government to mobilize the security apparatus against dissident increases the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict. Moving to the bottom cells, regimes with an open – or high – political opportunity structure are more likely to experience urban social unrest, as compared to states with a closed – or low – political opportunity structure. The regimes that respond to mass mobilization of dissent with high coercive government repression are more likely to experience escalation to violent civil conflict, as compared to states that respond to mass
mobilization of dissent with low coercive government repression. The bottom-left cell argues that regimes with a high political opportunity structure and low coercive government repression are more likely to experience urban social unrest, but less likely to experience a subsequent escalation to violent civil conflict. Contrastingly and as depicted in the bottom-right cell, when these regimes faced with urban social unrest respond to dissidents by coercive government repression, the likelihood of the regime experiencing an escalation to violent civil conflict increases.

The theoretical expectations presented above may appear counterintuitive to some. I have sought thus far to provide an explanation for past empirical contradictions on whether regime type increases or decreases the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent, and further, whether coercive government repression deters or contrastingly sparks further mass dissent and possible escalation to violent civil conflict. The proceeding theoretical section has suggested that these empirical contradictions have arisen because scholars have yet to address the theoretical nuance between coercive government repression and state capacity for repression. The theoretical expectations forwarded here capture these complex dynamics. Figure 3.4 suggests that marginal effect of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation on the likelihood that a given regime will experience mass mobilization of dissent is positive at all levels of political opportunity structure, but that this effect decreases in regimes with less open political opportunity structures (i.e., regimes that lack in some regard free and fair elections, broad protections of civil liberties, and an even playing field). In contrast to the theoretical expectation that state capacity for repression would decrease the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict, I argue that coercive government repression in response to mass mobilization of dissent increases the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict.

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8 As discussed previously, this dissertation focuses primarily on whether the government responds with coercive repression against mass dissent. Alternatively, government response to urban social unrest can be passive by offering policy concessions, economic subsidies, and a plethora of public assistance programs to appease dissident public demands. In this causal story, dissidents, however misguided, may feel that public demonstrations and protests against the regime were successful and that economic grievances will be remediated – thereby decreasing the likelihood of an escalation to violent conflict. It is most certainly the case that governments can respond to mass dissent with either coercive repression or some variant of policy concessions. It can also be the case that governments may choose a combination of coercive repression and policy concessions. Although in this dissertation, I am more focused on coercive repression, future research could seek to unravel these dynamics.
Figure 3.4 Combined Theoretical Expectations

Note: The figure depicts the theoretical expectations derived from the general theory. This dissertation argues a moderation effect exists in which the effect of basic needs deprivation on urban social unrest is moderated by the political opportunity structure present in the regime (on the left). Secondly, the likelihood that violent escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict is mediated by government coercive repression (on the top).

3.4 Conclusion

A large body of research has focused on the effect of fluctuations and shocks of global and domestic food prices on the likelihood of mass dissent (i.e., Smith, 2014; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015). Other recent literature has examined food insecurity indirectly through other measures, such as environmental degradation, farmland availability and rainfall (Kahl, 2006; Nel and Righarts, 2008; Hendrix and Salehyan, 2012). This dissertation not only adds to this literature by broadening the conceptualization of economic grievances of basic necessities deprivation to include access to stable housing, food security, potable water, and fuel energy, but also by examining under what conditions a regime will experience an escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict. The literature on basic necessities deprivation tends to focus mostly on the effect of these economic grievances on mass dissent in isolation, rather than examining
more broadly its effect on violent civil conflict. I hope to begin the discussion on how economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation incentivizes citizens to publically mobilize against the regime, but also broaden the discussion to include the incentives of dissidents to escalate from peaceful demonstrations and protests to violent rioting and civil conflict.

I now turn to an empirical examination of the theoretical arguments and expectations forwarded in this theoretical chapter. First, this scholarly work utilizes a mixed-methods or nested research approach – a combination of intensive case studies and a large–N, cross-national analysis – to examine and test the causal relationships and mechanisms at work. As a first cut into examining these causal mechanisms at work, intensive case analysis can yield greater measurement validity than is possible with a large–N, cross-national studies alone – while providing plausibility probes into the causal mechanisms. The fourth chapter seeks to bolster these results through a large–N, cross-national study. Rather than relying on preexisting datasets (e.g., Freedom House, and Polity IV) that were not designed to measure free and fair elections, broad protection of civil liberties, and an even level playing field – as conceptualized here, the subsequent large–N, cross-national study will utilize a new conceptualization forwarded by Levitsky and Way (2010) and Varieties in Democracy data project (2016).
CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The theoretical argument presented in this dissertation forwards a two-step process arguing that deprivation of basic necessities will be associated with a higher likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent – ranging from nonviolent protests to violent riots – conditioned by the political opportunity structure of a given country. More specifically, the presence of economic deprivation of basic necessities will be associated with a higher likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent in regimes with an open – or high – political opportunity structure, while contrastingly the effect is dampened in regimes with a closed – or low – political opportunity structure. The second step of the theoretical argument presented in the preceding chapter seeks to causally link economic deprivation with the onset of violent, civil conflict. The theoretical argument is that the presence of mass mobilization of dissent will be associated with a higher likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict. This effect is mediated by government’s choice to mobilize the security apparatus in response to social unrest. This chapter seeks to examine these causal relationships through case study analysis before presenting results from the cross-sectional, large–N, empirical analysis in the subsequent chapter.

4.1 Nested Research Analysis and Mixed-Methods Approach

Previous research within the political science field has debated between the use of two methodological approaches – with a long standing argument between the inherent tradeoffs of each. On the one hand, the comparative approach has been seen as an attempt to draw general conclusions from analysis of one or a few cases – leading to selection bias, lack of systematic procedures, and a lack of attention to potential rival explanations (e.g., Achen and Snidal, 1989; Geddes, 1990; King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994). Contrastingly, some scholars view the cross-national, large–N, approach problematic since big, national-level outcomes require a more close-range analysis to avoid spurious results (e.g., Rogowski, 1995, Collier and Mahoney, 1996; Munck, 1998; Collier, Brady, and Seawright, 2004). Recent scholarly work by King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) and Brady and Collier (2004) have concluded that each approach can be successfully implemented to achieve similar social scientific ends, albeit using different
methodological tools. Other scholars have called for a greater synthesis between the two methodological approaches or a mixing of methodological strategies (Achen and Snidal, 1989; Tarrow, 1995; Coppedge, 2002, Gerring, 2004).

Lieberman (2005), for example, argues that a nested research analysis or mixed-methods strategy can offer scholars a synergy between the two competing methodological approaches. Statistical analysis, for example, provides scholars more direction for a more focused case study analysis and subsequent in-depth research. Large–N, statistical analysis allows researchers to draw primary causal inferences from the quantitative estimates of robustness of a theoretical model (Lieberman, 2005). Contrastingly, case study analysis can serve as plausibility probes of observed statistical relationships between variables, as well as provide better measurement strategies for variables. Further, case study analysis or small–N studies can generate theoretical insights from outlier cases that can inform scholars of the causal mechanisms at play. These small–N, case study analysis allows researchers to draw causal inferences about the primary variable under examination from qualitative comparisons of cases and to trace causal chains in these cases across time. The relationship, therefore, between theoretical argument and historical narratives is captured. Lieberman (2005) argues that an integrated strategy provides scholars with the ability of making causal reference utilizing the strengths of these two differing approaches – combining statistical analysis of a large sample of cases with in-depth analysis of one or a few cases (e.g., a case study analysis of one or a few nation-states nested within a cross-sectional, large–N, statistical analysis of nation-states). I likewise argue that there are significant benefits in integrating the two methodological approaches simultaneously. It improves the quality of conceptualization and measurement of indicators, analysis of competing explanations, and increases overall confidence that the principal findings of the statistical analysis withstand historical narratives.

Following the broad recommendations forwarded by Lieberman (2005), I began with an explanation of previous literature and alternative arguments before presenting my main theoretical arguments and expectations. Subsequently, I conducted the preliminary large–N, statistical analysis – which allowed me to simultaneously estimate the effects of competing explanations and control variables on the dependent variable. Moving on to the small–N analysis, I analyzed whether results and findings from the statistical analysis withstand comparison within historical narratives. The goal here is to gain contextually-based evidence that a particular theoretical argument actually
worked in explaining the phenomenon as it did in the statistical analysis portion. Following these recommendations, this dissertation – after the initial large–N, statistical analysis – focuses on a small sample of historical case studies that elucidate the causal relationships at play.

4.2 Theoretical Expectations: Political Opportunity Structure and Coercive Government Repression

The preceding theoretical argument chapter sought to examine the causal mechanisms at play in order to create a more fine-grained argument explaining under what conditions a given nation-state will experience mass mobilization of dissent in response to economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation; and, under what conditions will nation-states experience a violent escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict. As Figure 4.1 forwards, in the presence of economic deprivation of basic necessities, urban social unrest, whether nonviolent demonstrations and protests or violent riots, is more likely in regimes with an open – or high – political opportunity structure, as compared to regimes with a closed – or low – political opportunity structure. An open political opportunity structure is marked by civil liberties, the presence of free and fair elections, and an even playing field in which opposition parties and candidates can compete against the incumbent regime. Put differently, the effect of economic deprivation of basic necessities will be associated with a higher likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent. This effect is conditioned by the political opportunity structure: in regimes with a high political opportunity structure, the likelihood of urban social unrest is greater, while in regimes with a low political opportunity structure, the effect of economic deprivation of basic necessities on the likelihood of urban social unrest is dampened.

Although previous literature has suggested that democracies (i.e., regimes marked by extensive civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field) dampen the likelihood of violent civil conflict, I find that a theoretical nuance emerges. While the likelihood of urban social unrest is greater in regimes with an open political opportunity structure, the likelihood of a violent escalation to civil conflict (i.e., internal coup, revolution or civil war) is contingent on the government’s choice to utilize coercive repression against mass dissent. Threat-Response Theory or Law of Coercive Repression argues that in the presence of mass dissent –whether nonviolent demonstrations and protests or violent riots – regimes will respond with coercive repression against
dissidents. I extend the argument by suggesting that the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict from mass dissent increases when the government chooses coercive repression in response to urban social unrest. Put differently, the effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict is mediated by coercive government repression against dissidents mobilizing in urban social unrest.

![Figure 4.1 Theoretical Expectations for Case Studies](image)

*Note:* The figure depicts the theoretical expectations derived from the general theory. This dissertation argues a moderation effect exists in which the effect of basic needs deprivation on urban social unrest is moderated by the political opportunity structure present in the regime (on the left). Secondly, the likelihood that violent escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict is mediated by government coercive repression (on the top).

As Figure 4.1 suggests, the theoretical expectations speak to both the likelihood of urban social unrest and the further escalation to violent conflict – providing a precise argument explaining how economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation increases the likelihood of mass dissent, conditioned by the political opportunity structure present in the given regime. Further, the theoretical argument presented in this dissertation causally links the likelihood of mass dissent with further violent escalation to civil conflict by arguing that this violent escalation is more likely to occur when government chooses coercive repression in response to mass dissent. The subsequent sections seek to provide historical narratives that elucidate this
causal story – from economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation to violent civil conflict.

4.3 Low Political Opportunity Structure, Urban Social Unrest, and Violent Civil Conflict

In this case study analysis chapter, the theoretical expectations above will be evaluated in relation to the openness of the political opportunity structure of a given nation-state and the government response to mass dissent – whether the regime will choose to respond with coercive repression or not. Figure 4.1 forwards a 2x2 table that expounds on the causal arguments presented in the preceding chapter. These causal arguments can be further analyzed through four sets of theoretical expectations drawing from whether the given nation-state has a low or high political opportunity structure, and whether the regime will choose low or high coercive government repression in response to mass mobilization of dissent. These four sets of theoretical expectations suggest the likelihood of urban social unrest, and a further escalation to violent conflict given the political opportunity structure of the regime and its choice to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. These four categories are as follows: low political opportunity structure and low coercive government repression; low political opportunity structure and high coercive government repression; high political opportunity structure and low coercive government repression; and high political opportunity structure and high coercive government repression. The subsequent sections seek to identify nation-states with each of these categories discussing the how the political opportunity structure of a given country and the choice of the regime to respond to mass dissent with coercive repression.

In this section, I first turn my attention to regimes with low political opportunity structures – regimes in which civil liberties are often violated, there is a lack of free and fair elections, and an even playing field in which opposition parties and candidates can compete against the incumbent regime does not exist. As Figure 4.1 suggests, these regimes will be less likely to experience urban social unrest stemming from economic grievances, as compared to regimes with high openness in their political opportunity structures (e.g., the top-left and top-right cells demonstrate this theoretical expectation).

Secondly, I turn my attention to understanding under what conditions mass dissent will then violently escalate to civil conflict – such as an internal coup, revolution, or civil war. As Figure
4.1 forwards, I argue that violent escalation is contingent on the actual government response to mass mobilization of dissent (i.e., low or high coercive government repression). Since this theoretical section is examining regimes with low political opportunity structure, incidences of urban social unrest are less likely, or in some cases altogether nonexistent, as compared to regimes with high political opportunity structure. As such, in regimes that do not experience urban social unrest, there is no government response. Put differently, violent escalation from urban social unrest to civil conflict is outside of the theoretical expectations. However, the preceding argument forwards that urban social unrest is less likely – not altogether impossible – in regimes with low political opportunity structure. There still exists the possibility that dissidents will choose to mobilize publically against the regime, albeit this is less of a possibility as compared to regimes with extensive civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field. In these cases, government response to mass dissent is essential in understanding whether these incidences of urban social unrest – however uncommon – will violently escalate to civil conflict. In the presence of mass mobilization of dissent, the government must choose between subsequent coercive repression – in attempts to thwart an escalation to violent conflict – or a passive response – perhaps offering policy concessions to dissidents as a means of appeasing economic grievances. In these regimes, when incidences of urban social unrest do occur, brutal coercive repression on the part of the regime only serves to solidify economic grievances of dissidents – thereby increasing the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict. Alternatively, government response to urban social unrest can be passive – or as conceptualized low coercive government repression – by offering policy concessions, economic subsidies, and a plethora of public assistance programs to appease dissident public demands. In this causal story, dissidents, however misguided, may feel that public demonstrations and protests against the regime were successful and that economic grievances will be remediated – thereby decreasing the likelihood of an escalation to violent conflict. 

Hence, in regimes with low political opportunity structure, the likelihood of an escalation

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9 Another alternative causal story that can play out in regimes with a low political opportunity structure is that the first step – from economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation to mass dissent – is altogether skipped. Perhaps, citizens in closed societies – those in which civil liberties are consistently violated, elections are severely marred with corruption and repressions, and opposition parties and candidates are repressed or exiled – will choose to not collectively mobilize altogether in fear of government reprisals. In these cases, citizens may choose to take arms violently against the regime directly, rather than first mobilize in mass dissent. In evaluating whether to directly engage in armed conflict against the regime, citizens may base their decision on government military capacity, rather than
to violent civil conflict is less likely in regimes with low coercive government repression (e.g., top-left cell) as compared to regimes with high coercive government repression (e.g., top-right cell). In the following section, I begin with an illustrative example of regimes with low political opportunity structure and low coercive government repression (e.g., top-left cell).

4.3.1 Low Coercive Government Repression

The People’s Republic of China (PRC, henceforth China) provides an illustrative example of the preceding causal story: in nation-states with low political opportunity structures, urban social unrest stemming from basic necessities deprivation is less likely as compared to regimes with high political opportunity structures, and further escalation to violent civil conflict is likewise less likely to occur given low coercive government repression. Despite its economic achievements and broad market reforms in the last two decades, Chinese citizens are still amongst the world’s poorest – and increasingly experiencing widening income inequality, reduction of social welfare and redistributive government policies, and rising unemployment. China and India, for example, hold fifty-four percent of the world’s poorest – meaning that fluctuations and shocks in basic commodity prices have a debilitating effect on these citizens who are among those in the lowest socioeconomic stratus of society (Polaski, 2008). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) – responsible for setting poverty line thresholds in China – has been concerned in the past primarily with the rural poor population and their access to “basic living needs for necessary goods and services under the specific conditions of time, place and social development” (Yan, 2008). Although China’s previous poverty reduction programs have been primarily focused on the rural poor population, recently there has been a growing consensus that urban poverty is on the rise in China – much like the trend in many emerging economies (Chen and Wang, 2001; Fang et al., 2002). As China has made its transition towards a market economy in the 1990s, the focus, and growing concern, over poverty in China has shifted from that of a rural phenomenon to one that threatens a considerable percentage of the urban populace. Shanghai serves as a textbook example of this – recognized for its rapid development and as the dragonhead of China’s economic system (Hussain, 2003; Yan, 2008). Despite the expansion of both its economy and industrial capabilities
– as seen in its double-digit growth rate for fourteen consecutive years and its increasing annual per capita disposable income (i.e., an increase from ¥1075 Chinese Yuan ($137 US Dollars) in 1985 to ¥18,645 Chinese Yuan ($2,375 US Dollars) in 2005) – scholars have ranked Shanghai in the bottom in regards to poverty rates in urban cities within emerging economies (Hussain; 2003; Shanghai Statistical Bureau, 2006; Yan, 2008). Housing subsidies in Shanghai, for example, were reduced substantially, while health coverage decreased from 100 percent coverage by the Chinese government to, as low as, twenty percent for state sector employees and zero for urban workers (Gong and Li, 2003; Li and Piachaud, 2004).

Citizens may fail to observe inflation, trade imbalances or even changes in per-capita income level within their country, but they most certainly will perceive individual-level indictors – the lack of stable housing, drastic fluctuations and shocks in global and domestic food prices, limited access to potable water, and inefficient and unaffordable fuel energy. This is most certainly the case with basic commodity prices – particularly global and domestic food prices. In 2003, for example, China’s grain output dropped to the lowest since 1990 causing a soar in consumer prices in the domestic market in 2004. From July 2007 to July 2008, the price of staple crops doubled, and then plummeted back to low-levels within a four-month period (Zhong, 2009; Lu and Wu, 2011). Food insecurity is not the only individual – level indicator for economic grievances for the Chinese populace. According to an assessment by the United Nations, approximately 34 percent of the rural populace in China has access to only unsafe drinking water supply (Shen, 2006). Chinese access to potable water and clean sanitation is considered one of the critical threats to societal health.

Fearing political backlash from economically-grieved citizens, the Chinese government devised a series of policies to ensure domestic food security and cope with fluctuations and shocks in basic commodity prices – particularly domestic food prices. These policies realized into two groups: policies aimed at production (i.e., input subsidies, subsidies on producer prices, and agriculture infrastructure), and intervention policies implemented after price shocks (i.e., temporary price intervention, consumer subsidies, and grain-export restrictions) (Lu and Wu, 2011). In regards to access to potable water and clean sanitation, the Chinese government created the Water Law of 2002 (Article 54) – defining that “the government at the various levels should implement positive methods to improve drinking water supply” (Shen, 2006). These policies
exemplify the Chinese government’s efforts to focus attention to increasing investments and strengthening management of basic necessitates provisions – such as ensuring food security, and access to potable water and clean sanitation. Despite these policy concessions by the Chinese government, unemployment, rising income inequalities and deprivation of basic necessities has added to the growing political resentments towards the Chinese government. With an emergence of a large number of urban poor – composed primarily of unemployed citizens and urban migrants – the potential of urban social unrest has never been greater for the Chinese government. Yet, as compared to other emerging economies with large segments of its populace holding economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation, China has not seen the widespread mass mobilization of dissent.

To understand under what conditions economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation effects the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent, the political opportunity structure of a given state must be examined. The Chinese regime can be classified as having a closed – or low – political opportunity structure, in which national-level democratic institutions do not exist. The Chinese communist government can be described as regime in which civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field are virtually nonexistent. The urban populations – a majority of which are poverty-stricken – suffer not only from a lack of access to basic necessities, but from serious violations of their civil liberties (Yan, 2008). This urban populace – for example, those living within the Shanghai metropolis – lack the legal right to participate in rule-making, and to participate politically in communist-party elections. The central party election system is often marred with fraud and corruption, while the central organs of the government are outside the political access of largely poverty-stricken urban residents. Essentially, an organized attempt from urban residents outside the control of the party-state apparatus to influence internal government policy-making is strictly forbidden, and many would argue futile (Guo, 2007; Yan, 2008).

Within a regime with a closed – or low – political opportunity structure, as is the case with China, the incidence of mass mobilization of dissent is less likely to occur than in regimes with an open – or high – political opportunity structure. Within the context of China, when public displays of dissatisfaction with government inaction or direct government policies that increase economic grievances do occur, the regime, counterintuitively, has chosen to not respond with coercive
government repression (as in contrast to regimes such as Syrian government under Bashar al-Assad in response to Arab Spring dissenters in 2011). In June 2003, for example, 200 protesters gathered outside of the Shanghai municipal government to protest unjust and unfair legal treatment concerning government-forced acquisition of housing. Another example, in September 2009, urban residents in Shanghai protested against widespread corruption and lack of effective policies to combat dire economic inequalities and grievances (Yan, 2008). In both of these situations, the Chinese government did not respond to these public displays of dissatisfaction with a large-scale repressive response. My theoretical expectation is that the effect of economic deprivation of basic necessities on the likelihood of experiencing mass mobilization of dissent by its citizens is dampened, and that further escalation is less likely – given low coercive government repression in response to any instances of protest, demonstrations or riots. Although the Chinese regime is fully authoritarian China has chosen to respond to dissent, especially those led by students, passively. The response of the Chinese government is not at all surprising in that harsh, repressive responses to protests and demonstrations in a regime with a closed political opportunity structure would lead to more serious political challenges – perhaps through escalation to violent civil conflict – to the current regime by further increasing economic and political grievances.

Although the Chinese government to this point has chosen to respond with low coercive government repression to mass dissent when it does occur – perhaps by offering policy concessions, economic subsidies, and a plethora of public assistance programs, the future of political stability within China is less certain with the transitioning regime under President Xi Jinping. The new regime has attempted to shift from the political and economic opening of the past decade to tightening central party control – with more than 100,000 party members currently under investigation (Bandow, 2015). This suggests that perhaps in the near future, if and when dissent occurs, the current regime may not respond as passively as it has in the past instead choosing to respond with the harsh, brutal security apparatus as a means of thwarting the threat of regime transition – thereby increasing the very thing the regime fears – civil conflict, whether an internal coup or revolution.
4.3.2 High Coercive Government Repression

Within a regime with a closed – or low – political opportunity structure, as is the case with China, the incidence of mass mobilization of dissent is less likely to occur than in regimes with an open – or high – political opportunity structure. Citizens in regimes with an open political opportunity structure are able to publicly express economic and political grievances towards the regime. When analyzing the likelihood of escalation to violent civil conflict from mass dissent, government repressive response when dissenters do, albeit rarely, take the streets must be examined. In the preceding section, China provides an illustrative example of a regime with a closed – or low – political opportunity structure, and a regime that when mass dissent does occur, albeit rarely, has chosen to respond with low coercive government repression. This section seeks to understand how, holding constant a closed political opportunity structure, changing from low coercive government repression to high coercive government effects the likelihood of the nation-state experiencing an escalation to violent civil conflict. In the following section, I continue with an illustrative example of regimes with low political opportunity structure and high coercive government repression (e.g., top-right cell).

As in regimes with with low political opportunity structure and low coercive government repression (e.g., top-left cell), this begs the question of whether mass dissent ever occurs in regimes with low political opportunity structure and high coercive government repression (e.g., top-right cell). The simple answer to this is two-pronged. Firstly, the theoretical expectation is that social unrest is less likely to occur, rather than never occurs under these regimes as compared to regime in which an open political opportunity structure exists. When these regimes do experience mass dissent, the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent violently escalating to civil conflict – whether an internal coup, revolution, or civil war – is more likely when the regime chooses to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. Drawing from the previous theoretical argument chapter, dissidents will choose to escalate from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict when they have complete information on government capacity to repress mass mobilization. Dissenters pay a high cost in mobilizing dissent. Actual occurrences of state repression – a state that chooses to harshly repress its dissidents – both increases already perceived economic and political grievances that dissidents have, while giving dissenters complete information on the capability of
the government to effectively defeat opposition groups and succeeding in opposing an escalation to armed violent conflict. In developing countries, government coercive capacity is often lacking and is rarely enough to completely repress dissent. As such, since dissenters know that the state does not have sufficient capacity to completely repress its citizens – since, the regime has chosen to repress, but mildly or not effectively as necessary to fully thwart dissenters, as is the case in a majority of developing countries – the likelihood of violent escalation is increased. In essence, since dissenters have paid the high cost associated with mass mobilization of dissent, these actors are more likely to rationally choose to escalate to armed violent conflict – figuratively speaking, they have nothing to loose.

A second argument would be that perhaps these regimes – those with low political opportunity structure and high coercive government repression – may not experience mass mobilization altogether in that its citizens do not possess legitimate mechanisms to publically express economic and political grievances against the regime and fear government repressive response to such expressions of dissatisfaction with government policies or similarly government inaction. Instead, these citizens choose to directly engage in violent conflict – sidestepping peaceful demonstrations and protests in favor of violent riots and armed conflict against the regime. I am primarily interested in the causal mechanisms at play from basic necessities deprivation to mass mobilization of dissent, and further under what conditions dissenters will choose to violently escalate such dissent to engaging in civil conflict against the regime – the argument being that coercive government repression explains this escalation. Following from these theoretical arguments, Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (henceforth known as Libya) provides an illustrative example of the causal mechanisms at play.

Leading a military coup against Libya’s aging King Idris I of Libya – accused of utilizing oil money to strengthen familial and tribal alliances at the expense of the populace, Muammar al-Gaddafi took power in 1969 and held a tight grip on power for over four decades. After this revolutionary transition, Gaddafi was proclaimed the “Che Guevara” of Africa – liberator and advocate for Libya’s poverty-stricken populace. However, over the next few decades, he would fail to utilize Libya’s oil wealth to lift Libyans out from poverty. Instead, Libya – under Gaddafi – became a fully authoritarian regime with virtually little civil liberties, lack of free and fair elections (i.e., all partisan elections were banned and carried out on a non-partisan basis), and a
regime in which an even level playing field did not exist (Recknagel, 2011). Gaddafi utilized the vast sums from oil revenues to bolster elite support for his repressive regime and to build a repressive police state. Under the regime, police informants violated the basic civil liberties of the Libyan people as they stalked citizens in government offices, factories and even schools. Citizens opposed to the Gaddafi regime – whether domestically or those living abroad – were assassinated or executed. Under these conditions, the Libyan population – poverty-stricken and fearful of the vast police security apparatus – have rarely mobilized in collective action against the Gaddafi regime. Demands for political and economic remediation from dissidents have often directly manifested in violent forms – whether violent riots, assassination attempts or full-scale, civil war -- as compared to other regimes in the region. In 1993, for example, an assassination attempt on Gaddafi by members of the Libyan Army was crushed by the brutal security apparatus. Likewise, in 1996, the violent, anti-government riot in Tripoli, and in 2006 in Benghazi, were violently repressed by the regime (Recknagel, 2011).

Libya’s macro-economic conditions – decades of poverty-inducing regime policies -- mixed with micro-economic indicators – widespread fluctuations and shocks in basic commodity prices -- would suggest that the country would be marred with mass mobilization. In the case of Libya, however, dissenters chose to engage in violent forms of mass mobilization or directly pick up arms against the regime. Drawing from the previous section, the theoretical argument here is that the effect of basic necessities deprivation on the likelihood of mass dissent is dampened in regimes lacking in basic civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing – which Gaddafi’s Libya presents an exemplary case. Between June 2010 and June 2011, for example, world grain prices doubled – leading to a rippling effect on many regimes across the globe. For several months, several governments experienced demonstrations and protests in urban centers stemming from these economic shocks in global food prices (i.e., Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Nairobi, Kenya and large swaths of the Middle East and North Africa region); while, other regimes seemed to escalate into violent conflict or dissidents chose to directly engage in violent civil conflict rather than first mobilizing publically in nonviolent forms against the regime (i.e., Libya and Afghanistan) (Parenti, 2011).

Libya, for example, experienced violent escalations into riots and civil conflict almost immediately as compared to other regimes in the area – most notably Syria, Egypt and Yemen.
Violent clashes between dissidents and the regime in late 2011 left hundreds, if not thousands, dead and citizens accusing government forces of perpetrating massacres in Benghazi and Tripoli in response to dissident demands for political and economic remediation – mostly violent as compared to other countries (Black and Bowcott, 2011). Whether in the initial, sparse peaceful demonstrations and protests, or violent clashes and riots that closely followed, coercive government repression was brutal and quick. By the end of 2011, reports from leading diplomats reported the use of heavy weaponry by the Gaddafi regime against dissidents and citizens, more generally, and mass killings by mercenaries in Benghazi – Libya’s second largest urban center. In Tobruk, violent riots by armed dissidents were shown destroying government infrastructure and a statute of Gaddafi – demanding the end of the regime – while the airport was essentially closed due to the violence. Meanwhile, security forces attacked al-Bayda as dissidents blocked the airport runway. Reports indicated that Libyan forces under Gaddafi utilized widespread coercive repression initially and that in many ways the response was compared to a bloody massacre (Michael, 2011).

The case of Libya flows well from the theoretical arguments presented previously. Economic grievances stemming from decades of structural, economic inequalities and drastic shocks in global commodity prices – both food and fuel – poised Libya for political instability, yet surprisingly citizens chose not to initiate peaceful demonstrations and protests but rather directly and violently confront the regime. Citizens within regimes with closed political opportunity structure have very little legitimate mechanisms for demanding remediation for failed government policies or inaction in regards to economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation. Further, citizens fear coercive government repression, and so do not want to pay the cost associated with mobilizing against the regime. These regimes – Libya serving as an illustrative example – seek to rule through fear – by keeping dissent at bay by utilizing severe coercive government repression at relatively low cost to themselves. This dynamic between citizens and the regime increases the incentives for dissidents to skip altogether peaceful demonstrations and protests and engage in violent conflict against the regime – since sitting passively has incurred the cost of repression and increased perceived citizen political and economic grievances. Another aspect of this dynamic is that when the regime chooses coercive repression against the little, or altogether nonexistent, incidences of peaceful mass dissent, dissidents are previewed to the
inability of the regime to completely squash challenges to its power – thereby further incentivizing dissidents to violent civil conflict.

In sum, two varying theoretical implications stem from regimes with closed – or low – political opportunity structure – contingent on coercive government repression. Within the low political opportunity structure paradigm, the effect of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation on the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent is less likely compared to regimes with a high political opportunity structure. In both illustrative cases studies – China and Libya, for example – dissenters are less likely to publically demand remediation for failed government policies or perceived inaction of the government towards economic inequalities and grievances. In regimes with low political opportunity structure, citizens lack the avenues to initiate collective action, and mass mobilization is simply not a legitimate mechanism for publically displaying economic and political grievances. The likelihood that violent civil conflict will occur or escalate in the rare cases in which dissenters do take the streets is contingent on government response in utilizing the security apparatus against citizens at large and dissenters more specifically. In the case of China, the regime, at least in the last decade, has chosen to offer policy concessions, economic subsidies, and a plethora of public assistance programs – rather than coercive government repression – in hopes of thwarting urban social unrest that may occur in the future given increasing economic grievances of Chinese citizens, and a further escalation to violent civil conflict – particularly an internal coup or armed revolution. Contrastingly, the Libyan regime under Gaddafi, in hopes of thwarting the spread of urban social unrest within the Middle East and North Africa region to Libyan society, chose to mobilize the government military and security apparatus against its citizens. Although the Libyan regime chose coercive government repression as a means of thwarting urban social unrest, and a further escalation to violent civil conflict, it in actuality increased the likelihood of violent civil conflict – by increasing citizens’ economic and political grievances and lowering the cost for citizens to choose armed rebellion against the regime. This strategic process resulted in the ousting of Gaddafi, while Libya was plunged into a half-decade long, brutal civil war.
4.4 High Political Opportunity Structure, Urban Social Unrest, and Violent Civil Conflict

In this section, I now turn my attention to regimes with high political opportunity structures — regimes in which civil liberties are not often violated, there are free and fair elections, and an even playing field in which opposition parties and candidates can compete against the incumbent regime exists. As Figure 4.1 suggests, these regimes will be more likely to experience urban social unrest stemming from economic grievances, as compared to regimes with low openness in their political opportunity structures (e.g., the bottom-left and bottom-right cells demonstrate this theoretical expectation), but whether these incidences of urban social unrest will escalate to violent civil conflict is contingent on government response to mass dissent — whether to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. In these regimes, collective action and mass mobilization are legitimate mechanism to publically express economic and political grievances against the regime — without fear of government reprisals. Regimes with open political opportunity structures have the choice of responding to mass dissent through low coercive government repression or high coercive government repression, thereby affecting the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict. When regimes choose to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents in efforts to thwart violent escalation to civil conflict, they in actuality increase the likelihood that the regime will experience such an escalation. The theoretical argument here stems from an examination of citizen costs for mobilizing in public dissent against the regime, and the cost of then escalating to violent civil conflict. Many existing models in examining the likelihood of mass dissent and violent civil conflict assume that the cost for citizens mobilizing against the regime to demand remediation for economic grievances is the same whether in developing or developed countries. In many developing countries, however, the choice whether to mobilize against the regime is made by the poorest of the world – those least capable of insulating themselves against fluctuations in basic necessities provision – such as drastic shocks in global or domestic food prices. These citizens often choose to mobilize against the regime as a means of basic survival, and so the benefit outweighs the relative cost in mobilizing. In other words, these citizens have little choice in the face of such dire economic conditions. When confronted with dissidents in developing countries, the choice of the regime to respond to mass dissent through brutal coercive government repression could exasperate already disastrous conditions. Dissenters who have chosen to mobilize against
the regime have done so by paying a cost, and as such government response by mobilizing the security apparatus against dissidents only further highlights and increases existing economic grievances. Dissidents – sensing that they have already paid the cost associated with mass mobilization of dissent and since the government response only has served to confirm their economic grievances – will choose to escalate from mass dissent to violent civil conflict. The theoretical expectation here is that in response to mass mobilization of dissent, regimes which choose to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents increase the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict as compared to regimes who choose to respond passively to mass dissent.

4.4.1 Low Coercive Government Repression

In this section, I continue with an illustrative example of regimes with high political opportunity structure and low coercive government repression (e.g., bottom-left cell). As Figure 4.1 suggests, the theoretical expectation is any given regime with a high political opportunity structure will be more likely to experience urban social unrest, and further the likelihood of violent escalation from mass mobilization of dissent to violent civil conflict (i.e., internal coup, revolution, or civil war) decreases in regimes in which the government chooses to respond to mass dissent with low coercive repression. The Federative Republic of Brazil (henceforth Brazil) provides an illustrative example of the causal mechanisms and theoretical augments at play.

The effects of basic necessities deprivation on the likelihood of a given regime experiencing social unrest is multi-faceted. In many of the social unrest incidences within the past decade, increasing food commodity prices alone were not the only identified grievances of dissenters; many demanded remediation for provisions of broader basic necessities – secure housing, potable water, and stable, household energy. One of the primary basic necessities is access to potable, clean water. Every region of the world has some varying degrees of high water stress – areas in which more than 80 percent of the local water supply is extracted by businesses, farmers, and citizens yearly (Iceland, 2015). These so-called high water stress areas are the most vulnerable to episodic droughts, and a few consecutive years of bad rainfall and poor government management decisions can plunge an area into crisis. In the past decade, Brazil has experienced some of its highest water stress since its inception. Parts of southeastern Brazil (i.e., cities of São Paulo, Rio
de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte), for example, have experienced the worst drought in over 84 years – with 40 million people at risk. In São Paulo, the five reservoirs in the Cantareira system, providing half of the city’s potable water, are at 13 percent capacity – dangerously low to sustain over 20 million residents that live in the greater São Paulo metropolis (Postel, 2015). Many residents in São Paulo have gone over a few days to a week without drinking water, while others have fled the city altogether – creating a new term of “water refugees.” Another area of great concern is that of “clandestine drilling” in which residents and businesses, worried about government rationing, have begun to drill their own groundwater wells – further worsening the drought’s long-term impact, increasing water pollution of aquifers, and raising public health concerns (Garcia-Navarro, 2015). Although droughts over the last few years in southeastern Brazil have contributed to water stress levels, many Brazilians place blame on corrupt government officials and inefficient government policies.

Brazil, with over twelve percent of the world’s renewable freshwater, is often called the “Saudi Arabia of water” (Postel, 2015). São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte are not desert cities (e.g., in São Paulo, average yearly rainfall is 57.3 inches – compared to just 15 inches in Los Angeles) (Postel, 2015). Despite this, water reserves and accessibility is at dangerously low-levels – some arguing lowest-level in over eight decades. To many Brazilians, government action and corruption are primarily to blame. Government officials have failed to take steps to curtail the impact of the recent droughts, and instead enacted policies that have served only to exacerbate an already dire situation (e.g., sending military to secure water access in poverty-stricken areas) (Postel, 2015). Many Brazilians cite recent elections, the hosting of the World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympic Games of 2016, and the Petrobas bribery scandal under the Rousseff government, as just political distractions that government officials utilize to procrastinate and not provide viable policy solutions to the water crisis. Government policies swing between populist Bolivarian ideals to placate the large working class, and the deregulated policies intended to appease private and cooperate industry – but neither has made an impact at solving water security issues that Brazil faces. Thousands of Brazilians took to the streets throughout 2013 and 2014 demanding remediation for economic and political grievances – many stemming from government waste and corruption, lack of government provision of basic necessities, and
allegations of police brutality – specifically linked to water accessibility and domestic food prices (Watts, 2013; Hawes, 2015).

Brazil is far from the only country at risk of high water stress stemming from years of droughts. In northern China, for example, hydrologists have warned that China’s future is in danger of severe high water stress. Much like California and much of the western United States, northern China is relatively arid. Due to flood irrigation to produce significant amounts of wheat and skyrocketing water use by industry, China is poised to be in danger of lack of accessibility to potable water. The Chinese government, aware of the effects of a lack of access to potable water on civil stability, have enacted several government policies aimed at improving efficient water use, while placing caps on water demands (Iceland, 2015). Contrastingly, regimes in the Middle East and North African region, also facing severe droughts and crop failures that stem from drastic change in water supply, have failed to implement policies that not only seek to manage water accessibility, but food insecurity among other basic necessities. From 2006 to 2011, Syria – often called the “breadbasket of the Middle East” – suffered its worst drought, and subsequent crop failure ever. For example, the Grace satellite data revealed that the Tigris and Euphrates rivers had the second fastest rate of groundwater storage loss on Earth (Iceland, 2015). Although many factors – political, ethnic and religious – have contributed to the ongoing Syrian civil war, scholars argue that “the decrease in water availability, water mismanagement, agricultural failures, and related economic deterioration contributed to population dislocations and the migration of rural communities to nearby cities” (Gleick, 2014). These factors mixed with continued urban unemployment, extreme economic inequalities, and food shortages have led to the mass social unrest, and in some cases, further escalation to violent civil conflict (Gleick, 2014). What is of future concern is that the global water conditions are likely to deteriorate rather than improve over the next few decades as large populations and growing economies place an increasing demand on water aquifers. Governments must offer its citizens sustainable water management policies, and natural and engineered water infrastructure investments to provide for the basic necessities of their citizens. Failure to do so may unleash waves of urban social unrest, and depending of government response, violent escalation to civil conflict.

Brazil has not only faced severe water scarcity, but has been a textbook example of the effects of rising economic inequality. Following the announcement of Brazil’s successful bid for the
Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup in 2014 and for the Summer Olympic Games of 2016, the Brazilian government created and implemented the Unidade de Policia Pacificadora (UPP, translated as Pacification Police Units) program with the objective of securing and cleansing large slum cities (known as favelas), predominantly controlled by gangs of armed drug traffickers and inconveniently bordering wealthy, prominent neighborhoods and sporting stadiums. To the Brazilian government, this was seen as the first-step solution in dealing with the urban cycle of violence that has plagued Brazil’s inner cities for decades, particularly in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Within seven years, the Brazilian government had effectively pacified over three dozen favelas and slum districts through forced relocation, securitization, and government-planned razing (Peet-martel, 2014). While at times these pacification policies and programs were implemented peacefully and, in general, successfully (e.g., Lins favela and the Zona Norte of Rio de Janeiro), other slum districts and territories have experienced widespread, violent clashes between UPP forces and residents (Peet-martel, 2014). In the pacification of the Complexo do Alemão favela, for example, 1,300 state and federal police surrounded the slum district in an effort to secure the favela. Known as the PAN Massacre of June 2007, the incident ended with nineteen residents killed (Peet-martel, 2014). The residents of these slum districts and territories are, in many regards, the poorest segment of Brazilian society – with limited or no access to potable water and stable, household energy. In Manaus, a remotely-located, jungle city of two million, the Brazilian government spent an estimated $3.6 billion to renovate and build sporting stadiums, including the Arena Amazonia, criticized for being the most glaring example of government waste (Manfred, 2014). Yet according to Brazilian government sources, approximately 20.2 percent of residents of Manaus lack basic, suitable plumbing. Nationally, 15.1 percent of Brazilian children under the age of four-years old live in districts where sewage still runs outdoors (Peet-martel, 2014). In 2009-10, violent confrontations between favela residents and Brazilian paramilitary police escalated with the destruction of a paramilitary police helicopter by armed residents and guerilla militia using surface-to-air missiles (Peet-martel, 2014).

In 2013-14, government waste and corruption, lack of government provision of basic necessities, and allegations of police brutality were among the stated grievances of the Brazilian Spring dissenter – in which thousands of Brazilians took to the streets throughout 2013 and 2014 demanding remediation for economic and political grievances (Watts, 2013). In 2015-2016, a
series of mass demonstrations and protests culminated in *Operação Lava Jato* (translated Operation Car Wash) – an investigation of the state-controlled energy company Petrobras for allegations of a money laundering scheme – and impeachment proceedings against President Dilma Rousseff over charges of manipulating government accounts (Watts, 2013). These incidents are not isolated events; in South Africa, over 20,000 slum district residents mobilized against the state, following the *KwaZulu-Natal Elimination and Prevention of Reemergence of Slums Act of 2007* – which sought to eliminate slums in the province of *KwaZulu-Natal* and initiate forced relocation programs for its resident prior to the *FIFA World Cup of 2010*.

Brazil serves as an illustrative example of the effect of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation on the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent. In contrast to regimes with closed political opportunity structure, Brazil is relatively open – with protections of civil liberties, free and fair elections, and generally an even playing field. Citizens can publically display their dissatisfaction with government policies, inaction, or corruption in regards to economic grievances. In these regimes, the theoretical expectation is that in the presence of economic grievances, citizens will choose to mobilize publically against the regime. From 2013 to 2016, thousands of Brazilians have taken to the streets demanding remediation for economic and political grievances – with no end in sight for mass mobilization of dissent. The Brazilian government for its part has responded to these public displays of dissent with low coercive government repression. It may be true that the Brazilian government responded to dissidents with some level of coercive control – the use of tear gas canisters to clear the streets, for example. However, for the most part, the Brazilian government has chosen to appease dissidents through policy reforms. One example of the Brazilian government response is the 2013 National Pact offered by former President Dilma Rousseff and following the 2013 mass demonstrations – in which the government promised political reform, changing corruption charges from a misdemeanor to a felony, an increased investment of R$ 50 Billion Reais ($23 Billion US Dollars) in city transportation, and an increased spending on health and education (Pitts, 2015). Despite waves of urban social unrest, which will likely continue as the Brazilian government grapples with its systematic economic problems, Brazil in contrast to many countries in the Middle East and North African region, for example, has not seen an escalation to violent civil conflict – whether internal coup, civil war, or revolution. This follows well from the theoretical expectations
presented in the previous chapter – mainly that the likelihood of mass dissent escalating to violent civil conflict is mediated by government response to mass dissent.

4.4.2 High Coercive Government Repression

In the preceding section, I elucidate the causal mechanisms that explain under what conditions government response to mass dissent can decrease the likelihood of violent civil conflict (e.g., the bottom-left cell). This section seeks to understand how, holding constant an open political opportunity structure, changing from low coercive government repression to high coercive government effects the likelihood of the nation-state experiencing an escalation to violent civil conflict. In this section, I continue with an illustrative example of regimes with high political opportunity structure and high coercive government repression (e.g., bottom-right cell). Within regimes with open political opportunity structures, the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent against the regime is more likely as compared to regimes with closed political opportunity structures. Whether the regime will then experience an escalation to violent civil conflict is contingent on government choice to mobilize its security apparatus against dissidents who have taken to the streets in protest. Regimes who choose high coercive repression against dissidents are more likely to experience an escalation to violent civil conflict – whether an internal coup, revolution, or civil war – as compared to regimes who choose low coercive repression. Following from these theoretical arguments, the Republic of Yemen (henceforth known as Yemen) provides an illustrative example of the causal mechanisms at play.

Broadly speaking, the Middle East and North African (MENA) and Sub-Saharan African regions provide a glimpse of how food insecurity, water scarcity, secure housing and drastic shocks and fluctuations in global and domestic commodity prices (i.e., fuel, energy and food prices) increase the likelihood of mass dissent and further violent civil conflict. One of the direst regional problems is that of water scarcity. The World Resources Institute (WRI), in a first-of-its-kind analysis released in August 2015, provides scholars with scores and rankings for future water stress levels (a measure of competition and depletion of surface water) based on an collection of climate models and socioeconomic scenarios (Luo, Young and Reig, 2015).10 The report found thirty-three

countries as most water-stressed (those scoring over a 4.0 in a 5.0 scale in all sectors including industrial, agriculture, and domestic components). Of those thirty-three countries, twenty-seven are within the broader MENA and Central Asian regions. Nine of the countries considered the most extremely stressed (those with a score of 5.0 of 5.0) are in the MENA region (e.g., Bahrain, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Lebanon). The region can be argued as the most water insecure in the world, drawing heavily upon groundwater and desalinated sea water (Luo, Young and Reig, 2015). In Syria, for example, the rise in temperature coupled with severe drought in varying regions could lead to the desertification of 60 percent of the country (Devlin, 2014). In Egypt, according to government statistics, the country’s annual water resources have dropped by an average of 660 cubic meters a person in 2013 (as compared to 2,500 cubic meters in 1947) (Vidal, 2015).

Water scarcity is caused by a myriad of factors. Despite regional arid conditions, low rainfall and high levels of evaporation, many blame inefficient usage and management – such as the usage of old water networks, severe population growth, pollution, and lack of appropriate legal, political and economic frameworks (Pedraza and Heinrich, 2016). Inefficient irrigation currently consumes 85 percent of the region’s water – resulting in the depletion of about two-thirds of groundwater supplies since the 1980s in Saudi Arabia (Devlin, 2014). Increasing water insecurity in this region cannot be separated from contentious politics. The relationship between water scarcity and contentious politics – whether mass demonstrations and protests or violent civil conflict – has been analyzed through the lens of climate change. Hendrix and Salehyan (2012), for example, analyzed how deviations from normal rainfall patterns affect the likelihood for citizens to participate in contentious politics – whether demonstrations, riots, strikes, and communal conflict – against the state. Collard (2014) even suggests that water security is at the forefront of the Islamic State’s (IS) strategy to maintain control of Iraq and Syria – beginning with the capture of the Tabqa dam in Northern Syria in 2014 and offensives to capture Mosul and Haditha dams in Iraq. Controlling the Tigris and Euphrates river basins would essentially control 95 percent of water flow and subsequently food production for the entire southern portion of Iraq – including Baghdad. According to the WRI, for 2010, Yemen ranked eleventh with an overall water stress score of 4.76 out of 5.0, Libya ranked twelfth with an overall water stress score of 4.74 out of 5.0, and Syria ranked twenty-fourth with an overall water stress score of 3.86 out of 5.0 – all of which have
experienced an escalation to violent civil war in the last few years. The WRI further claims that water insecurity was a key factor in the 2011 Syrian conflict – contributing to the initial urban social unrest that sparked the country’s subsequent civil war (Maddocks, Young and Reig, 2015). The authors forward that water shortages coupled with chronic mismanagement of water resources forced 1.5 million people to move to urban areas – further destabilizing Syria (Maddocks, Young and Reig, 2015).  

Comparably, Yemen has one of the highest rates of exhaustion of water resources. In the Sana’a basin in Yemen, the groundwater table has fallen nearly six meters (approximately 20 feet) per year – so much so that the Yemeni government had considered moving the capital city (Vidal, 2015). The total renewable water resources are 2.5 billion cubic meters per year, while the demand is estimated at 3.4 billion cubic meters per year – leaving 900 million cubic meters covered from deep aquifers. High groundwater aquifers depletion rates – at one to seven meters per year – coupled with highest rates in population growth in the world and severe drought puts Yemen in a dire situation (Glass, 2010). Water accessibility is most drastic in urban areas (World Bank, 2006). Although the Yemeni water crisis is partially due to high population growth and vulnerability to climate change, many place the responsibility for the current water crisis on misguided government developmental and agricultural policies and the lack of law enforcement in regulating water usage. Glass (2010) argues that the Yemeni government failed to prevent the sinking of wells and regulation of groundwater extraction in the 1970s and 1980s following the intense growth in the Yemeni market as Yemenis began migrating to neighboring countries to work in the booming oil industry. Instead, the regime implemented policies that encouraged excessive and unnecessary water usage, including low-interest loans, cheap diesel pricing, and public investment for surface irrigation causing Yemeni citizens to be wasteful with their water usage. Secondly, groundwater wells are often drilled illegally directly into aquifers without appropriate law enforcement. The importance of efficient water management cannot be overstated – without water, crops cannot be grown, which can further exacerbate basic necessities deprivation through food scarcity. The World Bank in 2006 stated that Yemen was "the single

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11 For a more extensive discussion on water scarcity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, please see Morris (1997), Dolatyar and Gray (2000), and Abdel-Samad and Khoury (2006).
12 Glass (2010) and Ward (2014) provides an extensive discussion on water scarcity and crisis in Yemen.
largest development challenge in the Middle East” – as Yemeni citizens faced the drastic rise in the cost of staple foods and water insecurity.

The relationship between food scarcity and water insecurity and contentious politics has a long history, particularly in Yemen. Increased water scarcity and widespread food insecurity following the influx of Somalian refugees from the six-year Somalian Civil War and from years of natural disasters were among the economic and political grievances of Yemeni dissenters in the Yemeni Revolution of 2010-11 (Jirdeh, 2015). In the 1990s, the Yemeni government placed import and export bans in order to stimulate economic growth at the expense of Yemeni citizens. In 1996, there was an important ban on fruits, vegetables and coffee – meaning importing these products was illegal (Glass, 2010). After the economic crisis of the early 2000s, the price of basic commodities – such as staple foods – had arisen disproportionally making it difficult for the Yemeni government to import food staples for its bulging populace (Kenyon, 2008). According to Abdul Rahman Al-Iryani, the Yemeni Minister of Water and Environment, much of the continuous politics, violent conflict and militancy is over resource scarcity – whether land or water (Kasinof, 2009). Researchers from Sana’a University, for example, stated that between 70 to 80 percent of all rural conflicts in Yemen were related to water scarcity. Khalid Al-Thour, a geology professor at Sana’a university, added that according to recent analytic reports Sana’a groundwater wells would dry within a few years – further exacerbating the dire situation. In Yemen’s third largest city, Taiz, residents are allowed access to public water tanks once every 45 days (Glass, 2010). The lack of access to basic necessitates – particularly water and food security – has been at the forefront of motivations for Yemeni dissenters throughout the early 2000s – culminating in the Arab Spring demonstrations in 2011.

Yet, as previously argued, the effect of basic necessities deprivation is conditioned on the political opportunity structure that exists within a given state. Yemen, likewise, provides an illustrative example of the how the openness of the political opportunity structure within a given state alters the effect of basic necessities deprivation on the likelihood of urban social unrest. In 1980s and 1990s, Yemen experienced rapid democratization, opening its political system to mass democratic participation by its largely, poverty-stricken citizens. Relative to regimes with fully closed political opportunity structures, particularly those within the MENA region, Yemen provided the beginnings of free and fair elections and an even playing field. In this way, Yemen
provides an interesting example of how democratization can increase political instability and increase the likelihood that citizens may publically take to the streets to make demands when economic inequalities and grievances become dire. In the late 1980s, Yemen was two distinct regimes: the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) ruled the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY, henceforth South Yemen) in South Yemen since 1967, while North Yemen was under President Ali Abdullah Saleh as the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR, henceforth North Yemen) since 1978. During the 1970s and 1980s, South Yemen aligned itself with the Soviet Union and provided its citizens with good government services, little economic inequality and a general rule of law. By the late 1980s, Saleh had negotiated unification with then South Yemeni leader Ali Salim al-Baydh, hoping to initiate democratization reforms in North Yemen (Phillips, 2008). In 1990 and after the 1989 unification of South and North Yemen, Saleh announced his intentions to initiate democratization in Yemen – through widespread implementation of democracy programs intended on opening elections and initiating parliamentary reforms. One of those programs allowed for the formation of the Yemen Congregation for Reform party (known as Islah, or translated as Reform or Repair in Arabic), unintentionally incorporating two problematic ideological movements for the Yemeni regime into its political system– the Muslim Brotherhood, which was introduced by expelled teachers from Egypt and Syrian, and Salafis, which comprised of Saudi-Arabian educated teachers (Rugh, 1997). In 1997, for example, Yemen held its second parliamentary election – supervised by the Supreme Election Commission, which was established by law as an independent body with balanced political representation. Further, two independent Yemeni nongovernmental organizations, the Arab Democratic Institute and Election Monitoring Committee, monitored for voter fraud through thousands of volunteers throughout the country (Rugh, 1997). The 1990s and beginning of 2000s was marked by what seemed to be a transition into democracy – with some resemblance of free and fair elections, protection of basic civil liberties, and an overall leveling of the playing field. This is not to say that Yemen provides a flawless example of a regime with fully open opportunity structure, but rather that the 1980s and 1990s were marked with an gradual opening of the political opportunity structure. This allowed citizens to mobilize publically against the regime in the early 2000s demanding remediation for basic necessities deprivation. In countries with fully closed political opportunity structures, citizens are less likely to mobilize publically against the regime – fearing government reprisals. Prior to democratization in the 1980s and 1990s,
albeit a slow transition, the Yemeni citizens – much like citizens under other regimes with a completely closed political opportunity structure – did not take to the streets against the regime demanding remediation and policy concessions for basic necessities deprivation. It was the growing economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation coupled with an opening in the political opportunity structure of the regime that explains why Yemeni citizens publically mobilized against the regimes throughout the 2000s and most drastically, in the Arab Spring of 2011.

The subsequent escalation from the Yemeni Revolution to the Yemeni Civil War in 2015 is a multifaceted story involving longstanding economic and political grievances, drastic shocks in basic commodity prices and state repression. The early 2000s were marked by decreasing oil exports following a continued downturn in domestic oil production and drastic decrease in global oil prices. As dissidents continued to publically demand remediation through demonstrations and protests, the Yemeni government was faced with a choice of providing policy concessions as a means of appeasing dissenter or mobilizing the security apparatus to repress dissidents. Dependent on government revenues from oil exports, the Yemeni government removed energy and food commodity subsidies, relaxing price controls on a variety of basic commodities. In 2010 - 11, Yemeni citizens, in response, continued to mobilize against the regime, publically displaying their dissatisfaction with the government response to the dire economic situation. By July 2014, the Yemeni government had increased the price of gasoline by approximately 60 percent and diesel by over 95 percent – in an effort to offset declining government oil revenues; while food commodity prices had climbed by over 20 percent within a few weeks (Kulcsar, 2015). Further, Yemeni farmers struggled to plough their fields as global energy prices matched highly-inflated black market rates. The Yemeni government – with its declining government revenues – was incapable of meeting the demands for remediation by Yemeni dissenters through subsidization, price controls or other economic policies to offset the spiraling basic commodity prices. As frustrations mounted, the Yemeni government initiated rounds of government repression in order to quell the uprisings – only exacerbating an already dire economic and political situation (al-Hajj, 2012; Carothers and Youngs, 2015). The government choice to utilize coercive repression against dissidents only increased economic and political grievances of dissenters – making an escalation to violent civil conflict all the more appealing. Opposition and militant groups often offer the
promise of basic provision of basic necessities as a means of recruiting citizens to join the fight against the regime. Yemen spiraled downward – from urban social unrest to a costly, deadly civil war. Unmistakably, mass demonstrations and protests alone are not the only responses to economic and political grievances – an escalation to armed, violent conflict can be a reaction to denied demands for remediation for government provision of basic necessities. Yemen illustrates the complex interplay between drastic fluctuations in basic commodity prices, urban social unrest, and further escalation to armed, violent conflict.

4.5 Conclusion

Though traditional explanations of conflict – whether political, military, ethnic or religious factors – play a role in explaining the likelihood of contentious politics, in this case study analysis, I have argued that economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivations is at the core of why citizens choose to mobilize publically against their government and subsequently potentially choose to take up arms. The argument presented here is that citizens when faced with economic grievances – such as water scarcity, food shortages, housing insecurity and drastic fluctuations in basic commodity prices – will mobilize against the government, conditioned on the openness of the political opportunity structure. The likelihood that urban social unrest will then escalate to violent civil conflict is contingent on the government response towards dissenters – whether to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents or to offer policy concession as a means of appeasing these economic grievances. In the next chapter, I analyze the results of the pooled, large–N empirical analysis that substantiates the causal story explained here – from basic necessities deprivation to violent civil conflict.
CHAPTER 5

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

This dissertation forwards a two-step process that relates global food prices to violent civil conflict in developing countries – incorporating political opportunity structures, urban social unrest, coercive government repression. The first portion argues that global food prices effect the likelihood of urban social unrest, but that this effect is moderated by the broad protection of civil liberties, the presence of free and fair elections and an even playing field (Levitsky and Way, 2010). The second portion of this causal story suggests that incidences of urban social unrest will escalate to violent civil conflict in developing countries in which the regime chooses to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. To test these hypotheses, I create a time-series, cross-national dataset that brings together myriad of measures – from global food prices to violent civil conflict. The temporal domain of this study is 1960 - 2009, though the availability of the PRIO Urban Social Disturbance in Africa and Asia variables restrict some of the models to the period of 1960 - 2007 (Urdal and Hoelscher, 2012).

5.1 Explaining Urban Social Unrest:
Research Design

This research agenda is interested in examining under what conditions public dissatisfaction with government responses and policies regarding basic commodity price shocks and fluctuations explains violent civil conflict – incorporating urban social unrest, political opportunity structures and coercive government repression. In an ideal research situation, I would test the hypotheses presented in the preceding theoretical chapter with country-level, monthly data for all developing countries, as well as utilize a domestic food price indicator, rather than a global food price indicator. Monthly data would be ideal in that it would allow me to gain leverage on how sharp fluctuations and shocks to food prices, whether global or domestic, influence the likelihood of urban social unrest within the same month. The argument here being that citizens do not wait a

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13 Levitsky and Way (2010) treat competitive authoritarianism as countries in which one of the following is violated: civil liberties, free and fair elections, or an even playing field. For complete list of criteria, please see the appendix.
year before taking to the streets demanding remediation for economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation, but rather the mass mobilization of dissent occurs within a shorter time span. Secondly, domestic food price indicators would be superior when analyzing the effect of basic commodity price shocks on domestic social unrest, rather than relying on global food price. The argument here is that perhaps global food price indicators do not translate well across regimes, and as such, domestic-level indicators would be a more precise measures. Unfortunately, the availability of country-level, monthly data for all developing countries with a domestic-level food price indicator, to the best of my knowledge, does not exist.

As such, following Hendrix and Haggard (2015) empirically, I create a time-series cross-national dataset from the PRIO Urban Social Disturbance in Africa and Asia (henceforth USDAA) database (Urdal and Hoelscher, 2012). The unit-of-analysis is the city-year. The major advantage of city-level data is that the analysis is on urban social unrest. While this provides a step forward, there are certain caveats regarding the availability of relevant and comparable time-series data at the city-level. Due to the lack of reliable city-level data, I use national-level measures to operationalize some of my explanatory and control variables. While the validity of nationally aggregated data as indicators of city-level conditions is questionable, I assume that the measures included also reflect conditions in the major urban areas and as such should have some validity.

Despite these developing countries having significant agricultural sectors, the economies of most in the USDAA dataset are driven by urban-based manufacturing or urban service sectors and that the national economic data reflect this urban economic activity (Webb and Block, 2012). The political and economic openness variables may be of less concern as they theoretically will have equal influence in all parts of the country. Although this raises ecological fallacy concerns, I follow the work of Hendrix and Haggard (2015) and include city fixed effects as a means of mitigating some of these concerns of unmodeled unit heterogeneity. These estimators eliminate the cross-sectional elements from the data, and reported coefficient thus reflect longitudinal changes within units (Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). Although not ideal, I believe that what is gained from analyzing urban social unrest at the city-level outweighs the concerns over ecological fallacy. This specification allows for the theoretical focus on how economic grievances is associated with

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intertemporal changes in food prices that are then associated with declining provision of basic needs and increased perceptions of economic grievances.

Secondly, although data representing all developing countries would be ideal, I likewise follow Hendrix and Haggard (2015) empirically and utilize the USDAA database, which limits the countries of research to Asia and Africa. The focus on Africa and Asia is ideal given my theoretical focus on populations who are deprived of their basic needs. According to the FAO (2013), 92% of the world’s food-insecure population are in Africa and Asia (Urdal and Hoelscher, 2012). The theoretical story being that economic shocks will be felt most by the poorest of society as they are the least likely to be capable of insulating themselves against such drastic fluctuations. Sharp increases in global basic commodity prices or soaring unemployment, for example, can disproportionately affect the ability of the poorest of society to ensure their basic survival.

The USDAA data were coded from electronic news reports in the Keesing’s Record of World Events (KRWE) and covers 55 major cities — 23 in Sub-Saharan Africa and 32 in Central and East Asia — in 49 different countries from 1960 – 2009. The KRWE covers significant events in all countries of the world, and their sources include regional news media in multiple languages (including German, French, and Spanish). Their broad source base helps reduce reporting bias likely to be present in major English-language news sources. The data includes events that are not typically covered in standard conflict datasets, ranging from nonviolent demonstrations and protests to riots, organized armed conflict and terrorism. The USDAA compares favorably with the national level event counts for riots, protests, and demonstrations in the more commonly used Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive (Banks, 2011). Although a comparison presents some inherent challenges due to the different resolution of the dataset, Urdal and Hoelscher (2012) find that the two event datasets to be in general agreement with a correlation of almost 0.5 over the entire period (for further comparison, see Urdal and Hoelscher, 2012).

For Asia, the USDAA covers all capital cities with a population of 100,000 or more in 2005, covering the area from Iran in the west to Japan in the east, excluding the Middle East. In addition, the largest noncapital cities of Pakistan (Karachi) and India (both Calcutta and Mumbai) are included, as are the two former capital cities Almaty (Kazakhstan) and Saigon (South Vietnam) and the capitals of Tibet (Lhasa) and Taiwan (Taipei). For Africa, the USDAA coded at least one city with a population of above 1 million in 2005 for each Sub-Saharan African country. For most countries, the city selected was the capital. However, for three countries we selected former capitals with populations considerably greater than the de jure capitals, namely Lagos (Nigeria), Dar el Salaam (Tanzania), and Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire) (Urdal and Hoelscher, 2012). For a complete list of cities, please see the appendix.
5.1.1 Dependent and Independent Variables

Following Hendrix and Haggard (2015), the dependent variable, *Urban Social Unrest*, is derived from event narratives in the USDAA database. I create two indicators that measure urban social unrest – one that precludes violence, and a second that includes incidences of violence. The first indicator, *Nonviolent Social Unrest*, includes nonviolent, organized demonstration and spontaneous protests. The second indicator for urban social unrest is *Violent Social Unrest*, which includes incidences with violence, such as violent riots. Protests and demonstrations refer to distinct, continuous, and coordinated actions by members of a distinct “other” group against government authorities. While riots refer to the same phenomenon, but with the presence of violence (Urdal, 2008). Since a portion of my theoretical argument focuses on the escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict, I forward a second operationalization of urban social unrest that precludes the presence of violence, *Nonviolent Social Unrest*. I find that the results are robust in models using either *Violent Social Unrest* and *Nonviolent Social Unrest*. There is a significant heterogeneity with respect to the prevalence of demonstrations and riots in my sample: Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, experienced only one nonviolent demonstration over a 50-year period, while in New Delhi an average of 1.7 nonviolent demonstrations per year occurred (an average of 2.3 if violent riots are included). The mean value of *Violent Social Unrest* in my data is 0.7 incidences per year, while the mean value of *Nonviolent Social Unrest* is 0.5 incidences per year (a majority of demonstrations and protests occurring without violence). At least more than one event occurred in 30.47% of the city-year observations and of these events 80.2% are nonviolent in nature. I code both *Violent Social Unrest* and *Nonviolent Social Unrest* with a one-year lead thus equivalent to a one-year lag for all other covariates.

The overall theoretical argument is that populations in which basic necessities are not being met are more likely to express economic grievances towards their government by engaging in demonstrations and protests. Food prices are helpful economic indicators of individual financial well-being and potential economic grievances towards government. Fluctuations in food market

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16 The city-year counts are compiled by summing the total of “ptypes” from the USDA A. The following narratives created the *Nonviolent Social Unrest* variable: 60 (organized demonstration) and 62 (spontaneous demonstration).

17 The following narratives created the *Violent Social Unrest* variable: 50 (organized violent riot), 51 (spontaneous violent riot), 60 (organized demonstration), and 62 (spontaneous demonstration). See appendix for “ptypes” narratives.
prices are common, although recent fluctuations have been severe. Much like previous food crises, the recent price fluctuations have been in large part due oil prices, investor speculation, emerging market consumption and declining agricultural productivity in many developing countries (Mitchell, 2008). While through the 1960s food prices were declining, the early 1970s witnessed the highest food prices due to significant increases in oil prices. These increases affected the costs of inputs and transportation, and a fall in production of major food exporters – the United States, Canada, and Argentina. Subsequently, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, periods of high food prices were due to weak US crop production and Soviet purchases. The first half of 2000s saw an economic boom and spiraling increase in food prices during the international food crises of 2007–08 and 2010–11 (Hendrix and Haggard, 2015). Recent work on food prices and protest generally use international commodity market price data and price indices, usually either FAO or the IMF food price index (Leblang and Bernhard, 2011; Smith, 2014). In order to model global food prices, I follow Hendrix and Haggard (2015) and use the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Food Price Index (FPI) (UNCTAD, 2013). Since the index is based on prices in current US dollars, I use the deflated index, \textit{FPI Deflated}, forwarded by the authors, which deflates the index using the \textit{US GDP} deflator (Heston, Summers and Aten, 2012). This index includes staple grains, sugars, meats and vegetable oilseeds and is taken from the trading desks at the relevant exchanges, such as Bangkok and Chicago. All three indices reflect trade volume-weighted values for similar baskets of commodities and as such are highly correlated. The advantage of using the UNCTAD index is that it provides a larger temporal coverage, while coverage for the FAO index begins at 1990 and the IMF index at 1980.

I argue that the effect of global food prices on the likelihood of urban social unrest is conditional on the presence of civil liberties, free and fair elections and an even playing field. This concept draws from the work of Levitsky and Way (2010) on \textit{competitive authoritarianism}, regimes that combine electoral competition with varying degrees of authoritarianism. In these

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19 Hendrix and Haggard (2015) found that the UNCTAD and FAO indices are correlated at $r = .95$ and the UNCTAD and IMF at $r = .97$.

20 Due to the data limitations at this time, I utilize global food prices as a proxy for domestic food prices, which is a weakness of this research agenda. Future research could seek to utilize a domestic-level measure of food prices rather than global food price measures in order to more accurately represent national-level economic conditions.
regimes, competition is real, but unfair. It is marred with electoral manipulation, unfair media access, abuse of state resources, and varying degrees of harassment and violence skewed the playing field in favor of incumbents. The previous assumption was that these regimes were moving in a democratizing direction or were *transitional* democracies. Levitsky and Way (2010) argue that these regimes rather than being conceptualized as *partial* or *incomplete* democracies, should be conceptualized as a distinct, nondemocratic regime type: *competitive authoritarianism*. Previous research on social unrest primarily utilize traditional measurements of regime type (e.g., Freedom House, and Polity IV) (Leblang and Bernhard, 2011; Smith, 2014; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015) as a means of measuring regime or to serve as proxies for a variation of civil and political liberties conceptualizations. Levitsky and Way (2010) argue that relying on measures from Freedom House and Polity IV, the most widely used measures for regime type, fails to provide researchers transparent, consistent and falsifiable coding schemes for countries across cases and regions. Consider the Polity index, which is disaggregated into five components: competitiveness of participation, regulation of participation, competitiveness of executive recruitment, openness of executive recruitment, and constraints on executive. Although these components are described at length in the Polity codebook, it is difficult to say precisely and transparently how a given country would be coded in a particular year through the stated aggregation principles (Coppedge et al., 2011). More concerning, the Polity measure is often used as a proxy for civil liberties. Although the concept of civil liberties (or the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens) is tucked into the disaggregated form of the score, the coders specifically do not measure civil liberties and say so in the codebook.\footnote{See Coppedge et al. (2011) for a full discussion on the usage of Freedom House and Polity IV measures.} The problem is straightforward: regimes with serious civil liberties violations do not meet procedural minimum standards for democracy, but may be in fact included in the Polity measure most utilized by researchers as a proxy for civil liberties. Further, the Freedom House’s *partly free* measurement, which catches all cases that fall between democracy and full authoritarianism, fails to capture the multidimensional nature of democracy – in that there are multiple ways to be partially democratic. For example, whereas Latvia the main nondemocratic feature was the denial of citizenship to people of Russian descent, in El Salvador, it was the military’s tutelary power and severe human rights violations (Levitsky and Way, 2010).

Following Levitsky and Way (2010), I measure presence of civil liberties, free and fair
elections and an even playing field directly, hoping to maximize measurement validity. Rather than relying on preexisting datasets that were not designed to measure Levitsky and Way’s (2010) competitive authoritarianism and often whose measurement validity is questioned (e.g., Freedom House, and Polity IV), I utilize indicators that more closely approximate these concepts. These measurements are derived from the Varieties in Democracy (henceforth V-Dem) database, hosted by the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden; and the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame, USA. The V-Dem indicators better conceptualize and measure democracy into seven high-level principle of democracy, which are then disaggregated to dozens of lower-level components of democracy (i.e., regular elections, judicial independence, and direct democracy) – providing disaggregated indicators for each conception and each component. Each indicator is coded by multiple country experts, generally about five. A single country will generally be coded by a dozen or more experts, each working on different facets of the questionnaire. To date, V-Dem has engaged in collaboration with over 2,500 country experts. I measure civil liberties through two indicators: Liberal Democracy Index and Physical Liberties Index. Each operationalize concepts of civil liberties forwarded by Levitsky and Way (2010). For the conceptualization of free and fair elections, I utilize two indicators: Electoral Component Index and Electoral Democracy Index. Lastly, for the conceptualization of an even playing field, I utilize two indicators: Expanded Freedom of Expression Index and Political Liberties Index. These indicators are ordinalized versions of the V-Dem original indices which ranged from 0 to 1. One can interpret 0.0 as Autocratic, 0.33 as Electoral Authoritarian, 0.67 as Minimally Democratic, and 1.0 as Democratic (Coppedge et al., 2016). I provide a detailed explanation of V-Dem variables used in operationalizing these three concepts in the appendix: civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field.

In addition to my theoretical variables of interest and following Hendrix and Haggard (2015), I include several controls at both the country and city levels. To model level of development or mean income, I use log-transformed real GDP per capita (Heston, Summers, and Aten, 2012). The sample includes both high-income Asian countries (South Korea and Singapore) and low-income

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22 Levitsky and Way (2010) utilize intensive case analysis. In contrast, I seek to provide specification for their conceptualization of competitive authoritarianism (through the measurement of civil liberties, free and fair elections and an even playing field) in a large-n cross-national study.

23 The V-Dem database can be accessed at https://www.v-dem.net.

24 For a fuller description of the V-Dem methodology, see Coppedge et al., 2016, Pemstein et al., 2015.
African and Asian countries (Nepal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe), as well as post-Soviet Central Asian republics. I control for global oil prices by including real oil price per barrel in constant 2012 dollars from British Petroleum (2013). There is a possibility that global oil prices track global food prices and that *FPI Deflated* might be capturing the effect of other global price shocks. Hendrix and Haggard (2015) found that while food and oil prices were highly correlated since 2000 \( (r = 0.9) \), over the entire period the correlation is relatively weak at \( (r = 0.13) \). I control for GDP growth in order to control effects that more general economic conditions may have on global food prices.

Prior research forwards that in times of economic prosperity the effect of global food prices will have less of an effect on the likelihood of urban social unrest and that high global food prices are more destabilizing in low-income developing countries (Blattman and Miguel, 2010; Arezki and Brückner, 2011).

In order to isolate the effect of global food prices from any more general effects stemming from economic openness, I control for trade openness (exports + imports / GDP) (Bussmann and Schneider, 2007). Since higher exchange rates (i.e., more units of local currency to purchase a dollar) erode purchasing power, I include a control for exchange rate levels as the logged exchange rate vis-à-vis the US dollar (Heston, Summers and Aten, 2012). Hendrix and Haggard (2015) note that widespread currency devaluations of the 1980s and 1990s – part of broader programs of structural adjustment – coincided with a period of comparatively low global prices.

I include a time trend in order to lessen the risk that the results are capturing general linear trends in social unrest data, due to changes in reporting on protest and demonstration within the developing world. During 1990 - 1992, the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to a rapid withdrawal of development and military assistance to developing countries from both the United States and the Soviet Union. As such, I include a dummy indicator for this period to mitigate this effect. As discussed earlier, I lag all independent and control variables in order to mitigate concerns over endogeneity.\(^{25}\) Lastly, since the *FPI Deflated* is constant by year, I cluster errors on years which partially accounts for otherwise unmodeled common shocks that might affect all cities similarly in any given year. I include descriptive statistics for all variables in the appendix.

\(^{25}\) Although I lagged all independent and control variables in order to mitigate concerns over endogeneity, lagging does not completely solve all concerns over endogeneity. Future research could attempt to further mitigate concerns over endogeneity by utilizing an instrumental variable or experimental approach.
5.1.2 Estimation and Results

Table 5.1 presents the main results of my panel analysis of 54 urban cities in Africa and Asia, 1960–2007. Since my main independent variable (Food Price Index (FPI)) is constant by year, I present the results of fixed-effects negative binomial regression models with errors clustered on years. Clustering on year partially mitigates unmodeled common shocks that might affect all cities similarly in a given year. Each model tests the effect of global food price on the likelihood of urban social unrest, moderated by the presence of civil liberties, free and fair election and an even playing field (conceptualizations drawn from Levitsky and Way’s competitive authoritarianism (2010)).

As a reminder, I provide two operationalizations of urban social unrest – Nonviolent Social Unrest and Violent Social Unrest. While the Violent Social Unrest indicator includes incidences of violent riots, the Nonviolent Social Unrest operationalization precludes the presence of violence and examines the occurrence of nonviolent demonstrations and protests.

In the first hypothesis presented in the preceding theoretical argument chapter, I predicted a positive relationship between global food prices and the likelihood of urban social unrest. I argue that in developing countries global food price shocks effect the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent against the regime. Further, past research has suggested that democracies have a pacifying effect on domestic unrest and conflict since policymakers have an incentive to lower the impact of global food prices on their domestic constituents – for example through consumer subsides or lowering trade barriers (Hegre et al., 2001; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015). However, others argue that extremely autocratic regimes may also discourage unrest by more brutal, and often, more effective means. I predict that although the presence of civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field (e.g., the presence of an open political structure) has a pacifying effect on urban social unrest in general, it plays a moderating role on the effect of food price on the likelihood of urban social unrest more specifically. The coefficients on FPI for all models, excluding Model 6, indicate that global food price has a positive and significant effect on the likelihood of urban social unrest (mostly, $p < 0.05$). These results are generally robust to the inclusion of more violent forms of urban social unrest, as measured by Violent Social Unrest. This result is contrary to the results reported in Haggard and Hendrix (2015). Hendrix and Haggard (2015) find the uninteracted FPI variable statistically insignificant. Others find that domestic food...
price effects urban social unrest independently (Weinberg and Bakker, 2015) and that domestic consumer food prices are a contributing cause of socio-political unrest in urban areas (Smith, 2014). As anticipated, I find the uninteracted civil liberties, free and fair elections and even playing field indicators negative, albeit not statistically significant other than Model 1 ($p < 0.01$).

Of more interest is the interacted term, $FPI$ with the civil liberties, free and fair elections and even playing field indicators. I find substantial support for my theoretical argument that countries with less civil liberties, free and fair elections and even playing field (e.g., those who have a more closed political opportunity structure as compared to their counterparts) moderate the effect of global food price on urban social unrest. I find the relationship to be positive and significant for all models, with the exclusion of Model 2(b). This is intuitive: in countries with less of these attributes (i.e., civil liberties, free and fair elections and an even playing field), citizens will be more hesitant in making demands from their government and to display public dissatisfaction with previous government policy. For one, they may not have the avenues to make their demands public and secondly, the lack of civil liberties creates fear that perhaps the government would respond with repression to such demands. The models provide some evidence that these political opportunity structures moderate the effect of global food price on urban social unrest.

Following past recommendations (Brambor, Clark, and Golder, 2006; Berry, Golder, and Milton, 2012) and in order to better evaluate my hypotheses about the moderating effects of civil liberties, free and fair elections and an even playing field on the likelihood of social unrest, I plot the marginal effect for each of the political opportunity structure indicators for both the Nonviolent Social Unrest and Violent Social Unrest variables (see Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2, respectively). In each figure, the solid line indicates how moving from a country with a lesser degree of an open political opportunity structure, as measured through civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field, to a country with a greater degree of openness in their political opportunity structure affects the probability of global food price effecting the likelihood of urban social unrest. Each figure shows that in countries with closed political opportunity structures, the effect of global food prices on the likelihood of urban social unrest is dampened. As a country moves to a more politically open structure, the effect of global food prices on the likelihood of urban social unrest increases. This effect is only significant when the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval does not encompass the zero line. Generally, and as predicted, a move to a more open...
Table 5.1. Negative Binomial Estimates of the Effect of Global Food Prices on Urban Social Unrest, 1960–2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>(a) Model 1</th>
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<th>(b) Model 2</th>
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<th>(a) Model 3</th>
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<th>(a) Model 5</th>
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<th>(b) Model 6</th>
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<td>(0.554)</td>
<td>0.007**</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>-0.415</td>
<td>(0.387)</td>
<td>-0.158</td>
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<td>Freedom of Expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oil Price</td>
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<td>log GDP per capita</td>
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<td>(0.141)</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>0.329*</td>
<td>(0.139)</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td>0.356**</td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
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<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>-0.023**</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>-0.027**</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>-0.025**</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>-0.037**</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
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<td>Trade Openness</td>
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<td>(0.057)</td>
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<td>End Cold War</td>
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<td>(0.215)</td>
<td>0.652**</td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td>0.780**</td>
<td>(0.222)</td>
<td>0.683**</td>
<td>(0.193)</td>
<td>0.781**</td>
<td>(0.222)</td>
<td>0.699**</td>
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<td>Time Trend</td>
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<td>0.016*</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
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<td>0.015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>-23.76*</td>
<td>(13.95)</td>
<td>-24.65</td>
<td>(17.42)</td>
<td>-30.47*</td>
<td>(15.48)</td>
<td>-18.62</td>
<td>(17.77)</td>
<td>-24.53</td>
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</table>

Negative Binomial with Fixed Effects. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1, Standard errors, clustered on years, in parentheses.
political opportunity structure increases the effect of global food price on urban social unrest. Citizens in countries with civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field, will choose to publically display economic frustrations towards their government without the fear of government reprisals. In countries with less civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field, citizens may not have the opportunity nor be willing to pay the cost to publically display economic grievances. The argument here is not that urban social unrest does not occur in these countries, but that the effect of global food prices on urban social unrest is dampened. The marginal effect plots exemplify this dynamic. This result is contrary to the expectations of Hendrix and Haggard (2015) who find global food prices are not correlated with protest and rioting in autocracies, and the coefficient estimate is very close to zero.

Model 5 and Model 6 (both for Nonviolent Social Unrest and Violent Social Unrest) are exceptions to this finding in that in countries with no freedom of expression and no political liberties (i.e., a value of 0), the effect of global food prices on urban social unrest is statistically insignificant. This would suggest that generally in countries with some type of open political opportunity structure (as measured through civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field), the effect of global food prices does indeed effect the likelihood of urban social unrest, but that in two particular cases – when there is a complete lack of freedom of expression and no political liberties – this effect disappears.

Another aspect of my theoretical argument seeks to analyze the effect of global food prices on violent forms of urban social unrest. Previous research has often combined urban social unrest into a catch-all variable, while here I seek to analyze the nuanced relationship between nonviolent social unrest and violent social unrest. As discussed previously, I operationalized urban social unrest to include more violent forms of urban unrest, such as riots and violent demonstrations, Violent Social Unrest. In all models, the inclusion of violent forms of urban social unrest, confirms the results forwarded by Hendrix and Haggard (2015). In countries with no civil liberties, free and fair elections and even playing field, the effect of global food prices on Violent Social Unrest is statistically insignificant. This suggests that in these countries, citizens fearful of government reprisals may not initiate violent social unrest. Lastly, in Model 1(b) the effect of global food price on the likelihood on urban social unrest is statistically insignificant in countries with a score of 1 in the Liberal Democracy Index. This suggests that in fully democratic countries, citizens may
Figure 5.1 Marginal Effect of FPI on Nonviolent Social Unrest
Figure 5.2 Marginal Effect of FPI on Violent Social Unrest
choose not to pursue violent public displays of dissatisfaction with government policies towards global food price shocks, perhaps since in these countries peaceful demonstrations and protests would suffice or citizens have alternative means of demanding remediation for economic grievances through open political opportunity structures.

Several additional controls for oil prices, level of development, rates of economic growth, exchange rate levels, and trade openness were included. Similar to Hendrix and Haggard (2015), I find no evidence that global oil prices are a significant determinant of urban social unrest – whether excluding violence or not. These findings likely diverge from Arezki and Brückner (2011) due to the use of fixed effects and the composition of my sample, which mostly excludes high-income countries. Confirming a vast prior literature on economic shocks, I find that economic growth, GDP Growth, is associated with a decrease in urban social unrest, including models which includes forms of violent social unrest ($p < 0.01$ across all specifications). Interestingly, level of development increases the likelihood of urban social unrest, but in only the models that exclude violent forms of urban social unrest. Otherwise, level of development is insignificant and consistent with Hendrix and Haggard’s findings (2015). Both trade openness and exchange rate fluctuations were not significant. Consistent with my expectations, the period coinciding with the collapse of the Soviet Union (1990-1992) was particularly unstable and increasing the likelihood of urban social unrest ($p < 0.01$ across all specifications). Hendrix and Haggard (2015) utilize a measurement of urban social unrest that includes violent forms of unrest – riots and violent demonstrations. The separation between violent and nonviolent forms of urban social unrest allows researches to further examine the nuanced relationship between global food prices, political structures, and the likelihood of urban social unrest.

5.2 Explaining Violent Civil Conflict: Research Design

The second portion of the two-step process presented in this dissertation seeks to answer whether increases in global food prices can ultimately increase the likelihood of violent civil conflict. Past research on global food prices has predominately focused on low-level events, such as demonstrations and protests (Smith, 2014; Weinberg and Bakker, 2015; Hendrix and Haggard, 2015), while ignoring the impact of basic necessities deprivation on high-level events, such as coups, revolutions and civil war. I posit that urban social unrest may indeed escalate to violent
civil conflict when the government chooses to mobilize its security apparatus for repression. This theoretical argument seeks to causally link an increase in global food prices to the likelihood of a developing country experiencing violent civil conflict – thereby combining two literatures that in the past have been researched independently.

Gurr (1970) argues that citizens are motivated to act on their economic grievances when they perceive a discord between what they are receiving and what they know is attainable. The political salience of food prices is clear – citizens will mobilize if their basic necessities are not cared for by the state. This disagreement between the state and its citizens over policy – the provision of basic necessities – directly affect the likelihood of mass mobilization of dissent. When mass mobilization of dissent occurs, research consensus has suggested that governments will almost always choose repression in order to control dissent (e.g., Carey, 2006; 2010; Davenport, 1995; 1996; 2007b; Earl, Soule, and McCarthy, 2003; Lichbach, 1987; Moore, 2000; Nordås and Davenport, 2013; Regan and Henderson, 2002). In the face of coercive government repression, dissidents will escalate to violent civil conflict by creating new grievances to which citizens respond by further challenging the regime. Secondly, citizens in low-income, developing countries receive a signal of the extent of government capability (or in low-income, developing countries, inability) to successfully repress mass mobilization of dissent (Davenport, 1995). For Fearon and Laitin (2003), financially weak states, or resource-poor states, are the most prone to violent civil conflict as they are unable to perform the tasks that reduce the effectiveness of potential insurgent adversaries. If citizens believe that the government cannot successfully control dissent, these opposition groups are more likely to escalate to violent civil conflict (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003). The empirical expectation is that, in developing countries, repression will lead to an escalation to violent civil conflict since citizens receive information that the state is unable to successfully and fully repress its population or by creating further grievances within the opposition.26

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26 Fearon and Laitin (2003) conceptualize state weakness as one-dimensional, meaning that the resources available to the state determine its capacity. Measures of capacity such as military spending or coup-proofing may indicate whether a state has the resources to repress groups, not whether they have been successful in repressing dissent. In a sense, coercive capacity is incomplete information, while coercive response can be directly observed by citizens. The conditions under which coercive repression will prevent future violent civil conflict is less clear if coercive capacity is measured versus actual coercive government repression. This may explain the paradoxical findings that actual government repression leads to an escalation towards violent civil conflict, while coercive capacity decreases the
In order to examine these theoretical expectations, I utilize the time-series cross-national dataset from the PRIO Urban Social Disturbance in Africa and Asia (henceforth USDAA) database (Urdal and Hoelscher, 2012). Further, following the theoretical discussion regarding state capacity for repression versus coercive government repression, I incorporate measures of actual coercive government repression. The unit-of-analysis is again city-year. The temporal domain of this study is 1960 - 2009, though the availability of the PRIO Urban Social Disturbance in Africa and Asia variables restrict some of the models to the period of 1960 - 2007 (Urdal and Hoelscher, 2012).

This section is primarily focused on the escalation from mass mobilization of dissent to violent civil conflict, as well as the role that coercive government repression plays in mediating this effect. As such, I utilize causal mediation analysis with Linear Structural Equation Model (LSEM) with robust standard errors. Causal mediation analysis is ideal in this instance since it plays an essential role in identifying intermediate variables (or mediators) that lie in the casual pathway between the treatment and the outcome (Imai et al., 2010) – in this case, from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict.

5.2.1 Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable for the second portion of the theoretical argument is Violent Civil Conflict and is derived from event narratives in the USDAA database. I conceptualize violent civil conflict as incidents in which there is a violent interaction between a state and dissident group(s). I create three indicators that measure violent civil conflict – one that precludes terrorism, a second that includes incidences of terrorism, and a third that exclusively measures terrorism. The first indicator, Civil Conflict, includes general warfare, inter-communal warfare, armed battles and clashes, armed attack, anti-government terrorism, and communal terrorism.

The second indicator for violent civil conflict is Non-Terrorism, which precludes anti-government terrorism and communal terrorism.

The third indicator is Terrorism, which measures exclusively anti-

likelihood of escalation towards violent civil conflict (Young, 2013). The subsequent section seeks to elaborate on this distinction.

27 The following narratives created the Civil Conflict variable: 10 (general warfare), 20 (inter-communal warfare), 30 (armed battle/clash), 31 (armed attack), 41 (anti-government terrorism), and 42 (communal terrorism).

28 The following narratives created the Non-Terrorism variable: 10 (general warfare), 20 (inter-communal warfare), 30 (armed battle/clash), and 31 (armed attack).
government terrorism and communal terrorism. Since a portion of my theoretical argument focuses on actual coercive government repression versus state capacity for repression, I seek to explain some of the paradoxical findings that actual government repression leads to an escalation towards violent civil conflict, while coercive capacity decreases the likelihood of escalation towards violent civil conflict (Young, 2013). Within the existing literature on violent civil conflict, the classification of terrorism is often simply embedded or excluded in the outcome variable (Collier and Hoefler, 2001; Young, 2013). In the mass dissent literature, terrorism is likewise included or excluded. Since this dissertation seeks to examine urban social unrest, and the subsequent escalation to violent civil conflict, and since terrorism can be examined within both literatures, I chose to incorporate terrorism into the first indicator of violent civil conflict. Terrorism, in essence, is a violent interaction between a state and an opposition group. Despite the fact that terrorism is inherently violent, it is different than other forms of violent civil conflict – some suggesting that in many ways it is a weapon of the weak. As such, I included an indicator that excludes terrorism. Lastly, for the purpose of future scholarly enquiry, I created a third indicator that measures only terrorism. I find the results robust across the three operationalization of violent civil conflict.

The key independent variable is *Urban Social Unrest*. Following the preceding empirical section, I create two indicators that measure urban social unrest – one that precludes violence, and a second that includes incidences of violence. The first indicator, *Nonviolent Social Unrest*, includes nonviolent, organized demonstration and spontaneous protests. The second indicator for urban social unrest is *Violent Social Unrest*, which includes incidences with violence, such as violent riots. Protests and demonstrations refer to distinct, continuous, and coordinated actions by members of a distinct “other” group against government authorities. While riots refer to the same phenomenon, but with the presence of violence (Urdal, 2008). Since a portion of my theoretical argument focuses on the escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict, I forward a second operationalization of urban social unrest that precludes the presence of violence,

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29 The following narratives created the *Terrorism* variable: 41 (anti-government terrorism), and 42 (communal terrorism).
30 The following narratives created the *Nonviolent Social Unrest* variable: 60 (organized demonstration) and 62 (spontaneous demonstration).
31 The following narratives created the *Violent Social Unrest* variable: 50 (organized violent riot), 51 (spontaneous violent riot), 60 (organized demonstration), and 62 (spontaneous demonstration). See appendix for “ptypes” narratives.
Nonviolent Social Unrest. I find that the results are robust across models utilizing both Nonviolent Social Unrest and Violent Social Unrest.

I conceptualize coercive government repression, the mediating variable, as acts that violate the personal integrity of citizens within a state (Young, 2013). To measure this concept, I use the Political Terror Scale, or PTS (Gibney, Cornett, and Wood, 2011). This is the most widely used measure of state repression (e.g., Davenport and Armstrong 2004; de Soysa and Nordás 2007; Hafner-Burton 2005a, 2005b; Poe and Tate 1994; Poe et al., 1999; Wood 2008). The PTS is a 5-point categorical indicator, ranging from 1 to 5, of physical integrity rights – defined as the rights to freedom from extrajudicial killing, disappearance, torture, and political imprisonment. Low levels correspond to states where people are not imprisoned for their political views, torture is infrequent or nonexistent, and state murder of civilians is rare. High levels correspond to states where these techniques are used frequently against large portions of the population. The PTS coding is based on two sources with slightly diverging coverage and highly correlated ($r = 0.74$): Amnesty International and the US State Department. The Amnesty International has been criticized for being too uncritical in their reporting on socialist regimes (Wood 2008, 500) – particularly in reporting human right abuses during the 1970s and 1980s, while the State Department indicator has been criticized for reflecting political considerations and interests of the United States, often protecting itself from criticism (Poe et al., 2001, 650). To address these issues and following Nordás and Davenport (2013), I run models based on Amnesty International and the State Department separately, $PTS \text{Amnesty}$ and $PTS \text{State Department}$ respectively. I find the results robust for both measures. For a further robustness check, I also run the models using the Cingranelli and Richards (CIRI, 2004) Human Rights Dataset infringements on physical integrity rights, coded as $CIRI \text{Physical Integrity}$. The Physical Integrity Rights index was constructed using Amnesty International (AI) reports of human rights behaviors as primary documents and US Department of State reports as supplementary documents. This is an additive index constructed from the Torture, Extrajudicial Killing, Political Imprisonment, and Disappearance indicators. It ranges from 0 (no government respect for these four rights) to 8 (full government respect for these four rights). The lower the rank a country receives for each in the given year, the more reports of human rights violations were issued in that year. The findings (reported in the appendix) confirm

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32 Please see appendix for PTS 5-point categorical indicator of state violations of physical integrity rights.
the results based on the *PTS Amnesty* and *PTS State Department* indicators.

The main controls in the second portion of my theoretical argument are similar to the first: log-transformed real GDP per capita, global oil prices, GDP growth, trade openness, logged exchange rate, and Soviet breakup. I include a time trend in order to lessen the risk that the results are capturing general linear trends in urban social unrest data, due to changes in reporting on protest and demonstration within the developing world. I lag all independent and control variables in order to mitigate concerns over endogeneity, to ensure that *Urban Social Unrest* precedes *Coercive Government Repression* which then precedes *Violent Civil Conflict* temporally.\(^{33}\) I include descriptive statistics for all variables in the appendix.

### 5.2.2 Estimation and Results

I have argued that within developing countries, in the face of mass mobilization of dissent, governments must choose whether the respond to urban social unrest by mobilizing the security apparatus against dissidents or not. Mass dissent will escalate to violent civil conflict when citizens receive information that the regime is incapable to successfully and thoroughly repress its populace, or by further increasing grievances citizens or opposition groups may hold towards the regime. This second portion of the theoretical argument utilizes causal mediation analysis with Linear Structural Equation Model (LSEM) with robust standard errors – in order to examine the effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of coercive government repression, the effect of coercive government repression on the likelihood of violent civil conflict, and lastly, the indirect effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of violent civil conflict through coercive government repression.\(^{34}\) This proposed relationship between urban social unrest and violent civil conflict is shown in Figure 5.3, in which the effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of coercive government repression and the effect of coercive government repression on the likelihood of violent civil conflict are both positive. The effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict is mediated by government response to mass dissent – whether the regime chooses to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. The dashed line between \(X_{it-2}\) and \(Y_{it}\) represents the direct

\(^{33}\) I created a lead of two years for the dependent variables and a lead of one year for the mediator variables.

\(^{34}\) The traditional LSEM is appropriate only when the assumption of linearity is met. Imai et al. (2011, 2010) discuss the appropriate methods that should be used with nonlinear estimation. The authors find that both OLS and LSEM produce similar results.
relationship between urban social unrest and violent civil conflict, which is included in order to acknowledge that repression only partially mitigates the effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict.

Figure 5.3 Mediating Relationship of Coercive Government Repression

Mediation occurs (1) when the variance of the mediator and independent variable separately account for statistically significant variations in the dependent variable, and (2) when both the mediator and independent variable are controlled for in the same equations, and (3) the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables are reduced with the inclusion of the mediating variable (Baron and Kenny, 1986, 1176). Further research allows us to produce accurate joint hypothesis tests on the individual paths and indirect effects (Sobel, 1982; Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2009; Imai et al., 2010). I follow the methods utilized by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Imai et al. (2011) by first estimating Linear Structural Equation Model (LSEM)

\[
(1) \quad Y_{it} = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 X_{it-1} + \lambda_1 C_{it-1} + u_{i1} \\
(2) \quad M_{it} = \alpha_2 + \beta_2 X_{it-1} + \lambda_2 C_{it-1} + u_{i2} \\
(3) \quad Y_{it} = \alpha_3 + \beta_3 X_{it-1} + \gamma M_{it} + \lambda_3 C_{it-1} + u_{i3}
\]

35 For further discussion on the significance of independent variables and mediating variables, particularly in small sample sizes, see Shrout and Bolger (2002) and Kenny et al. (1998).
(see Equations 1-3 below) and then calculating the product of the coefficients ($\beta_2$ and $\gamma$ from Equations 2 and 3 below). I use nonparametric bootstrap method in order to calculate the 95% confidence intervals of the direct, indirect, and total effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of violent civil conflict, as well as sensitivity analysis to mitigate concerns of endogeneity and omitted variable bias. The LSEM utilizing cross-sectional time-series data can be written as follows:

Where $X_{it-2}$ is the lagged independent variable ($Urban Social Unrest$), $C_{it-2}$ is the vector of lagged control variables, $M_{it-1}$ is the contemporaneous mediator variable ($Coercive Government Repression$) and $Y_{it}$ is the contemporaneous dependent variable ($Violent Civil Conflict$).

Table 5.2 presents the main results of the casual mediation analysis of the mediating effect of coercive government repression on the escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict. Since my theoretical argument focuses on the escalation from urban social unrest to violent civil conflict, I provide two operationalizations of urban social unrest – one that includes violent forms of urban social unrest, such as riots and violent demonstrations ($Violent Social Unrest$) and a second that precludes the presence of violence ($Nonviolent Social Unrest$). I find that the results are robust across both models using both $Violent Social Unrest$ and $Nonviolent Social Unrest$.

Equation 1 corresponds to pathway $c'$ in Figure 5.3, the effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict. Equation 2 corresponds to pathway $a$, the effect of urban social unrest on coercive government repression. Finally, Equation 3 corresponds to pathway $b$, the effect of coercive government repression on violent civil conflict and to pathway $c'$, the effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict.

Beginning with Equation 2 (i.e., corresponding with pathway $a$ in Figure 5.3), urban social unrest – measured as two indicators: $Violent Social Unrest$ and $Nonviolent Social Unrest$ – has a statistically significant and positive effect on the occurrence of coercive government repression – measured as three indicators: $PTS Amnesty$, $PTS State Department$ and $CIRI Physical Integrity$. For example, a one-unit increase in $Violent Social Unrest$ has a predicted 0.052-unit increase in $PTS Amnesty$ the following year, holding all else constant. Using the second operationalization of urban social unrest precluding violence, a one-unit increase is $Nonviolent Social Unrest$ has a predicted 0.056-unit increase in $PTS Amnesty$ the following year, holding all else constant. This supports the vast literature which argues that governments respond to popular dissent with
Table 5.2. Linear Structural Equation Model (LSEM), The Mediating Effect of Repression on Violent Conflict, 1960–2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Equation (1) Violent Social Unrest</th>
<th>Equation (2) PTS Amnesty</th>
<th>Equation (3) Civil Conflict</th>
<th>Equation (1) Nonviolent Social Unrest</th>
<th>Equation (2) PTS Amnesty</th>
<th>Equation (3) Civil Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTS Amnesty (_{t-1})</td>
<td>0.111**</td>
<td>0.052**</td>
<td>0.081**</td>
<td>0.129**</td>
<td>0.056**</td>
<td>0.096**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Social Unrest (_{t-2})</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.004**</td>
<td>0.006**</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.004**</td>
<td>0.006**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonviolent Social Unrest (_{t-2})</td>
<td>0.171**</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>0.188**</td>
<td>0.179**</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.194**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
<td>(0.059)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Price (_{t-2})</td>
<td>-0.025**</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.025**</td>
<td>-0.026**</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.026**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log GDP per capita (_{t-2})</td>
<td>-0.006**</td>
<td>-0.059**</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.006**</td>
<td>-0.008**</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP Growth (_{t-2})</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.059**</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>-0.058**</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Openness (_{t-2})</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.145</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
<td>(0.147)</td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
<td>(0.147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log Exchange Rate (_{t-2})</td>
<td>-0.307</td>
<td>4.173**</td>
<td>-2.726**</td>
<td>-0.356</td>
<td>4.144**</td>
<td>-2.767**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.427)</td>
<td>(0.226)</td>
<td>(0.455)</td>
<td>(-0.427)</td>
<td>(.023)</td>
<td>(0.454)</td>
</tr>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>1,375</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>1,375</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
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<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linear Structural Equation Model (LSEM) with robust standard errors, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1, Standard errors, clustered on years, in parentheses.
repression (i.e., Threat-Response Theory or the Law of Coercive Responsiveness) (Earl, Soule, and McCarthy, 2003; Davenport, 2007a). Several additional controls for oil prices, level of development, rates of economic growth, exchange rate levels, and trade openness were included in all models. I find that global oil prices, trade openness and exchange rate fluctuations were significant ($p < 0.01$) and negatively associated with coercive government repression. These results are robust across varying operationalizations of urban social unrest and coercive government repression.

In order to examine the direct effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of violent civil conflict, I turn to Equation 1 (corresponding with pathway $c'$ in Figure 5.3). Urban social unrest – measured as Violent Social Unrest and Nonviolent Social Unrest – has a statistically significant and positive effect on the escalation to violent civil conflict – measured as Civil Conflict, Non-Terrorism, and Terrorism. For example, a one-unit increase in Violent Social Unrest has a predicted 0.111-unit increase in Civil Conflict within two years, holding all else constant. Using the second operationalization of urban social unrest precluding violence, a one-unit increase is Nonviolent Social Unrest has a predicted 0.129-unit increase in Civil Conflict within two years, holding all else constant. Several additional controls for oil prices, level of development, rates of economic growth, exchange rate levels, and trade openness were included in all models. I find that level of development, economic growth and trade openness were significant ($p < 0.01$) and negatively associated with violent civil conflict, with the exception of level of development, which was positively associated with violent civil conflict.

![Figure 5.4 Mediation Effects of Coercive Government Repression on Violent Civil Conflict](image)

Figure 5.4 Mediation Effects of Coercive Government Repression on Violent Civil Conflict

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Of more importance to my theoretical argument, Equation 3 examines the effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict and the effect of coercive government repression on violent civil conflict (corresponding to both pathway \( c' \) and \( b \) in Figure 5.3, respectively). An initial examination of the results show that the effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict drops from 0.111 per unit change in Equation 1 to 0.081 per unit change – suggesting that the mediator, coercive government repression is explaining some of the relationship between the two (i.e., partial mediation). The indirect effect of urban social unrest on violent civil conflict is calculated by taking the product of the coefficient \( \beta_2 \) urban social unrest in Equation 2 and the coefficient \( \gamma \) of violent civil conflict in Equation 3.

Following methods proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Imai et al. (2011), I use nonparametric bootstrap method in order to calculate the 95% confidence intervals of the direct, indirect, and total effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of violent civil conflict. Figure 5.4 plots the indirect, direct and total effect of urban social unrest (measured as Violent Social Unrest and Nonviolent Social Unrest, respectively) on the likelihood of violent civil conflict (measured as Civil Conflict) including the bootstrap 95% confidence intervals using the nonparametric bootstrap method. For Model 1, a one-unit increase in Violent Social Unrest has a predicted .041-unit increase in Civil Conflict through PTS Amnesty, holding all else constant. Table 5.3 presents the nonparametric bootstrap method results in empirical representation – providing precise estimated values. The total effect of Violent Social Unrest on Civil Conflict is .117 of which .345 (35%) is mediated through PTS Amnesty. This supports the theoretical argument that coercive government repression partially mediates the effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict. While coercive government repression accounts for approximately 35% of the positive effect of urban social unrest on the likelihood of escalation to violent civil conflict, nearly 65% of the total effect is direct. While it is clear that a direct effect exists between urban social unrest and violent civil conflict (as should be expected empirically drawing from existing literature), this result may also suggest that more than one mediating relationship may exist beyond coercive government repression. Identifying and explaining these additional mediating relationships opens avenues for future research opportunities perhaps incorporated the vast literature on violent civil conflict.
Two primary concerns that rise from causal mediation analysis is endogeneity and omitted variable bias – these confounders would inevitably bias the results of the analysis. Identifying casual mechanisms requires sequential ignorability, which cannot be tested with observed data. Since casual mediation analysis relies upon an untestable assumption, it is important to evaluate the robustness of empirical results to potential violation assumptions. Sensitivity analysis provides one way to do this. The goal of sensitivity analysis is to quantify the exact degree to which the key identification assumption must be violated for a researcher’s original conclusion to be reversed. If inference is sensitive, a slight violation of the assumption may lead to substantively different conclusions (Imai et al., 2011). Sequential ignorability assumption can be understood in two parts: (1) when conditioned on pre-treatment covariates, the treatment is statistically independent of the mediator and the dependent variable (i.e., the independent variable must be exogenous); and (2) when conditioned on the treatment and pre-treatment confounders, the mediator is statistically independent of the dependent variable (Imai et al., 2010). The authors note the difficulty of satisfying such an assumption in that researchers “must measure the complete set of covariates that
affect both the mediator and the dependent variable, and they must not be affected by the treatment” (2010, 770). Within the repression literature for example (Ritter, 2014; Young, 2012; Davenport, 2007), past government use of repression could positively or negatively affect dissident’s decision whether to dissent, as well as the state’s decision to repress --- a clear violation of the sequential ignorability assumption. 

Sensitivity analysis – conducted on the error terms in Equation 2 and 3 (corr \((u_{i2}, u_{i3})\)) of the LSEM – allows researchers to calculate the strength and direction of the relationship with a given confounder necessary to break the results (with a recommended sensitivity parameter of \(p = \text{corr} (u_{i2}, u_{i3})\)). Two alternative sensitivity coefficients: the total variation of the mediator explained by the confounder, and the total variation of the dependent variable explained by the confounder (see Figure 5.5.)

Following the methods proposed by Imai et al. (2011), Figure 5.5 show two alternative formulations of the proposed sensitivity analysis for both Model 1 (Violent Social Unrest) and Model 2 (Nonviolent Social Unrest). In the left panel, the true indirect effect (also referred to as the ACME) is plotted against the sensitivity parameter of \(p\), which is the correlation between the error terms in the mediator and the error terms in the mediator and outcome regression models. The dashed line represents the estimated indirect effect when the sequential ignorability assumption is made – or the value of the indirect effect of urban social unrest (Violent Social Unrest for Model 1 and Nonviolent Social Unrest for Model 2, respectively) on violent civil conflict when the sequential ignorability assumption holds. The shaded areas represent the 95% confidence interval for the mediation effects at each level of \(p\). The question that sensitivity analysis seeks to answer is how large \(p\) must be for the mediation effect to be zero. I find that for this outcome, the estimated indirect effect equals zero when \(p\) equals approximately 0.4 (approximately 0.35 for Model 2). Thus, to conclude that the true indirect effect is not significantly different from zero, researchers must assume an unobserved confounder that affects both coercive government repression and violent civil conflict in the same direction and makes the correlation between the two error terms greater than 0.4 (approximately 0.35 for Model 2) (Imai et al., 2011).

In conjunction with sensitivity analysis, the inclusion of lagged variables is one way of lessening concerns over endogeneity. When using casual mediation analysis, I created a lead of two years for the dependent variables and a lead of one year for the mediator variables in order to mitigate these concerns.

Although this procedure effectively quantifies the degree of sensitivity, researchers may have difficulty in interpreting the result in substantive terms. For more discussion on sensitivity analysis, see Imai et al. (2011).
Model 1
Violent Social Unrest

In the right panel, the contours represent the true indirect effect plotted as a function of the proportion of the total mediator variance (horizontal axis) and the total outcome variance (vertical axis), that are each explained by the unobserved confounder included in the corresponding regression models. These two sensitivity parameters represent the proportion of the variance that is not yet explained by the observed predictors in each model. Other things being equal, a low

Figure 5.5. Sensitivity Analysis of Indirect Effect
value of the upper bound indicates a more robust estimate of the indirect effect because there is less room for an unobserved cofounder to bias the result (Imai et al., 2011). In other words, when the proportion of the total variance of violent civil conflict explained by the cofounder and the total variation in coercive government repression explained by the pre-treatment cofounder are greater than approximately 0.20 (for both Model 1 and Model 2), the indirect effect is zero and becomes increasingly positive. In cases where concern exists on violent civil conflict in a previous time period affects contemporaneous coercive government repression and contemporaneous violent civil conflict, sensitivity analysis (as visualized in Figure 5.5) gives researchers the exact conditions under which the results are robust to the past level of violent civil conflict. The cofounder would need to account for over 20% of the total variation of violent civil conflict and 20% of the total variation of coercive government repression. At less than 20% of each, the results are robust.

As robustness checks, I also ran subsequent models with causal mediation analysis. In order to analyze the impact of urban social unrest on varying types of violent civil conflict, I included two further operationalizations of violent civil conflict (measured Non-Terrorism and Terrorism). As discussed previously, Civil Conflict includes general warfare, inter-communal warfare, armed battles and clashes, armed attack, anti-government terrorism, and communal terrorism. Non-Terrorism, precludes anti-government terrorism and communal terrorism. Lastly, Terrorism measures exclusively anti-government terrorism and communal terrorism. These operationalizations do not change any of the main results (see the appendix for results). Further and as discussed previously, I also run the models using the PTS State Department indicator, PTS State Department, and Human Rights Dataset infringements on physical integrity rights, CIRI Physical Integrity. The findings (reported in the appendix) confirm the results based on the PTS Amnesty indicator.

5.3 Conclusion

The research presented in this dissertation contributes to our understanding of the conditions under which citizens will mobilize publically against the regime, states choose to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents, and dissidents choose to escalate to violent civil conflict. First, the results on the measure of global food price and its effect on the likelihood of urban social
unrest suggests that citizens in developing countries will mobilize collectively against a regime when drastic fluctuations and shocks to global food prices occur. This effect is conditioned by the political opportunity structure in a given regime. Counterintuitively, the results of this chapter suggest that regimes with broad protections of civil liberties, free and fair elections, and an even playing field are more likely to experience urban social unrest – both nonviolent and violent. Previous research has suggested that democracies have a pacifying effect on contentious politics. I argue that regimes with open political opportunity structures are more likely to experience mass mobilization of dissent. As regimes move from open political opportunity structure to more closed opportunity structure, the effect of global food prices on the likelihood of urban social unrest decreases. Secondly, the results suggest that an escalation to violent civil conflict is largely contingent on the response of the government to mass dissent by citizens. As citizens take to the streets demanding remediation for economic grievances, the choice of the government to mobilize the security apparatus against dissident increases the likelihood that mass dissent will escalate to violent civil conflict. One of the novel contributions of this research agenda has been to distinguish between moderation and mediation effects in explaining both urban social unrest and violent civil conflict. Like any scholarly work, however, this research design raises additional questions and possible areas for future research. In the concluding chapter, I will discuss several venues for additional inquiry.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Under what conditions do economic grievances – stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities – effect the likelihood of urban social unrest? And additionally, under what conditions will a state experience violent escalation leading to civil conflict? This dissertation seeks to bridge the gap in existing literature and provide a fluid theoretical argument explaining the causal story from economic grievances stemming from broader basic necessities deprivation to violent civil conflict. First, existing literature has generally ignored how broader economic deprivation of basic necessities – such as access to potable water, housing security, food prices and food security, and access to affordable fuel – influence the likelihood of a state experiencing varying forms of political violence and civil conflict. Further, much of the existing literature is dichotomized between two streams of research – either seeking to explain nonviolent dissent or violent civil conflict – however rarely seeking to explain both. Third, an examination of the role in which regime type plays in explaining mass mobilization has been peripheral in the literature – often merely a control variable with often contrary theoretical expectations. Most of the existing literature examining regime type is interested rather in how regime type influences the likelihood of violent civil conflict, rather than urban social unrest. Lastly, the existing literature on coercive government repression has largely been examined within the protest–repression cycle, but has not attempted to causally link repression to basic necessities deprivation, regime type or violent civil conflict.

In this dissertation, I have sought to distinguish between varying casual mechanisms and pathways that explain the multifaceted interplay between economic deprivation of basic necessities, nonviolent dissent, and violent civil conflict. Chapter 3 forwarded the theoretical arguments and expectations that explain how economic grievances stemming from broader deprivation of basic necessities increases the likelihood of urban social unrest, and how this effect is conditioned by the political opportunity structures of a given regime. This scholarly work adds to the existing literature by broadening the conceptualization of basic necessities deprivation to include access to potable water, housing security, food prices and food security, and access to affordable fuel, and by building on the work of Levitsky and Way (2010) and Varieties in
Democracy database project (2016) in forwarding a more appropriate conceptualization and operationalization of regime type – political opportunity structures. Secondly, in Chapter 3, I bridged the gap between existing literature on basic necessities deprivation – mainly recent empirical work examining global and domestic food prices – and violent civil conflict. I argued that in regimes that experience mass mobilization of dissent, the likelihood of an escalation to violent civil conflict is contingent on coercive government response. Whereas previous scholarly work has studied nonviolent dissent or violent civil conflict in isolation, this work attempted to analyze these two forms of contentious politics together – as part of a strategic process.

I utilized a nested research analysis or mixed-methods strategy – the use of both small-\(N\), case study analysis and large-\(N\), cross-sectional statistical analysis – in order to examine the theoretical arguments and expectations in Chapter 3. Statistical analysis provides scholars more direction for a more focused case study analysis and subsequent in-depth research. Large-\(N\), statistical analysis allows researchers to draw primary causal inferences from the quantitative estimates of robustness of a theoretical model. Contrastingly, case study analysis can serve as plausibility probes of observed statistical relationships between variables, as well as provide better measurement strategies for variables. In Chapter 4, I examined the role in which access to potable water, housing security, food prices and food security, and access to affordable fuel may increase the likelihood of urban social unrest. The case study analysis approach served as plausibility probes for the causal mechanisms I forwarded in the theoretical argument chapter – mainly the role of political opportunity structures and coercive government repression in explaining mass mobilization of dissent and the subsequent escalation to violent civil conflict.

The results from the cross-sectional, large-\(N\) empirical analysis presented in Chapter 5 suggests that indeed basic needs deprivation – measured as global food prices – increases the likelihood that a given state will experience urban social unrest, and that the effect is dampened in states in which the political opportunity structure is less open. Secondly, the results support my theoretical argument that urban social unrest will escalate to violent civil conflict in regimes that choose to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. Moreover, this dissertation adds to previous empirical research by utilizing two differing methodological approaches when examining the two outcome variables in question – urban social unrest and violent civil conflict. In examining urban social unrest, I argue that a moderating model is more appropriate, while when examining
the escalation to violent civil conflict a mediating model is better able to examine the causal mechanism at play. To my knowledge, this scholarly work is the first to examine this strategic process utilizing both mediation and moderation.

Although I have attempted to bridge some of the gaps in the existing literature, it is often said that the work of a scholar is never truly finished. This is most certainly true here. While this dissertation has sought to provide a theoretical story that causally links economic grievances stemming from basic needs deprivation to violent civil conflict, it also highlights some possible future avenues for fruitful research. First, the measure of basic needs deprivation – global food prices – presented in Chapter 5 is only one measurement of the concept forwarded here. In the future, I would like to expand the measurement of basic needs deprivation by examining global water stress levels, particularly incorporating newly available geospatial and geographic information data. I would further this research by examining how water stress levels in particular regimes effect the likelihood of urban social unrest and likewise the subsequent escalation to violent civil conflict. I would also be interested in examining the role of coercive government repression in explaining an escalation to violent civil conflict from urban social unrest stemming from water inaccessibility and insecurity. Within this research agenda, I would be interested in analyzing the role of political opportunity structures in explaining the effect of water insecurity on the likelihood of contentious politics – both urban social unrest and violent civil conflict. In regards to measurement, in this dissertation, I have utilized global food prices as a proxy for domestic food prices due to data limitations. Future research could seek to utilize a domestic-level measure of food prices rather than global food price measures in order to more accurately represent national-level economic conditions.

Although this research has suggested that the effect of mass dissent on the likelihood of violent civil conflict is explained best through the mediating effect of coercive government repression, a direct relationship still exists between mass dissent and the likelihood of violent civil conflict. Likewise, I have acknowledged that coercive government repression may only partially mediate the effect of mass mobilization of dissent on the likelihood of violent civil conflict. A second area of fruitful inquiry would be to examine other possible mediating variables that may illuminate the causal pathway from mass dissent to violent civil conflict.

A third area of future inquiry would be examining the theoretical nuance between coercive
government repression and state capacity for repression. Much of the existing literature seeking to explain contentious politics – whether urban social unrest or violent civil conflict – utilizes either state capacity for repression or coercive government repression, but seldom analyzes the theoretical nuances between the two measurements. For example, within the violent civil conflict literature, state capacity for repression is key in examining potential rebels’ decision to fight against the regime (e.g., Tilly, 1978; Hendrix, 2010; Sobek; 2010), while in much of the existing protest–repression literature, coercive government repression is utilized in examining government response to mass mobilization of dissent (e.g., Carey, 2010; Nordås and Davenport, 2013; Young, 2013; Hultquist, 2015). State capacity for repression argues that rebels’ decision to take up arms against a regime is based on their perception of the capacity of the regime to repress incidents of violent civil conflict or to likewise accommodate rebels’ demands. In nation-states with considerable state capacity for repression, the regime can impose high costs on potential rebels, and thus deter armed rebellion. Similarly, nation-states with significant capacity for accommodation – whether through redistributive economic policies, or through the incorporation of dissident movements within the party system – decrease the likelihood of facing violent strands of urban social unrest, or further escalation into violent civil conflict. Contrastingly, coercive government repression is measured using the Political Terror Scale (PTS) and CIRI Human Rights Data Project as indicators, and is generally interested in actual government response to mass mobilization rather than perceived state capacity. As such, future research should examine these alternative measurements, and their ability to explain the effects of economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation and the likelihood of contentious politics – whether urban social unrest or violent civil conflict. To my knowledge, Pierskalla (2010) is the only scholarly work to date that has grappled with the inconsistencies between state capacity for repression and coercive government repression, as well as attempted to examine under what conditions mass mobilization of dissent can escalate to violent civil conflict. Pierskalla (2010) forwards an extensive strategic game between the regime and an opposition group to identify the conditions for successful deterrence of escalating violence to civil conflict. The model produces some novel testable hypotheses that shed new light on the effect of coercive government repression on social unrest and the likelihood of subsequent violent civil conflict. To date, however, there has been no scholarly work seeking to empirically test these hypotheses. Bell and Murdie (2016) draw from
Pierskalla (2010) and her examination of the punishment puzzle – providing a first cut in examining why repression may sometimes work to stop violent protests and at other times heighten protests. Despite this, the authors miss the theoretical nuance between state capacity for repression and coercive government repression, as well as examining the differences between and escalation from, what Weinberg and Bakker (2015) refer to as, low-level events (e.g., nonviolent dissent) and high-level events (e.g., violent civil conflict). Within this research agenda, I would seek to empirically examine the theoretical nuance between state capacity for repression and coercive government repression, and how varying these conceptualizations and measurements would explain urban social unrest and the likelihood of violent escalation to civil conflict.

This dissertation has primarily focused on whether governments respond with coercive repression or not against mass dissent. Although it is assumed that governments can either respond with coercive repression or some variant of policy concessions – the concept that this decision for governments is either one side of a coin or the other, it is most certainly the case that governments could choose a combination of coercive repression and policy concessions (i.e., economic subsidies or a plethora of public assistance programs to appease dissident public demands). In this causal story, dissidents, however misguided, may feel that public demonstrations and protests against the regime were successful and that economic grievances will be remediated – thereby decreasing the likelihood of an escalation to violent conflict. This dissertation, for theoretical simplicity, has focused on the role of coercive government repression plays in increasing the likelihood of an escalation from urban social unrest and violent civil conflict. Future research could extend this discussion by analyzing how regimes may utilize policy concession with coercive government repression as a means of thwarting future escalation into violent civil conflict.

This dissertation has examined under what conditions mass dissent will escalate to violent civil conflict when citizens have economic grievances against the regime. The theoretical argument presented in this dissertation has primarily focused on economic grievances stemming from basic needs deprivation. However, it is most certainly the case that this theoretical argument can be broadened to include grievances stemming from other government policy decisions or other socio-political conditions. For example, the recent turmoil over the influx into Europe of migrants seeking economic opportunities or refugees seeking asylum from the ongoing violent conflict in the Middle East and North Africa region (i.e., the Syrian refugee crisis) would be a natural
extension of this research. The argument being that these situations and the subsequent government response (or perceived lack thereof) have created grievances for many Europeans – much like basic needs deprivation creates economic grievances in developing countries. Future research could attempt to extend the theoretical arguments presented in this dissertation to examine the role in which grievances, more broadly defined, increases the likelihood of urban social unrest and further escalation to violent civil conflict.

The policy implications of this research agenda is to understand why citizens choose to publically mobilize against the regime and why dissidents would choose escalation to violent civil conflict. To close, the theoretical point that I make is that indeed economic grievances stemming from basic necessities deprivation increases the likelihood of mass dissent, but that violent civil conflict does not always need to be the end result. It is important that regimes choose their response to dissidents wisely – offering perhaps policy concessions and providing economic relief, rather than choosing to mobilize the security apparatus against dissidents. Regimes often choose to mobilize in coercive government repression against dissidents believing that such aggressive acts will solidify their power and thwart any further urban social unrest or the possibility of violent civil conflict. I suggest that repressive strategies on the part of the government often increase the likelihood of violent civil conflict and possibly encourage regime change, the very thing that these regimes are attempting to thwart. As deadly violent civil conflicts rage in Syria, Yemen and Libya, my hope is that this dissertation serves as a starting point for future research in understanding what incentivizes both dissidents and regimes alike to choose violence, and to perhaps, mitigate these choices through future foreign policy solutions.
## APPENDIX A

### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND OPERATIONALIZATIONS

#### Table A.1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Obs.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>FPI</td>
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<td>91.21</td>
<td>118.28</td>
<td>578.55</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Civil Conflict</td>
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<td>1.57</td>
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<td>Nonviolent</td>
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<td>Violent</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTS Amnesty</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTS State Department</td>
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<td>.99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIRI Physical Integrity</td>
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<td>2.11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democracy</td>
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<td>.23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Physical Violence</td>
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<td>.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Component</td>
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<td>.36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Democracy</td>
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<td>.26</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Expression</td>
<td>2755</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controls</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Oil Price</td>
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<td>28.23</td>
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<td>113.56</td>
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<td>log GDP per capita</td>
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<td>.90</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>10.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP Growth</td>
<td>2340</td>
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<td>6.31</td>
<td>-33.40</td>
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<td>1.16</td>
<td>284.19</td>
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<td>log Exchange Rate</td>
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<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.67e-13</td>
<td>10.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Cold War</td>
<td>2755</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Trend</td>
<td>2755</td>
<td>1985.51</td>
<td>15.01</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.2. Levitsky and Way’s (2010) Competitive Authoritarianism

(I) Unfair Elections

Evidence of any one of the following indicators is sufficient to score an election as unfair:

1. At least one major candidate is barred for political reasons.
2. Centrally coordinated or tolerated electoral abuse is asserted by credible independent sources (i.e., known scholars or credible international or nonpartisan domestic observers).
3. Significant formal or informal impediments – coordinated or tolerated by the national government – prevent the opposition from campaigning nationally on reasonably equal footing.
4. Uneven electoral playing field.

(II) Violation of Civil Liberties

Evidence of any one of the following indicators is sufficient for civil liberties to be violated:

1. Frequent harassment of independent media for political reasons.
2. Any serious political attack on the media within a one-year period that can reasonably be expected to have a “chilling effect” on independent media activity.
3. The government at least occasionally engages in (or tolerates and rarely investigates) actions that restrict freedom of political association or speech.
4. Any serious attack on opposition figures or other government critics within a one-year period that can reasonably be expected to have a “chilling effect” on civil and opposition activity.

(III) Uneven Playing Field

Evidence of any one of the following indicators is sufficient to score the playing field as uneven:

1. State institutions are widely politicized and deployed frequently by the incumbent in ways that limit the opposition’s ability to compete on reasonably equal footing.
2. Uneven media access.
3. Uneven access to resources.

Note: This is a summarized version of the Competitive Authoritarianism measure provided by Levitsky and Way (2010). For a fuller discussion on the measurements, please see Levitsky and Way (2010).
### Table A.3. List of Cities, PRIO USDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City 1</th>
<th>City 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>Accra, Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</td>
<td>Almaty, Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antananarivo, Madagascar</td>
<td>Ashgabad, Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astana, Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Bamako, Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok, Thailand</td>
<td>Beijing, People’s Rep. of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>Brazzaville, Rep. of Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta, India</td>
<td>Colombo, Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conakry, Guinea</td>
<td>Dakar, Senegal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dar es Salaam, Tanzania</td>
<td>Dhaka, Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dushanbe, Tajikistan</td>
<td>Hanoi, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harare, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Islamabad, Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jakarta, Indonesia</td>
<td>Johannesburg, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabul, Afghanistan</td>
<td>Kampala, Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachi, Pakistan</td>
<td>Kathmandu, Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khartoum, Sudan</td>
<td>Kinshasa, Democratic Rep. of Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>Lagos, Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhasa, People’s Rep. of China</td>
<td>Lomé, Togo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luanda, Angola</td>
<td>Lusaka, Zambia</td>
</tr>
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<td>Manila, Philippines</td>
<td>Maputo, Mozambique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mogadishu, Somalia</td>
<td>Mumbai, India</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nairobi, Kenya</td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niamey, Niger</td>
<td>Phnom Penh, Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon, Myanmar</td>
<td>Saigon, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei, Taiwan</td>
<td>Tashkent, Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehran, Iran</td>
<td>Vientiane, Laos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulan Bator, Mongolia</td>
<td>Yaoundé, Cameroon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

123
Table A.4. Urban Social Unrest Indicators, PRIO USDAA

**Violent Social Unrest**

(50) *Organized Violent Riot*: Distinct, continuous, and coordinated action staged by members of a singular political or identity group and directed toward members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities.

(51) *Spontaneous Violent Riot*: Distinct, continuous, and uncoordinated action resulting from an originally non-violent protest and directed toward members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities.

(60) *Organized Demonstration*: Distinct, continuous, and coordinated largely peaceful action directed toward members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities.

(62) *Spontaneous Demonstration*: Distinct, continuous, and uncoordinated largely peaceful action directed toward members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities.

**Nonviolent Social Unrest**

(60) *Organized Demonstration*: Distinct, continuous, and coordinated largely peaceful action directed toward members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities.

(62) *Spontaneous Demonstration*: Distinct, continuous, and uncoordinated largely peaceful action directed toward members of a distinct “other” group or government authorities.
Table A.5. Varieties in Democracy (ViD) Indicators

(I) Civil Liberties

*Liberal Democracy Index:* The liberal principle of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The liberal model takes a "negative" view of political power insofar as it judges the quality of democracy by the limits placed on government. This is achieved by constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power.

*Physical Violence Index:* Physical integrity is understood as freedom from political killings and torture by the government. Among the set of civil liberties, these liberal rights are the most relevant for political competition and accountability. The index is based on indicators that reflect violence committed by government agents and that are not directly referring to elections.

(II) Free and Fair Elections

*Electoral Component Index:* The electoral principle of democracy seeks to achieve responsiveness and accountability between leaders and citizens through the mechanism of competitive elections. This is presumed to be achieved when suffrage is extensive; political and civil society organizations can operate freely; elections are clean and not marred by fraud or systematic irregularities; and the chief executive of a country is selected (directly or indirectly) through elections.

*Electoral Democracy Index:* The electoral principle of democracy seeks to embody the core value of making rulers responsive to citizens, achieved through electoral competition for the electorate’s approval under circumstances when suffrage is extensive; political and civil society organizations can operate freely; elections are clean and not marred by fraud or systematic irregularities; and elections affect the composition of the chief executive of the country. In between elections, there is freedom of expression and an independent media capable of presenting alternative views on matters of political relevance.

(III) Even Playing Field

*Freedom of Expression Index:* Freedom of expression is understood as the extent to which the government respects press and media freedom, the freedom of ordinary people to discuss political matters at home and in the public sphere, as well as the freedom of academic and cultural expression. The index includes indicators for print/broadcast censorship effort, internet censorship effort, harassment of journalists, media bias, media self-censorship, print/broadcast media critical, and print/broadcast media perspectives, freedom of discussion for men/women and freedom of academic and cultural expression.

*Political Liberties Index:* Political liberties are understood as freedom of association and freedom of expression. Among the set of civil liberties, these liberal rights are the most relevant for political competition and accountability. The index is based on indicators that reflect government repression and that are not directly referring to elections. The index includes indicators for party ban, barriers to parties, opposition party autonomy, civil society organizations (CSO) entry and exit, and CSO repression.
### Table A.6. Violent Civil Conflict Indicators, PRIO USDAA

#### Civil Conflict

(10) General Warfare: Distinct event related to a protracted, interactive, and violent conflict involving at least one, organized, non-state actor group fighting with government authorities. Can be either over ethnic, political or economic issues.

(20) Inter-communal Warfare: Distinct event related to a protracted, interactive, and violent conflict involving at least two militant organizations representing a singular ethnic or religious identity group (i.e., non-state actor) fighting each other without (explicit) involvement of a government.

(30) Armed Battle/Clash: Distinct, continuous, and coordinated interaction involving opposing, organized armed forces representing government and/or group interests.

(31) Armed Attack: Distinct, continuous, and coordinated action staged by a singular, militant political or identity group against government authorities or institutions representing an “other” group.

(41) Anti-Government Terrorism: Distinct event related to a persistent, directed-violence campaign waged primarily by a non-state group against government authorities or symbols of government authorities (e.g., transportation or other infrastructures).

(42) Communal Terrorism: Distinct event related to a persistent, directed-violence campaign waged primarily by a non-state group targeting individual, or “collective individual,” members of an alleged oppositional group or movement.

#### Non-Terrorism

(10) General Warfare: Distinct event related to a protracted, interactive, and violent conflict involving at least one, organized, non-state actor group fighting with government authorities. Can be either over ethnic, political or economic issues.

(20) Inter-communal Warfare: Distinct event related to a protracted, interactive, and violent conflict involving at least two militant organizations representing a singular ethnic or religious identity group (i.e., non-state actor) fighting each other without (explicit) involvement of a government.

(30) Armed Battle/Clash: Distinct, continuous, and coordinated interaction involving opposing, organized armed forces representing government and/or group interests.

(31) Armed Attack: Distinct, continuous, and coordinated action staged by a singular, militant political or identity group against government authorities or institutions representing an “other” group.

#### Terrorism

(41) Anti-Government Terrorism: Distinct event related to a persistent, directed-violence campaign waged primarily by a non-state group against government authorities or symbols of government authorities (e.g., transportation or other infrastructures).

(42) Communal Terrorism: Distinct event related to a persistent, directed-violence campaign waged primarily by a non-state group targeting individual, or “collective individual,” members of an alleged oppositional group or movement.
### Table A.7. Repression Indicators, Political Terror Scale (PTS)

**Political Terror Scale (PTS)**

_The scale is defined as follows:_

1. If countries are under secure rule of law, then political imprisonment and torture are rare, and political murders are extremely rare.
2. If imprisonment for nonviolent political activities is limited, then torture and beating are exceptional and political murder rare.
3. If political imprisonment is extensive, then execution and political murder may be common, and detention for political views is acceptable.
4. If the practices of level 3 are expanded to a larger segment of the population, then murders and disappearances are common, but terror affects primarily those who interest themselves in political practices and ideas.
5. If terror has expanded to the whole population, and state authorities place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.

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*Note:* This scale serves for both the *PTS Amnesty* and *PTS State Department* indicators.
APPENDIX B

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Figure A.1. Mediation Effects of PTS Amnesty on Non-Terrorism

Figure A.2. Mediation Effects of PTS Amnesty on Terrorism
Figure A.3. Sensitivity Analysis of PTS Amnesty on Non-Terrorism
Figure A.4. Sensitivity Analysis of PTS Amnesty on Terrorism
Figure A.5. Mediation Effects of PTS State Department
Figure A.6. Mediation Effects of CIRI Physical Integrity


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nathalia Ricarte Gillot Borden is originally from Miami, Florida. She completed her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and Psychology at University of Miami in Spring 2005 and her Master of Public Administration Degree at University of Miami in Spring 2006. Under the advisement of Professor Dale L. Smith, Nathalia obtained her Master of Science Degree in Political Science at Florida State University in Spring 2013 and entered the Doctoral Program in Political Science. Nathalia’s research interests include violent civil conflict, mass dissent, human rights, international conflict, and foreign policy. She is particularly specializing in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Latin American region.