THE DETERMINANTS OF CIVIC SPACE CRACKDOWNS: EVIDENCE FROM HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

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THE DETERMINANTS OF CIVIC SPACE CRACKDOWNS: EVIDENCE FROM HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: protest, repression, non-democratic regimes, Turkey, event data

This thesis examines the effect of threat perception on protest repression by focusing on protest and repression dynamics in Turkey during democratic backsliding. Questioning when and against whom protest repression is more intense, it seeks to understand the determinants of state response to dissent. However, traditional media sourcing and news outlets' coverage are insufficient in non-democratic settings where the media is co-opted, censored, and heavily repressed, which requires addressing additional causes of selection bias. To address this problem, I construct and leverage a unique dataset based on human rights reports. The TRACE dataset measures protest and repression events in Turkey since 2013 with fine-grained event categorization and issue type identification. The comparison with other protest event datasets illustrates TRACE's strength in measuring protest repression across different issues in Turkey. To analyze changes in protest repression behavior across various issue types, I employ multinomial logistic regression. Results show that the intensity of protest repression increases with the perceived threat. Further, mobilization becomes more threatening to the regime when it is challenged by labor and environmental issues. Ultimately, this thesis aims to provide more insight into targeted protest repression and threat perceptions in non-democratic regimes.

ÖZET

SİVİL ALAN BASKILARININ BELİRLEYİCİLERİ: İNSAN HAKLARI RAPORLARINDAN KANITLAR

AÇELYA ALTUN

Siyaset Bilimi, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Temmuz 2025

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi FATİH SERKANT ADIGÜZEL

Anahtar Kelimeler: protesto, baskı, demokratik olmayan rejimler, Türkiye, olay verisi

Bu tez, Türkiye'de protesto ve baskı dinamiklerine odaklanarak, demokratik olmayan rejimlerde tehdit algısının protesto baskısını nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Protesto baskısının ne zaman ve kime karşı daha ağır olduğunu sorgulayarak, toplumsal muhalefete karşı devlet tepkisinin belirleyicilerini anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Ancak, medyanın kontrol altına alındığı, sansürlendiği ve yoğun baskıya maruz kaldığı demokratik olmayan rejimlerde geleneksel medya kaynakları yetersiz kalmaktadır ve protesto baskısını analiz etmek, seçim yanlılığına yol açabilecek ek nedenleri de dikkate almayı gerektirir. Bu sorunu aşmak amacıyla, insan hakları raporlarına dayanan TRACE veri seti oluşturulmuş ve analizde kullanılmıştır. Bu veri projesi, 2013'ten itibaren Türkiye'deki protesto ve baskı olaylarını ayrıntılı olay sınıflandırması ve konu başlıklarıyla ölçmektedir. Diğer protesto veri setleriyle yapılan karşılaştırmalar, TRACE veri setinin Türkiye'deki farklı konulara yönelik protesto baskısını ölçmedeki gücünü ortaya koymaktadır. Farklı konu başlıklarına göre protesto baskı davranışlarında değişiklikleri inceleyebilmek adına çok kategorili lojistik regresyon modeli uygulanmaktadır. Sonuçlar algılanan tehditin güçlenmesi ile protesto baskısının arttığını doğrulamaktadır. Ek olarak, emek ve çevre konularında mobilizasyonun, rejim için daha büyük tehdit teşkil ettiği görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu tez, demokratik olmayan rejimlerde hedefli protesto baskısı ve tehdit algılarına dair derinlemesine bir anlayış sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

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Beyond my professors, my deepest thanks go to my family and friends, not only for this thesis but also the person I am today. Nearly eight years ago, my parents drove me to Istanbul and dropped me off. Here, I found myself and built a home, thanks to Mesut, Jan, and Cemre. I am proud to call them my friends and excited for our journeys ahead.

As I embark on yet another journey from where they left me almost a decade ago, I know it is possible only because of my mother's determination and my father's hard work. Over these years, I have become even more aware of my family's strength. This thesis would not have been possible without their trust in me. I am also deeply grateful to my sister, Kardelen, for everything she is.

In loving memory of my grandmother,
Kadem.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATONS

ACLED Armed Conflict Location and Event Data

AKP Justice and Development Party – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*

CHP Republican People's Party – *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*

HDP Peoples' Democratic Party – *Halkların Demokratik Partisi*

IHD Human Rights Association – *İnsan Hakları Derneği*

ISIS Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

NER Named Entity Recognition

NLP Natural Language Processing

PEA Protest Event Analysis

TIHV Human Rights Foundation of Turkey – *Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı*

TPRPGRD Turkey Protest, Repression, and Pro-Government Rally Dataset

TRACE Turkey Repression and Contentious Events Dataset

YPG People's Protection Units – *Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*

1. INTRODUCTION

From Tiananmen to Maidan, Tahrir to Taksim, mass uprisings have challenged, transformed, or overthrown autocrats. Uprisings are unpredictable and destabilizing for authoritarian regimes, making them vulnerable. As the ultimate goal of authoritarian rule is to survive at all costs, dictators fear the people and their collective action potential (Svolik 2012). Thus, all authoritarian regimes adopt repression to increase the cost of collective action and eventually to secure their regimes (Rivera 2017). However, while coercion is an essential component of authoritarian control and survival, its application is not singular and not uniform.

There are numerous ways and degrees in which regimes submit to repression, as well as many different approaches in the literature to distinguish and categorize these different repressive actions (Earl and Braithwaite 2022). Amongst these many ways of making distinctions between different tactics, overt and coercive repression is the most studied (Earl 2011), yet lately, regime reliance on non-violent and preventative repression has been increasing (Tertytchnaya 2023). With globalization, the spread of education, and new information technologies increasing the cost of overt coercion, non-democratic regimes have shifted from violent and visible repression to concealed and targeted repression (Guriev and Treisman 2019). Research shows that many authoritarian regimes today prefer to use information manipulation, targeted violence, and institutional constraints instead of mass killings, forced disappearances, and torture (Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent 2022). This shift from overt to covert, widespread to selective repression is also evident in protest repression. For instance, Gillham (2011) shows that protest policing in the United States has evolved into strategic incapacitation, a more tactical and preventative way of repression.

In short, 20th-century totalitarian rule is now out of fashion; autocrats of the post-Cold War era do not and cannot rule like their predecessors. These regimes have to mimic elections, legitimacy, and popularity (Guriev and Treisman 2019). Thus, repression mechanisms are purposely tailored to be discreet (Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent 2022), preemptive (Escribà-Folch 2013), and targeted (Demirel-Pegg

and Rasler 2021). Consequently, if autocrats try this hard to refrain from visible repression, it becomes crucial to understand when they choose to adopt it.

While it is agreed upon that a regime will become more repressive as its survival is threatened more (Davenport 2007), there are still debates about the threat perceptions of authoritarian regimes. What kind of dissidence is more threatening for an authoritarian regime? Where does an autocrat draw the line? Comparing ideological, religious, and anti-leader protests, Keremoglu, Hellmeier, and Weidmann (2022) find that in personalistic regimes, protests against the leader increase the likelihood of intense protest repression. Others argue that the threat posed by protest mobilization depends on the size of participation, repertoire of contention, or whether the goals are radical and revolutionary (Earl et al. 2004). Ultimately, there seems to be no consensus on when dissidence becomes more threatening for an authoritarian regime.

However, a significant problem with understanding how threat perception shapes targeting and protest repression is one that is inherent in all protest-repression analyses of authoritarian regimes: data are not reliable. The literature on event data methodology reveals that measuring protest and repression in authoritarian settings is not as simple as it is in democratic regimes (Chenoweth, Perkoski, and Kang 2017). Protest event datasets overwhelmingly rely on traditional media and news outlets (Hutter 2014) that are unreliable in authoritarian settings. Cooptation of media outlets, attacks on journalists, censorship, and institutional repression significantly undermine news outlets' ability to report protests and protest repression (Paskhalis, Rosenfeld, and Tertytchnaya 2022). Most of the repression datasets are indices for violent repressive measures such as mass killings and torture, not able to measure discreet and indirect coercion (Chenoweth, Perkoski, and Kang 2017; Fariss 2014; Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent 2022). Evidently, an analysis of targeted protest repression in authoritarian settings requires adaptation of new sources, measures, and details in dataset construction.

Therefore, this thesis examines two aspects regarding protest repression. First, I introduce a novel dataset that alleviates the problem of selection bias in event datasets and aims to find an ideal strategy to measure protest and repression in authoritarian regimes. I argue that protest and repression datasets have to incorporate various forms of media sources, measure disaggregated event types, and differentiate between different intensities of protest repression. To analyze protest and repression dynamics in authoritarian regimes and further, to understand how the threat is perceived, such datasets are imperative. Secondly, using this original dataset, I argue and find that authoritarian regimes are more likely to submit to repression when their existence is challenged by labor and environmental issues. Thus, the threat

a movement presents is greater when the issue at hand is more directly concerned with how the regime ensures its survival and undertakes autocratization.

To examine threat perception and repression in contemporary authoritarian regimes, Turkey presents an excellent case on three grounds. First, Turkey went through a severe authoritarian transition under the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rule. Since 2015, Turkey has been recognized as a competitive authoritarian regime, and as of March 2025, stands on a thin line between democratization and a turn into hegemonic authoritarianism (Esen and Gumuscu 2025). Second, this decade of autocratization was accompanied by many crises and changes that resulted in the configuration and intensification of various issues across time. Since then, Turkey has witnessed a coup attempt, a system change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a devastating earthquake, all under the shadow of a deepening economic crisis. During this period, both new grievances and repressive measures emerged while existing ones intensified. Third and lastly, even after the Gezi Protests' brutal repression in 2013, protests continued to challenge the regime. Albeit weakened by increasing repression, protest mobilization was still strong enough to demonstrate resistance against autocratization (Arslanalp and Erkmen 2025). Ultimately, a protest repression analysis of Turkey in the last decade is constructive in providing a better understanding of threat perception in authoritarian regimes. However, existing protest datasets in Turkey during this autocratization process are limited either in temporal coverage or in protest repression detail.

Therefore, this thesis introduces the novel Turkey Repression and Contentious Events Dataset (TRACE) dataset and proposes human rights reports as an alternative to constructing disaggregated event datasets in non-democratic regimes. The TRACE dataset measures contention, repression, and protest intervention in Turkey at the event level. Covering the last 12 years of authoritarian transition in Turkey, it accounts for various types of repression, an expanded protest repression measurement, and a context-driven issue categorization. Utilizing this original dataset, I employed multinomial logistic regression models in order to compare different issues and different intensities of protest repression they encounter. I analyze nine issue types (Kurdish, Prisoner Rights, State of Emergency, Feminist and Queer, Labor, Environment, Immigration, Journalism, Student and Academic) across four protest repression types (Peaceful Protest, Police Block, Intervention, Detention).

The results suggest that protest repression is indeed shaped by the threat perceptions of the regime. Protests about the rights violations and expulsions during the state of emergency are significantly more likely to meet police intervention and detention than any other issue. As the state of emergency issue and the preceding coup attempt signify an immediate and direct threat to regime survival, this finding confirms that

repression increases when the threat posed by mobilization increases. Following, labor and environmental movements are met with intense protest repression, compared to the remaining issues. As the AKP regime and its autocratization process are structurally built on an economy of extractivism and privatization (Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut 2021), and hence a mutual dependency with the business elite (Esen and Gumuscu 2021), labor and environmental protests are existential threats to the survival of the AKP regime. These protests are significantly more likely to be intervened in, and protestors are more likely to be detained, illustrating how crucial it is for the regime to protect the economic elite and to silence dissent against it.

Although the results suggest repression is weaker on other protest issues, this is not to say those issues are not repressed. Indeed, in both political repression and protest repression, Turkey witnessed drastic increases in repression since 2013. Nevertheless, findings align with the literature, increases in repression were not uniform across issues, and targeted protest repression depended on the threat perception of the regime.

Consequently, this thesis aims to develop a better understanding of targeted repression and to gain some insight into threat perceptions in authoritarian regimes. By interrogating which issues are targeted with more repression, this research contributes to the literature on protest repression in non-democratic settings. Further, the TRACE dataset fills a significant gap in the existing dataset environment as well as the literature on event data. While presenting advantages of detailed event categorization and non-traditional sourcing, this project adds to the discussion on how to minimize selection bias in authoritarian regimes.

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows: The first chapter examines conventional approaches and consequent challenges to event data construction while introducing the novel TRACE dataset as an alternative to protest and repression analysis in non-democratic regimes. The following chapter compares TRACE to other available datasets in order to demonstrate the need for a new dataset and to establish external validity. The third chapter focuses on the determinants of repression in Turkey and takes a closer look at protest repression across different issues. It aims to expose the AKP's threat perceptions and resulting repressive measures against collective action. The last chapter summarizes the findings and the implications of this thesis, concluding with the limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. INTRODUCING THE TRACE DATASET

2.1 Introduction

The dynamics between repression and contention are widely questioned in the literature, and there is a puzzle still standing unabated about the relationship between the two (Davenport 2007). While many scholars try to find patterns between the two, the way we analyze both is surprisingly and severely different from each other.

The usual practice to measure repression is to construct yearly scales, indices, or counts out of Amnesty International and the US State Department reports, with some datasets using additional sources (Cingranelli and Richards 1999; Gibney et al. 2024). However, international and governmental sources can have limited access to local events and possibly introduce political bias (Fariss 2014). International organizations often cannot reach local and smaller events, whereas state reports can censor, downsize, or emphasize certain events according to their political agenda.

Further, the repertoire of repression in these datasets is often limited to more intense and violent human rights violations, where even the most detailed ones focus only on events such as political imprisonment, torture, extrajudicial killings, and disappearances (Cingranelli and Richards 1999). However, only reporting severely violent repression events cannot account for an ideal measure of political repression. Contemporary authoritarian regimes have moved from adopting such violent measures of repression to more discreet and systematic strategies (Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent 2022). Hence, only reporting extreme repression cases underestimates repression in post-Cold War authoritarian regimes.

However, repression data is not only limited in the variety of event types, but also too aggregated and biased to allow for a proper analysis. While yearly counts cannot account for changes within the year in repressive behavior, indices cannot measure changes in the repertoire of repression. Ultimately, the usual approach to construct a repression dataset significantly weakens the ability to measure repression.

On the other hand, methods for measuring contentious politics have been more diverse and advanced, albeit with particular drawbacks. Although there have been attempts to use alternative sources to measure mobilization, such as police reports (Uysal 2017), researchers predominantly rely on news articles and archives to construct their datasets (Hutter 2014). However, censorship, proximity to the events, issue preference, and institutional capacity can all distort event coverage of media outlets (Daphi et al. 2025). To compensate for potential loss and selection bias, scholars have adopted the use of various media outlets (Hanna 2017), yet to what extent these different sources can complement each other and overcome the selection bias problem is questionable, especially in authoritarian settings.

In non-democratic regimes, the media is under immense pressure and heavy censorship. With various legal and economic means, these regimes persecute and silence independent and opposition media (Paskhalis, Rosenfeld, and Tertytchnaya 2022). Besides news outlets, social media environment is also carefully crafted with censorship and access limitations (King, Pan, and Roberts 2013). This control over the media allows authoritarian regimes to manipulate flow of information about collective action and repression, which can then be used to gather support for the regime or to prevent mobilization (Zakharov and Schulze 2023). In short, almost all options to measure protest and repression are significantly weakened due to the authoritarian takeover of the media.

Ultimately, I argue that event data in non-democratic regimes require researchers to look deeper and find alternative sources. With these motivations, I introduce the TRACE dataset that would circumvent all these limitations as much as possible while filling the gap in existing datasets for protest and repression in Turkey.

The contributions of this thesis to the literature are twofold: it demonstrates that human rights reports from national and local sources can provide detailed event coverage in authoritarian settings and that computational methods can be advantageous in constructing event data. In the following chapters, I will present examples of how a new approach to event coverage in datasets can provide a better understanding of the relationship between contention and repression.

In the next two sections, I explain selection bias in news sourcing event data and introduce the source material of the TRACE dataset. I then present the data construction methods in detail with model specifications, event types, labeling, and other information. This chapter ends with the conclusion.

2.2 Challenges to News Sourcing Event Data

Media coverage of protest and repression involves an inherent risk of bias both in the selection and description of events (Lee 2014). In fact, even a literature on the differences in media coverage has developed out of this selection bias threat. For instance, McCarthy et al. (McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996) find that mainstream media coverage is strongly determined by the size, agenda, and timing of the protest. In terms of description bias, Davenport's (2009) study on the repression of the Black Panther Party illustrates that event coverage can differ across the political orientation of the news outlet. Hence, scholars using news outlets as sources have developed certain tactics to escape from bias as much as possible. Some have adopted triangulation of multiple sources or electronic news databases such as Lexis Nexis (Earl et al. 2004). In some cases, even activist websites have been used and proven to have advantages in coverage than local, national, and international media outlets (Almeida and Lichbach 2003).

In short, new outlets and more recently social media are still the dominant sources in constructing event data, yet these tactics to limit bias in coverage cannot work as efficiently in non-democratic contexts as it is in democracies. The media's power to cover protest and repression in authoritarian regimes is starkly different from that in democratic countries. Research has shown that emerging authoritarian regimes carefully design a system of media repression and manipulation with the aim of both gathering more support and hindering collective action (Zakharov and Schulze 2023).

Autocratic regimes pressure independent media economically by heavy tax burdens, restrictions on advertising, and legally with lawsuits, changes in legislation. On the other hand, in a more direct form of repression, media outlets can be shut down, transferred to regime supporters, or journalists imprisoned (Paskhalis, Rosenfeld, and Tertytchnaya 2022). Meanwhile, the scope of authoritarian control over media surpasses traditional news outlets and extends to social media too. Specifically for curtailing the effect of social media on mobilization, preemptive tactics such as word censoring, content filtering, and limiting internet access are used, as well as reactionary tactics like persecutions, defamation lawsuits, and pro-government cyber-attacks (Chang and Lin 2020; Hellmeier 2016; King, Pan, and Roberts 2013).

However, most of the literature on repression and censorship of dissent focuses on full autocracies like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and especially China (Rød and Weidmann 2015). There is still a gap in the literature on how media are utilized and transformed during democratic backsliding and in hybrid regimes. In hybrid regimes

and processes of autocratization, the rate of media control and censorship can be highly volatile and unpredictable, which introduces more biases to the measurement of dissent and repression. A news outlet might be relatively free during the early years of authoritarian rule and report on protests and repression. As the regime gets more authoritarian, censorship, co-optation, and repression can lead to changes in coverage of certain events. Thus, conducting an analysis on protest and repression using media sources is less than ideal in non-democratic and unstable regimes. In such contexts, one strategy to minimize selection bias can be to explore alternative sources like human rights reports.

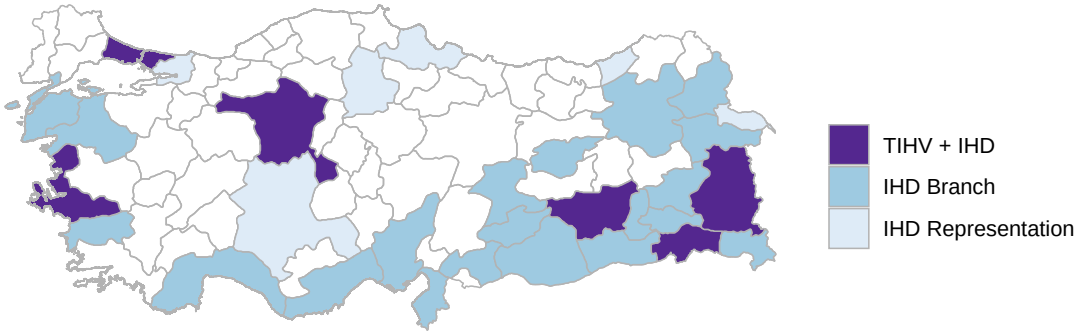
2.3 Reporting Human Rights Violations in Turkey

In 1986, the Human Rights Association (IHD) was founded as an unprecedented level of human rights violations took place in the years following the 1980 military coup in Turkey (Human Rights Association (İHD) 2025). Later in 1990, IHD led the efforts to establish the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV), specifically for the treatment, documentation, and prevention of human rights violations such as torture and ill-treatment (Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı (TİHV) 2025*b*). Since then, the Foundation has published extensive reports and sheets for a variety of violations. Perhaps one of the most significant works produced by these reports has been the colossal archive of daily reporting undertaken since 2013. These reports present an extensive understanding of human rights violations where, in addition to torture and ill-treatment, many other repression events such as arrests and bans, as well as contentious events such as hunger strikes and protests, are reported. Additionally, the Foundation has also systematically followed political trials, news from prisons, and reports from other NGOs. In short, the reports contain large-scale information across many different types of events.

However, it is not just detailed and daily reporting that makes this archive invaluable. One key point is that the Foundation follows a wide range of sources for its documentation efforts. According to the website of the Foundation, their sources for documentation are: the press, the IHD Headquarters and its branches, democratic mass organizations, human rights defenders, and various individuals and sources (Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı (TİHV) 2025*a*). Further, in the footnotes of each daily report, they list their sources as newspapers, news agencies, internet news sites, and TIHV's network of contacts. In the subsequent list, they name mainstream news outlets such as Hürriyet, more independent ones like Evrensel, often persecuted and

censored pro-Kurdish outlets such as Jinnews and Yeni Yaşam, local ones such as Yüksekova Haber, international news outlets like DeutscheWelle, and lastly NGOs like Kaos GL. Even with this range of news coverage, the sourcing of documentation is comprehensive, yet even more important are the additions to news outlets. In total, TIHV and IHD have 31 branches in 27 cities and 11 representative offices, which account for immense access to local networks (Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı (TİHV) 2025*b*; İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD) 2025). Alongside cities with high population, there are also many branches in cities with considerable Kurdish population where human rights violations have been drastically common both historically and in the last decade (Negrón-Gonzales 2021; Whiting and Kaya 2021). Lastly, both organizations are prominent and long-established human rights organizations that are possibly in contact with many other NGOs. Figure 2.1 presents the distribution of TIHV and IHD's offices in Turkey.

Figure 2.1 TIHV and IHD branches across Turkey



Note: TIHV has a representation office in Cizre (Şırnak) while IHD has additional representation offices in İskenderun (Hatay) and Doğubeyazıt (Ağrı).

Ultimately, the daily human rights reports of TIHV present data with extensive detailing and broad sourcing, demonstrating that researchers can benefit from supplementing news outlets with other sources when building event datasets. In fact, in cases like this, a diverse sourcing strategy can prove to be better in measurement.

2.4 Data Construction Methods

The reports are publicly available on the Foundation's website in both English and Turkish, but to avoid translation discrepancies and errors, they were scraped in Turkish. The first ever daily report was posted on February 1, 2013, while the

last report scraped for this version of the dataset was the report titled "December 31, 2024 – January 2, 2025". These reports are in unstructured text format, which required cleaning and then splitting the text into different levels, such as reports, topics, and sentences. Each report contains several topic chunks listed, which are separated by titles and sometimes mention several events. Thus, to gather as much information and detail as possible, all data construction operations were done at the sentence level. At the end, the reports consisted of more than 90,000 sentences spanning 12 years and still ongoing. Thus, I decided that the best approach for this project would be to use computational methods.

The use of computational methods has been a relatively new approach in event data and has received mixed reactions. More often and traditionally, manual coding has been preferred over automated models (Hutter 2014). However, it is also acknowledged that manual coding can be a lengthy and difficult process, especially if the aim is to cover a long period. In these cases, computational methods such as machine learning are known to be more efficient (Hanna 2017; Lorenzini et al. 2022), yet there is still some skepticism about the use of automation in data construction. Concerns about adopting automation and machine learning strategies differ depending on the type of automation. The use of keyword-based automated selection on news followed by manual coding raises concerns about losing observations during selection and hence underestimating mobilization, while the use of machine learning for event classification is often questioned for misclassification and overestimation (Lorenzini et al. 2022).

Ultimately, there seems to be no decisive method to reach the perfect event analysis. Each strategy has its strengths and weaknesses. In this case, machine learning strategies presented a significant advantage over manual coding due to the size of the data, but I also considered the weaknesses and limitations of the method and tried to compensate for them as much as possible during the data construction process.

The first step was to create a training dataset at the sentence level. I then used this training data to train a machine learning model and classified all sentences. Lastly, I used a Named Entity Recognition Model and keyword filtering to extract additional information. The rest of this section explains these methods and strategies in further detail.

2.4.1 Conceptual Framework

In this data project, I relied on several definitions frequently used in the literature to classify events of the contention, repression, and intervention models. For contention, I used the definition provided by Tilly, Tarrow, and McAdam for contentious politics as a starting point:

> "By contentious politics we mean: episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an objective of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants. Roughly translated, the definition refers to collective political struggle" (2004, 5).

In addition to this definition, I also included events with the same features in the non-public space of prisons, due to the publicity provided by the reports, as well as the high frequency of contentious and repressive events in the prisons. In terms of repression, I adopted the definition proposed by Davenport:

> "Like other forms of coercion, repressive behavior relies on threats and intimidation to compel targets, but it does not concern itself with all coercive applications (e.g., deterrence of violent crime and theft). Rather, it deals with applications of state power that violate First Amendment-type rights, due process in the enforcement and adjudication of law, and personal integrity or security" (2007, 2).

Lastly, for intervention, I relied on della Porta's conceptualization of "policing of protest – the police handling of protest events – a more neutral description for what protestors usually refer to as 'repression' and the state as 'law and order'" (1997, 99). In light of these definitions, seven contention event types and nine repression event types emerged as most common in reports.

Demonstration is a category that serves more as an umbrella term due to several reasons. Firstly, multiple Turkish words can be translated as demonstration: "eylem", "protesto", and "gösteri", all of which were labeled as such. Secondly, labor strikes were often mentioned as "eylem" instead of "grev"(strike) in the reports and hence labeled as a demonstration. Thirdly, event types such as physical boycotts, blockades, and human chains did not have enough potential observations to label for the training data and thus were added to this event type.

For public statements, exact translation was followed while being careful not the include the press meetings held indoors. As illustrated in Table 2.1, this event type holds an essential place in the protest repertoire in Turkey and has also become a tradition to start or end a protest with. In the 1990s, legal code was interpreted to penalize public statements less than other types of protest, pushing dissidents to adopt it for more protection (Uysal 2017). Since then, this protest repertoire has been significantly popular in Turkey and often accompanies other protest repertoires (Arslanalp and Erkmen 2020). In those cases, I prioritized labeling the other contention event type over public statement. Yet, even after that operation, public statement has the highest estimated count, emphasizing its significance to mobilization in Turkey.

The third most observed contentious event type is hunger strikes, mostly reported out of prisons. For this event type, I labeled sentences where at least one person was mentioned to start, continue, or end either a hunger strike (açlık orucu) or an indefinite hunger strike (ölüm orucu). The reports mention any updates regarding a hunger strike, but do not keep a daily record, which means that each observation accounts for an update.

Other and less frequent contentious event types are more direct in their labeling. Marches, sit-ins, and vigils account for events respectively mentioned as "yürüyüş", "oturma eylemi", and "nöbet" in Turkish. Lastly, celebration as an event type accounts for ethno-religious celebrations that are often enacted as protests, such as Newroz and Qaxan.

In terms of repression, the main approach was again to take the equivalent translation of the event term. To begin with, detention and arrest occupy a substantial part of the entire repertoire of repression and the distinction between the two events is that detentions refer to when people are taken into custody (gözaltı), and arrests refer to when people are jailed during the trial process (tutuklanma). Ill-treatment and torture mostly take place in prisons, detention centers, and deportation centers. Torture was labeled when an event was described as torture, and ill-treatment was labeled when human rights violations were mentioned under the title "kötü muamele".

Among the remaining repression event types, police block refers to events where a protest encounters a police block or barricade, aimed at hindering the protest from taking place, whereas intervention refers to events where a protest is attacked by the police with force, tear gas, or water cannons to disperse protestors. Access restrictions and bans are decisions by courts and state institutions to impose limits and bans on online news and publications for the former; curfews, protest bans,

and transportation limitations for the latter. Lastly, civilian death was labeled to measure civilian deaths as a direct or indirect result of the actions of a law enforcement agent. More information regarding the rules and practices followed to label the training data can be found in the appendix.

Furthermore, I created a binary measure for police intervention in protests for easier operationalization and measurement of protest repression. Those sentences where the police were said to block, barricade, intervene in a protest, beat the protestors, use water cannon and tear gas, or detain protestors were labeled as intervention. The remaining protest events were all labeled 0 for intervention.

2.4.2 Model Specifications

In order to prepare the training data, I first searched for all possible event types with keywords and arrived at estimated counts for each of them. I then listed event types that had enough potential observations. For each contention and repression event type, between 100 and 500 randomly selected sentences were hand-labeled according to the availability of each. The primary principle in hand-labeling was to follow the phrasing in the reports directly to adhere to the Foundation's understanding of events and to avoid debates on event definitions. Another reason for following the language in the reports was to abstain from unnecessary interpretation, yet there were times when some interpretation had to be made. Overall, the aim was to label each event as close to the reporting as possible and to keep the maximum possible number of event types. In total, the final list consisted of seven contentious event types and nine repression event types, which were labeled in separate columns for contention and repression. Table 2.1 presents the list of event types with their total counts in the training data alongside the estimated total counts in the final data.

Using this training dataset, I fine-tuned and used a BERT-based Turkish natural language processing (NLP) model for the event classification of three models: contention, repression, and intervention (Schweter 2020). Eighty percent of the training data was used for training, whereas the remaining twenty percent was used to test model performance. I tested 16 different versions with different combinations of four hyperparameters: batch size, learning rate, number of epochs, and weight decay. After comparing evaluation metrics of all models, I selected the best working model according to training loss, accuracy, and precision. The confusion matrices for all three models are provided in the Appendix. Table 2.2 presents evaluation metrics of the final three fine-tuned models.

Table 2.1 Distribution of event types

Category	Event Type	Training Data Counts	Estimated Total Counts
Contention	Public Statement	503	4814
	Demonstration	505	3453
	Hunger Strike	336	1468
	March	457	898
	Sit-in	406	531
	Vigil	292	524
	Celebration	113	276
Repression	Detention	536	12710
	Ill-treatment	520	7710
	Arrest	548	5120
	Civilian Death	494	2389
	Intervention	576	2121
	Ban	337	1625
	Torture	507	1540
	Access Restriction	309	1184
	Police Block	330	1084

Table 2.2 Evaluation metrics for models

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score	Loss
Contention	0.9343	0.9326	0.9343	0.9316	0.3015
Repression	0.9556	0.9568	0.9556	0.9556	0.2187
Intervention	0.9830	0.9831	0.9830	0.9830	0.0725

As the table shows, I constructed three separate models for contention, repression, and intervention with the purpose of reaching more detailed event information. Training separate models for these event categories allowed capturing the interaction between contention and repression as well as the intensity of protest repression.

2.4.3 Other Information: Location, Date, Issue

In order to collect more details on protest and repression events, I applied a Named Entity Recognition (NER) model specifically developed for Turkish that extracts and classifies the entities mentioned (Altinok 2023). I mainly used the model on the sentence level while also applying it to the topic titles for additional information. At the end, not all sentences contained the same level of detail, which led me to develop a series of fallback mechanisms to uncover as much detail as possible while minimizing potential errors in extraction.

The NER model extracted location information from sentence texts and topic titles for both cities and districts mentioned. In cases where there was no city information available, I used the information of facilities and organizations mentioned and applied a location API model to extract city details (Google 2025). While the NER model worked well for the extraction of location information, it worked poorly in extracting other information due to specifications in reporting. One such example was the date variable. Since the reports are quite detailed and some are updates on previous events, many sentences mention several dates, which are all extracted by the model. Although in some cases it is easy to differentiate between the actual event date and others, there is no generalizable solution to designate the exact event date. Therefore, to avoid potential multiplication and misclassification, I choose to construct the date variable out of the report titles, which is essentially named as the period that the report covers. Most of the reporting takes place the day after the event, with sometimes more than a day's break due to weekends and official holidays. Thus, conducting a monthly or weekly analysis should result in a more precise measurement.

Another problem emerged with the event issues when the outputs of the NER model did not provide enough information to construct variables for the issues and actors. Hence, out of the patterns I encountered while reading the reports, as well as the general topics of contention used in the literature for Turkey (Arslanalp and Erkmen 2020), I created a list of issue types and relevant keywords to filter sentence texts and topic titles. I then manually labeled the issue type in events where multiple issues were identified by the keyword search. These issue types refer to claims, aims, and goals presented in each event by the challengers in contention events and by the state in repression events. In other words, issues translate into the movement in which an event emerges from or targets. Table 2.3. presents a list of issue types.

Table 2.3 Issue types and descriptions

Issue Type	**Description**
Kurdish	Kurdish political movement and events in Kurdish-populated cities
Prisoner Rights	Conditions of detention, rights of prisoners, reports from prisons
State of Emergency	Actions regarding the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt, the resulting state of emergency and rights violations
Labor	Events involving workers, unions, wages and employment conditions
Journalism	Freedom of speech, press freedom, censorship, attacks on journalism
Student and Academic	Academic freedom, events in universities and campuses, student organizations and movements
Environment	Environmental protection and destruction, and events about the climate crisis
Feminist and Queer	Women's rights and organizations, anti-violence campaigns, LGBTQ+ rights and rights violations, pride marches, Queer NGOs
Immigration	Immigration support or discrimination, events in detention and deportation centers, or involving immigrant/refugee persons

2.4.4 Limitations and Future Plans

Whether news, social media, or human rights reports, data sources will always have their particular limitations. During the data construction process, the human rights reports published by TIHV presented a few challenges to cover as much detail as possible. In the majority of the sentences, fine-grained location information was missing. Although additional fallback mechanisms and different models were applied, more precise information could not be acquired about the precise location of events. Thus, the location variable was constructed at the city level.

Besides some concerns about the content, there were a few other limitations regarding methodology. Constructing a dataset comes with various challenges the

researcher has to deal with, and both manual-coding and machine learning methods come with their own advantages and disadvantages. Although the latter is much more efficient in handling a vast amount of data, such as the daily reports of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, there are some aspects open to improvement in this dataset.

One weakness emerges from the method by which the issue variable has been constructed. I used keyword filtering after the NER model failed to provide sufficient information, but a more systematic and sophisticated approach could be adopted by building another fine-tuned BERT-based model to predict issue topics. With this strategy, creating separate and detailed agenda and actor information would also become possible.

Likewise, one possible improvement could be expanding the repertoire of contention and repression present in this version of the dataset. After scanning the reports for each event type and their possible counts, some contentious events such as boycotts, funerals, and commemorations had to be included in the event type 'demonstrations' due to the low number of observations. Eventually, as time passes and more reports are published, these events might reach a reporting level that would enable their classification. Lastly, with datasets constructed using machine learning, a few concerns emerge about measurement errors, namely about over-estimation and misclassification.

Some event reports include statements of the victim and witness or refer to past events, which can cause over-estimation if it were done so in separate sentences. Thus, I specifically hand-labeled quotes and past events under a category for irrelevant events while preparing the training data. I later checked the final version of the data for over-estimation and found that the number of events in the same event type, date, and location is marginal.

In a dataset with more than 90,000 observations, it is inevitable to miss, duplicate, or mislabel some events. All these strategies were developed to minimize measurement error as much as possible. Although I tried to detect patterns that could cause measurement error and come up with systematic solutions to reduce their effect on the dataset's event coverage, there is always room for improvement. Acknowledging the limitations and weaknesses of this version, the aim is to enhance the coverage of the dataset upon future developments in Natural Language Processing and feedback from other researchers.

2.5 Conclusion

The TRACE dataset covers almost 12 years of event information in Turkey, coinciding with a significant period of authoritarian deepening as well as various crises the country has faced. Contentious politics and repression in Turkey have changed drastically since 2013, yet existing data have been limited in their ability to help explain this period.

Currently, conventional approaches to measuring contention and repression prove to be insufficient in developing a better comprehension of the relationship between the two. Further, aggregation has possibly caused us to lose important nuances and differences that could prove to be explanatory for the many questions about protest and repression dynamics still waiting to be answered. However, TRACE's rich and extensive event coverage provides a chance to understand how autocratization intensifies, expands, and adapts both spatially and temporally.

With more details on protests and state response at the event level, the dataset enables exploring patterns in how and when different types of contention are treated by the state. It also provides rich insight into repression with new event types that are often not measured and not discussed, especially in relation to collective action. Lastly, by providing issue topic information, TRACE adds more context information that enables the contention and repression analysis to move from event counts to a more refined and in-depth estimation.

The adoption of machine learning techniques raises the question of misclassification and overestimation. However, in this case, using a source that is less likely to cause selection bias and adopting computational techniques that could process large data more easily have produced a dataset that could answer questions about contention and repression more precisely and with more confidence. Consequently, this project demonstrates that seeking alternative sources and methods can be risky yet rewarding, showing that researchers should not avoid novel practices and force the boundaries of existing methodology if necessary.

In the following chapters, I will present two applications of the TRACE dataset to illustrate the need for a more detailed dataset and to give insights into how it can help us better analyze autocratization.

3. COMPARING PROTEST EVENT COVERAGE IN TURKEY

3.1 Introduction

Research on dataset comparisons demonstrates that there can be considerable difference in event coverage due to the source material and data construction strategies. Clarke (2023) shows that compared to locally sourced datasets, global datasets have considerable bias towards urban, violent, and large-scale events. On the other hand, different coding rules and strategies can cause underestimation or overestimation (Raleigh et al. 2010), as well as differences in the quality and quantity of event detail (Eck 2012).

In the previous chapter, I explained the link between media sources and selection bias in event data while introducing the TRACE dataset as an alternative to minimize selection bias in measurement. In this chapter, I will present TRACE's advantages and disadvantages compared to other datasets. Ultimately, I argue that compared to existing datasets, the TRACE dataset offers a better measurement of protest and repression dynamics during the authoritarian transition period in Turkey. I test my argument and the TRACE dataset's external validity by comparing it with two datasets: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) and The Turkey Protest, Repression, and Pro-Government Rally Dataset (TPRPGRD).

Findings suggest that TRACE has superior coverage in reporting protests with intervention and protests in Kurdish-populated cities. Although the coverage of peaceful protests is weaker in TRACE, coverage trends for both peaceful protests and protests with intervention show some alignment with the other two datasets, ultimately supporting external validity.

Consequently, this comparison contributes to the literature on protest and repression in two ways: it illustrates that dataset selection matters greatly for measurement capacity as each dataset has different strengths and weaknesses and shows that measuring protest and repression in non-democratic settings requires novel approaches.

The next section explores each dataset in its data-generating processes, structures, and measurements. I then present the empirical strategy in the research design section and end the chapter with a discussion on the findings.

3.2 Datasets

Testing the TRACE dataset in protest coverage and external validity requires finding datasets that are suitable for comparison amongst the wide array of existing datasets. Since TRACE consists of protest and repression events in Turkey for the last 12 years, comparison datasets need to cover protest and repression in Turkey at least partially for the period of 2013-2024. At the end, two publicly available datasets are fit to do a comparison with TRACE: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) and The Turkey Protest, Repression, and Pro-Government Rally Dataset (TPRPGRD). Table 3.1 presents the comparison summary of these datasets while the following subsections examine each dataset in detail.

Table 3.1 Comparison of protest event datasets

	ACLED	**TPRPGRD**	**TRACE**
Data Generation	Manual coding	Manual coding	Machine coded
Source	News outlets supplemented with non-traditional media sources	National newspapers: Cumhuriyet and Yeni Şafak	Daily Human Rights Reports of TIHV
Period	2016 – onwards	2013 – 2016	2013 – 2024
Protest Coverage	Violent vs. non-violent demonstrations	36 event types under 3 categories	7 different event types
Repression Coverage	Sexual violence, attacks, and arrests	42 event types under 6 categories	9 different event types
Protest Repression	Peaceful protest, non-lethal intervention, lethal intervention	Specific events for the action taken by the police	Separate events for peaceful protest, police block, intervention, and detention

3.2.1 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data

ACLED is a global event-level dataset that focuses on the coverage of internal political conflict and political violence. It provides detailed event coverage such as actors, exact geographical location, and fatalities across a wide array of event types that are mainly separated as political violence, demonstrations, and strategic developments. The data construction method depends on manual coding by researchers across the world, with several checks for coder reliability (Raleigh et al. 2010).

ACLED adopts a sourcing strategy that is developed specifically to minimize selection bias in event coverage. While the common approach is to use multiple news outlets that would amend the shortcomings of each other, ACLED supplements its news sourcing with non-traditional sources (Raleigh, Kishi, and Linke 2023). It tracks four main types of sources: traditional media, reports, local partner data, and new media. In terms of traditional media, news outlets from local to international are all included in the sourcing process, with a focus on the local language instead of English. Reports and local partner data range from international organizations, NGOs, human rights organizations to partner activist organizations. Lastly, new media sources such as Telegram and WhatsApp, which are widely used for updates in conflicts, are also followed with verification (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2024). Overall, ACLED's sourcing is carefully designed to expand event coverage as much as possible.

While ACLED aims to report armed conflict events, it also covers protest and repression events. Protests are mainly separated into violent and non-violent demonstrations. Non-violent demonstrations are further separated into three sub-event types that classify state response to peaceful demonstrations: peaceful protest, protest with intervention, and excessive force against protestors. Peaceful protest is used to identify demonstrations without any kind of police intervention. Protest with intervention events include all non-lethal coercion tactics to disperse the demonstration, ranging from police beatings and tear gas to arrests. Lastly, excessive force against protestors is the sub-event type for the state or state-affiliated groups' use of lethal force against the protestors that could cause serious injuries and death (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2024). Ultimately, the approach to reporting demonstrations is concerned with whether the protestors adopt violence or not, while protest intervention is focused on the distinction between lethal and non-lethal response.

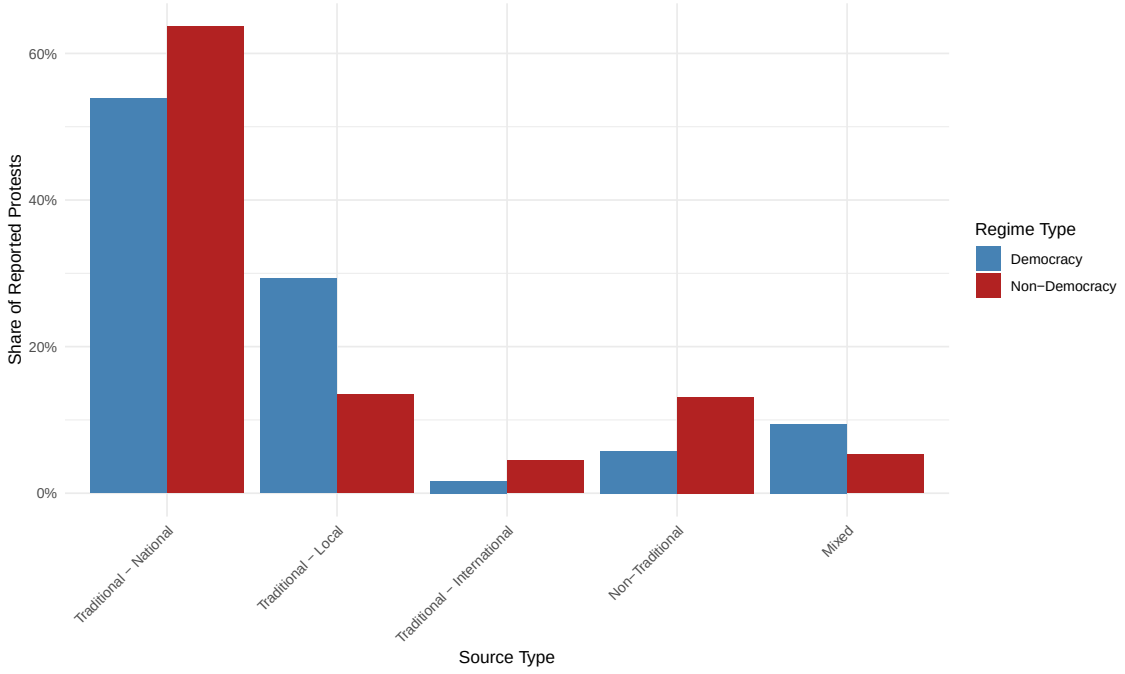
On the other hand, there are several event types for measuring repression: sexual violence, attack, abduction/forced disappearance, and arrests. Attack focuses on violence and harm inflicted on civilians, whereas sexual violence refers to attacks of

a sexual nature. Abduction/forced disappearance events include captivity by non-state actors and extrajudicial detentions by the state. Finally, the arrest sub-event type specifically refers to detentions of important people and mass arrests that would trigger mobilization and conflict (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2024). Overall, repression event coverage is limited to these four event types and within their respective definitions.

Furthermore, ACLED has numerous detailed event types for conflicts and violence that range from territory transfers, armed clashes, and suicide bombs to chemical weapons (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2024). With this wide conflict event repertoire, ACLED enables measuring different aspects of protest mobilization, such as the relationship between protests and conflict. However, specifically for the dynamics of protest and repression, ACLED has its certain benefits and shortcomings.

To begin with, its global coverage provides consistent measurement for multi-country analyses. Researcher-led coding significantly decreases the possibility of event duplication, misclassification, and fake reporting. Moreover, a substantial advantage of using ACLED for an analysis comes from the rich sourcing methods. Using numerous traditional media outlets that are supplemented with non-traditional sources results in extensive event coverage, especially in non-democratic settings. Figure 3.1 shows a comparison of protest coverage across various source types utilized by ACLED,

Figure 3.1 Comparison of protest coverage across sources and regime type



demonstrating the difference in sourcing between democratic and non-democratic regimes[1]. However, even with the incorporation of non-traditional media sources, ACLED is still dependent heavily on traditional news sources in reporting protests.

Although extensive in its ability to report different events, the dataset lacks detail on event types. The main disadvantage of using ACLED is that it cannot account for the various tactics adopted by authoritarian regimes to undermine mobilization, both as protest repression and political repression. Protests with police intervention are separated according to the lethality of the measure taken, instead of the specific tactic employed. Police beatings, tear gas, and arrests are all reported under the same event type and hence miss significant variation in state response to dissent. It has only a few repression event types that are more related to conflicts instead of political repression. The reporting of arrests is specific to particular arrests, and the attack event-type is too general, while other repertoire of repression, such as detentions, bans, and torture, are left out. Lastly, ACLED cannot account for the preferences and shifts in protest repertoire, as demonstrations are only reported as violent or non-violent. Overall, event type variety is limited and aggregated for analyzing protest and repression dynamics.

These advantages and disadvantages present themselves across any protest and repression analysis, yet what about using the ACLED dataset for Turkey?

Turkey went through a significant erosion in press freedom in the last decade, and ACLED's extensive sourcing strategy amends for a significant portion of selection bias encountered in authoritarian settings (Yeşil 2018). It follows local and independent media outlets such as Evrensel Gazetesi and Mezopotamya Ajansı, activist websites such as Sendika.org, and uses reports from NGOs and human rights organizations such as the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. Essentially, ACLED has a sourcing strategy that incorporates a wide array of media sources. However, although selection bias is minimized with this sourcing strategy, ACLED is still insufficient to reflect on the shifts in protest-repression dynamics through the autocratization period that Turkey has gone through in the last decade. The AKP's wide-ranging repertoire of repression is not measured in these limited event types for political violence, shifts in state response to protests are not captured with the protest intervention distinction, and dissidents' reaction to repression is not observable. In short, there are not enough event types to differentiate changes in repertoire of contention and repression.

1. Regime types are designated according to the latest version of V-Dem Data and the Regimes of the World variable.

In addition to the lack of fine-grained event information, ACLED covers a relatively short period in Turkey. Although ACLED's coverage dates back to 1997 for some countries, data on Turkey only goes back to January 2016[2]. Data availability on only the last 9 years misses information on a very significant period of autocratization in Turkey, as well as the protest-repression dynamics in the aftermath of the Gezi Protests. Consequently, with all these shortcomings, the ACLED dataset proves to be not ideal for a detailed analysis of changes in contention and repression in Turkey.

3.2.2 Turkey Protest, Repression, and Pro-Government Rally Dataset

TPRPGRD is an event-level dataset constructed to report protest, repression, and pro-government rallies in Turkey. TPRPGRD's sourcing consists of Cumhuriyet and Yeni Şafak newspapers, the former as the anti-government source and the latter as the pro-government source. Events are hand-coded from the newspapers by the authors and checked for coder reliability. Its coverage starts from January 2013 and ends in December 2016, which overlaps with an important period for collective action and political violence in Turkey. It covers periods of high mobilization, such as the Gezi Protests in 2013 and the Kobane Protests in 2014, intense repression of the Kurdish political movement following the June 2015 elections, and the emergence of pro-government rallies in the aftermath of the coup attempt in 2016 (Kahvecioğlu, Demirel-Pegg, and Aytürk 2023).

Under the main categories of protest, repression, and pro-government rally, there are wide-ranging event types separated according to the level of violence and intensity. TPRPGRD reports on more than 30 event types under each category and thus provides a fine-grained dataset. For protests and pro-government rallies, sub-event types range from low intensity actions like petitions and founding organizations, to medium intensity actions such as demonstrations, and lastly, high intensity actions such as assaults and attacks. These sub-event types also include repertoire that is specific to a protest or rally episode, such as banging pots during the Gezi Protests and democracy watches held after the coup attempt. Moreover, the repertoire of repression includes bans, torture, arrests, and legal actions, as well as detailed protest repression information such as police blocking demonstrations, beating protestors, using tear gas, or detaining protestors. Overall, TPRPGRD's event type coverage is significantly detailed and categorized (Kahvecioğlu, Demirel-Pegg, and Aytürk 2023, Appendix).

2. According to the version of the dataset available in May 2025.

Additional event information consists of associated actors and targets, the number of dead, injured, or arrested, and the scale of the event for protests and pro-government rallies. The cutoff between small-scale and large-scale demonstrations is 200 participants, and reported by the sub-event type. There are more than 80 actors and targets identified in the dataset that are split into several categories, such as the state, social actors, political parties, religious and ethnic populations (Kahvecioğlu, Demirel-Pegg, and Aytürk 2023, Appendix).

In short, TPRPGRD's strengths come from a meticulous approach to reporting an event. Hand-coding events from archival data allows for all reported events to be covered, especially in detail, even in periods of high frequency, such as the Gezi Protests or the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt. However, this advantage comes at the cost of limited time coverage and selection bias. With data construction methods like TPRPGRD's, extending the coverage period and sourcing can become extremely difficult and time-consuming. While the dataset covers an important period in AKP's autocratization, it accounts for only four years. Any analysis on the patterns and shifts in protest-repression dynamics in Turkey requires a broader time window. Further, the sourcing of events from Cumhuriyet and Yenişafak newspapers only leads to severe selection bias problems. Although different in their approach to the AKP regime, both are national and moderate newspapers, lacking resources and incentives to cover non-urban and relatively small events. In addition, the lack of independent or pro-Kurdish news outlets results in the risk of ethnic bias and underestimation of Kurdish mobilization and repression. Ultimately, TPRPGRD provides a reliable measurement for a specific kind of analysis, limiting its ability to explain protest and repression dynamics in Turkey.

3.2.3 Turkey Repression and Contentious Events Dataset

The TRACE dataset is an event-level dataset that aims to cover contentious events, political repression, and protest intervention in Turkey from February 2013 to 2025. It is constructed out of daily human rights violation reports of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TIHV) by using a semi-automated machine learning model and natural language processing. Although the TRACE dataset relies solely on the reports, the events in the reports are collected from numerous media outlets at the local and national level, NGO reports, the TIHV's collection of submissions, and networks. This variety in sourcing amends for and minimizes selection bias caused by proximity, censorship, and ethnic bias.

Under the categories of contention, repression, and intervention, the TRACE dataset has several event types that account for common repertoires. Contention events include demonstrations, hunger strikes, sit-ins, and celebrations, whereas repression events range from bans, arrests, and ill-treatment to torture. In terms of intervention, the dataset enables a fine-grained protest repression analysis with event types police block, intervention, and detention. It recognizes and measures differences between police non-violently dispersing or blocking a demonstration, police beating protestors or using tear gas to disperse the demonstration, and the police detaining the protestors.

In addition to a comprehensive repertoire of event types, TRACE provides context information regarding the issue present in the event. These issue types refer to the subject of challenge in contention events and to the reason for targeting in repression events. Alongside more universal issue types such as labor and environment, there are also issue types particular to the context, such as state of emergency and Kurdish. Further details on the dataset construction methods, sourcing, and event coverage can be found in the previous chapter and the appendix.

In short, the TRACE dataset allows for the measurement of protest and repression in Turkey for the last 12 years, the longest period available across existing datasets. It provides event type information at the repertoire level and specifically identifies police behavior in protests. Finally, by categorizing events according to the issue presented, the TRACE dataset helps to track changes in contentious and repressive behavior. While this dataset is ideal for analyzing shifts in protest-repression dynamics during autocratization, it still has certain weaknesses.

While the use of machine learning methods helps construct large data, it also carries the risk of duplication and misclassification. The model evaluation statistics presented in Chapter 2 show that the models used to construct the TRACE dataset have high success rates in classification, yet these computational techniques are relatively new and still open to improvement. Further, in terms of the content, the TRACE dataset depends on the reporting of TIHV, their selection mechanisms, definitions, and resources. Although not yet encountered, changes in those aspects and thus the reporting can undermine consistency in the future.

3.3 Data and Research Design

Selection bias is the most interrogated problem in protest event analysis (PEA). There are many studies focusing solely on the causes of selection bias as well as

possible solutions. I argue that using diverse media sources can change the spatial coverage of protests and decrease the effect of selection bias. To examine the impact of sourcing strategy on selection bias, I focus on ethnic bias in protest coverage.

Since the early 2000s, the AKP's strategy to use governmental restrictions and authority to seize media outlets and later to allocate them to pro-AKP economic elites has worked to capture media in Turkey (Yeşil 2018). With the erosion of independent media outlets came the increasing criminalization of often Kurdish and leftist journalists. In the last fifteen years, imprisonments and harassment of journalists rose to considerably high levels, further undermining the freedom of speech in Turkey (Yeşil 2018). Finally, the AKP's takeover of media and censorship capacity became evident with the 2015-2016 security operations in the Kurdish populated cities. Although research illustrates the severity of repression and human rights violations against the Kurds in that period (Negrón-Gonzales 2021), mainstream media outlets refrained from covering the repression of Kurds, and media outlets that were sympathetic to Kurdish issues were under heavy repression (Kocer and Bozdağ 2020).

Thus, diversification of media sources is crucial in measuring protest and repression in Turkey due to ethnic bias and censorship. Comparing protest and protest repression coverage across different datasets, I test the following hypothesis:

H_1: The TRACE dataset's coverage of protest and repression in Kurdish populated cities is stronger due to its diverse sourcing strategy.

For the empirical analysis, I use the three datasets compared in the previous section: ACLED, TPRPGRD, and TRACE. As explained in the previous section and Table 3.1., these three datasets overlap in certain periods and in limited detail. Thus, I conduct the analysis for two types of protests: one consists of all reported protest events, and the other consists of protest events that report any form of intervention. I then compare TRACE with ACLED for the 2016-2004 period and TRACE with TPRPGRD in the 2013-2016 period.

To construct a mutual protest measurement, I used the demonstration event type from ACLED, contention events that take place in public spheres from TRACE, and a list of collective action events that fit the definition provided by Tilly, Tarrow, and McAdam (2004, 5) from TPRPGRD. For a mutual protest intervention measurement, I combined the protest with intervention and excessive force against protestors sub-event types from ACLED, protest repression events of police block, intervention, and detention from TRACE, and lastly repression events taking place during demonstrations from TPRPGRD.

Lastly, I constructed two dummies for spatial interaction: metropolitan and Kurdish populated. The former consists of İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir, whereas the latter includes 12 cities designated as cities with a majority Kurdish population in the literature (Celik 2005; Kibris 2011; Mutlu 1996; Tezcür and Gurses 2017)[3].

To test my hypothesis, I use a Poisson regression with interaction terms, city and year fixed effects, and a city-month unit of analysis. The dependent variables for both models are event counts, while the main independent variable is the dataset being compared. The baseline dataset for comparison is TRACE. The following is the final base model estimated:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{E}(Y_{it}) = \exp(&\beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \mathrm{Dataset}_{it} + \beta_2 \cdot \mathrm{Metropolitan}_{it} + \beta_3 \cdot \mathrm{Kurdish}_{it} \\ &+ \beta_4 \cdot (\mathrm{Dataset} \times \mathrm{Metropolitan})_{it} + \beta_5 \cdot (\mathrm{Dataset} \times \mathrm{Kurdish})_{it})\end{aligned}$$

where Y_{it} is the protest or intervention event count for city i in month t.

3.4 Findings

Figure 3.2 presents protest coverage trends of datasets for all protests. This over-time comparison shows that while TRACE provides protest coverage for a longer period than both datasets, it reports fewer protests overall compared to both the ACLED and TPRPGRD datasets. On the other hand, according to Figure 3.3, TRACE reports fewer protests with intervention than TPRPGRD but still more than ACLED. The over-time trends between ACLED and TRACE are similar and at certain times overlapping.

According to Table 3.2, the estimation results also support these trends. For the overlapping 2016-2024 period, ACLED performs significantly better at reporting protests than TRACE. In line with the previous findings, its coverage for protests with intervention is weaker than that of TRACE. In both metropolitan cities and cities with Kurdish population, ACLED reports fewer protests overall, with the exception of protests with intervention in Kurdish cities, yet the effect is relatively small.

3. List of cities with majority Kurdish population: Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Muş, Tunceli, Siirt, Şırnak, Van

Figure 3.2 Over-time protest trends across datasets

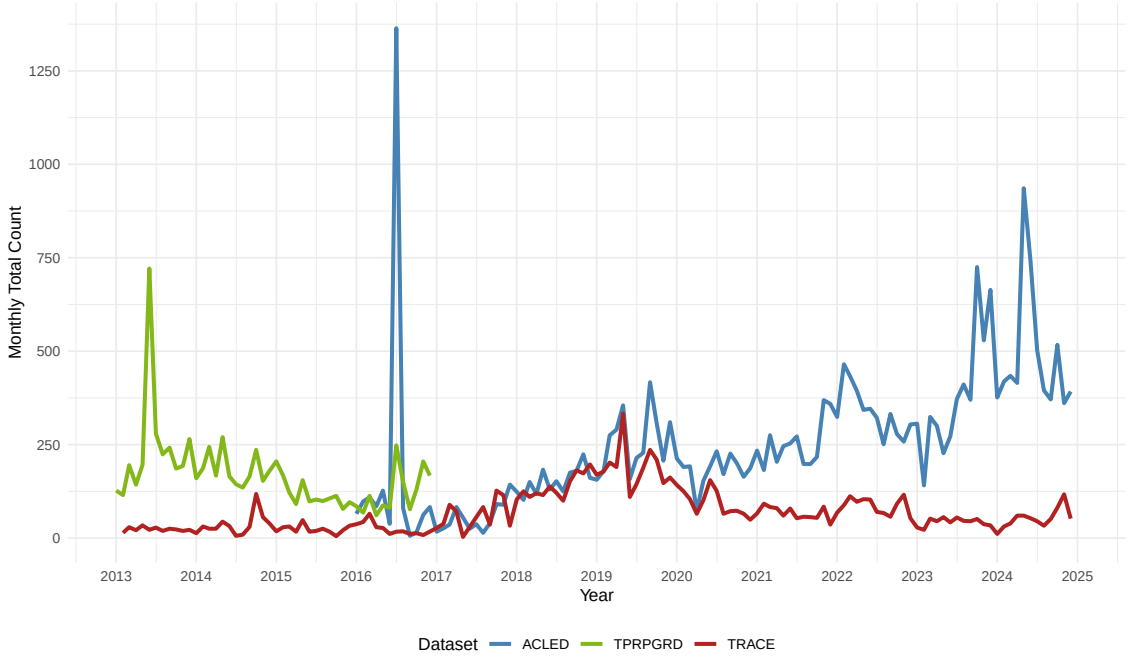
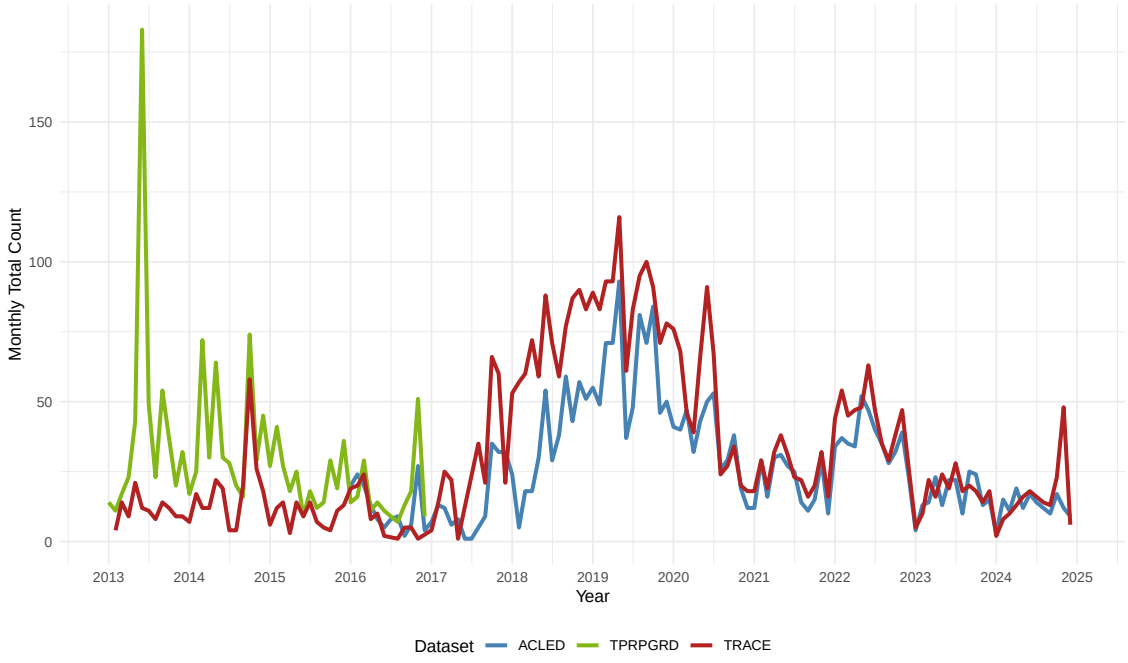


Figure 3.3 Over-time protest intervention trends across datasets



For the overlapping 2013-2016 period, TPRPGRD performs significantly better at reporting both all protests and protests with intervention than TRACE, although the latter difference is smaller. Similarly, in metropolitan cities, TPRPGRD again shows better measurement of protests and protests with repression. On the other

Table 3.2 Poisson regression results comparing protest and intervention counts across datasets

	TRACE vs ACLED (2016–2024)		**TRACE vs TPRPGRD (2013–2016)**	
	All Protests	Protest Intervention	All Protests	Protest Intervention
ACLED	1.854***	−0.237***		
	(0.027)	(0.071)		
ACLED × Metropolitan	−1.120***	−0.131^{+}		
	(0.031)	(0.076)		
ACLED × Kurdish	−0.577***	0.243*		
	(0.039)	(0.105)		
TPRPGRD			1.716***	0.894***
			(0.050)	(0.089)
TPRPGRD × Metropolitan			0.545***	0.316**
			(0.070)	(0.116)
TPRPGRD × Kurdish			−0.726***	−0.515***
			(0.083)	(0.142)
Baseline	TRACE	TRACE	TRACE	TRACE
Log-Likelihood	−30894.75	−10473.65	−8310.87	−3464.91
AIC	61801.5	20959.3	16633.74	6941.83
BIC	61844.46	21002.27	16671.79	6979.88
Num. Obs.	9516	9516	4194	4194

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. $^{+}$p < 0.1, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

hand, TPRPGR's reporting in Kurdish populated cities is significantly weaker than that of TRACE, both for all protests and protests with intervention.

The implications of these differences are twofold. First, the TRACE dataset measures fewer peaceful protests compared to other two datasets; in other words, TRACE is better at measuring protests with intervention than peaceful protests. Since the dataset's source is human rights violation reports, it is likely that these reports are prioritizing the documentation of protests with repression.

Secondly, sourcing strategy changes protest event coverage in datasets. TPRPGRD relies on the manual coding of two national newspapers, which significantly undermines Kurdish mobilization. ACLED has a diverse sourcing strategy, incorporating many forms of media, yet it still falls behind TRACE when it comes to reporting protests with intervention. Further, even though TRACE's coverage of peaceful protests is weaker, it scores better in all protest coverage in Kurdish populated cities, further illustrating the gravity of ethnic bias in other datasets' protest reporting.

In conclusion, all three datasets present their particular advantages in measuring protest and repression in Turkey for the last decade. Findings show that ACLED provides better coverage for protests in Turkey for a considerable period of autocratization in Turkey. TPRPGRD covers a short but important time window in AKP's authoritarian setting, enabling fine-grained protest and repression analysis with its detailed event classification. Lastly, the TRACE dataset provides detailed event

classification across a longer period than both datasets. Further, its superior coverage in Kurdish populated cities demonstrates that some biases can be minimized with diversification of sources in non-democratic settings.

4. DETERMINANTS OF CIVIC SPACE CRACKDOWNS

4.1 Introduction

Amongst the many threats to the survival of authoritarian regimes, collective action is the most direct and unpredictable one. As an inherent component of any non-democratic regime, coercion is essential for autocracies in addressing this challenge (Svolik 2012), yet although widely studied, there is no clear conclusion as to whether repression works against contention or not (Davenport 2007). Attempts to find an answer to under which circumstances coercion ensures regime survival should inquire about many different dimensions of repression, such as when, where, how, and against whom.

Comparing different issues and protest repression against their mobilization, I intend to find an explanation for the determinants of protest repression. While each has distinct institutions, values, and challenges, all authoritarian regimes share the same fundamental crisis of regime survival. Thus, it is crucial to understand how autocrats perceive threats to their survival and build strategies to eliminate or weaken them. As one of the most intense authoritarian transitions in the last decades (Esen and Gumuscu 2016), Turkey's autocratization process offers a valuable insight into authoritarian survival logic and repression mechanisms.

This chapter specifically examines selective protest repression according to the issue of challenge, arguing that protests that are directed at the central pillars of the regime are met with an intense state response compared to other issues. Using the novel TRACE dataset, I test the effect of different issue types on protest repression in Turkey since 2013, both spatially and temporally.

Findings show that protests regarding the state of emergency are the most likely to be heavily repressed. Furthermore, the results suggest that labor and environmental protests are more likely to encounter intense repressive measures compared to other issues. Thus, the analysis supports the threat model of repression and confirms that

the AKP regime is more threatened when it is challenged on issues directed at the main drivers of its survival and autocratization.

Closely examining the strategies adopted by the AKP in the last decade, my aim is to provide insight into a case where protest repression has worked in undermining collective action potential and ultimately, in ensuring regime survival. Essentially, this paper contributes to the broader understanding of how authoritarian regimes employ repression and curb democratization efforts.

The following two sections investigate the literature on first, the relationship authoritarian regimes establish with contention and repression, and then the autocratization process of Turkey in the last decade. In the fourth section, I introduce the data and the research design. Lastly, I conclude with a discussion on the findings.

4.2 The Logic and Limits of Repression in Autocracies

Every now and then, regimes are forced to change, and autocrats forced to step down with popular uprisings, which seems to haunt every autocrat, aspiring or not, in their nightmares. In fact, recent history with the Revolutions of 1989, the Color Revolutions, and lastly the Arap Spring have demonstrated how contagious and unstoppable a mass movement can be. Accordingly, authoritarian regimes, especially compared to democracies, are more likely to use repression to consolidate their rule and to hinder any collective action against it (Escribà-Folch 2013). However, even though all authoritarian systems adopt repressive measures to ensure their survival, it does not always work. If Bashar al-Assad and Ilham Aliyev were both to be asked whether repression worked to protect their regimes, surely, they would not give the same answer. Likewise, the literature is still unable to find a definitive answer for whether repression indeed ensures autocratic survival or not (Davenport 2007; Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent 2022). Especially for mass uprisings, the question seems even more puzzling and the answer more ambiguous (Tarrow 2022), yet one thing is clear: repression is risky and costly (Escribà-Folch 2013). For an authoritarian regime, the consequences of repression lie twofold: the risks taken against the dissidents, and the costs paid due to observers.

First off, repression is risky in that it can trigger backlash and radicalize collective action as it did in Syria after the Arab Spring (Almeida 2018). It can increase grievances, push protest repertoire to violence, and encourage the dissidents to take up arms. In the least, heavy repression can further mobilize risk-acceptant demonstrators and increase the duration of protests (Lewis and Ives 2025).

Secondly, repression is costly due to the presence of various audiences and bystanders. One such actor consists of the institutions of repression, such as the military and the police. According to Svolik, one way to face the problem of authoritarian control is repression which can lead to a grave danger because: "The very resources that enable the regime's repressive agents to suppress its opposition also empower them to act against the regime itself " (2012, 124). Further, repression is also costly because it requires resource allocation to the repressive agent (Olar 2019).

On the other hand, there are actors outside the regime observing the response to dissidence. When adopting brutal repressive measures against dissidents, authoritarian regimes risk delegitimizing themselves in the domestic and international arena (della Porta 1997). Even if they are less accountable to the international audience than democratic regimes, no autocrat would want undue attention to their repressive mechanisms and create outrage. Further, authoritarian regimes may not require the support of the majority, yet they seek the approval and consent of some part of the society to secure their survival (De Mesquita et al. 2005; Svolik 2012). In other words, they care about what people think, and they want people to like them.

In short, the risk of fueling anti-government dissidence and sentiments, sharing power with the repressive apparatus, and domestic and international accountability can all increase the cost of repression. Thus, it is even more important to understand how repression works because, although it is costly, autocrats still submit to repression. If there is no answer as to when it works, perhaps the question should be how is repression exercised? When does the intensity of repression decrease or increase in authoritarian regimes? Under which circumstances or against whom are autocrats more likely to exercise their repressive capabilities? When is an authoritarian regime incentivized to adopt less intense repressive measures?

The literature often associates intense repression with mobilization that threatens central pillars of the regime and its survival, such as ideology, religion, or the leader (Keremoğlu, Hellmeier, and Weidmann 2022). Davenport and his theory on 'Law of Coercive Responsiveness' suggests that "When challenges to the status quo take place, authorities generally employ some form of repressive action to counter or eliminate the behavioral threat" (2007, 7). Although this threat model is widely accepted, there are different suggestions as to how mobilization becomes threatening for a regime. These mainly consist of the aim of the collective action, whether it has radical or revolutionary goals, confrontational tactics used by the dissidents, such as riots, or the size of the protest and the extent of mobilization (Earl 2003).

On the other hand, scholars also look for answers as to when an authoritarian regime refrains from adopting intense repressive measures. One motivation for which dissidence is to a certain extent allowed is to gather information. For instance, China oftentimes allows protests directed to local administrations to mitigate grievances before they are directed at the regime itself (Huang, Boranbay-Akan, and Huang 2019). Overall, refraining from repression in certain spheres enables the regime to gather information regarding mobilizing groups and their dissatisfactions with the system (Huang, Boranbay-Akan, and Huang 2019; King, Pan, and Roberts 2013). Another theory suggests that repression is easier and more prevalent in rural parts compared to urban areas due to a smaller number of observers (Keremoğlu, Hellmeier, and Weidmann 2022) while others illustrate that in multi-ethnic authoritarian regimes, ethnic minorities are more likely to face severe repression measures (Arriola 2013).

Ultimately, repression dynamics in authoritarian regimes shift according to many variables, particular to the regime and the threat it is facing. There seems to be no universal recipe to ensure the survival of the regime, a pattern for how much repression or co-optation should be adopted under which circumstances. Thus, the puzzle of the protest-repression relationship remains unresolved. Perhaps, one solution would be to examine each authoritarian regime by the specific strategies they have adopted.

4.3 Dissent and Crackdown in Turkey, 2013-2025

From late May 2013 until July 2013, Turkey witnessed an all-time high protest mobilization across the country (Özen 2020; Yardımcı-Geyikci 2014). The protests initially emerged as an attempt by a few environmental activists to save Gezi Park, one of the last green spaces in the area, from demolition. The brutal police response to the encampments on May 28, 2013, triggered a backlash from various political groups as well as ordinary citizens (Aytaç, Schiumerini, and Stokes 2018). Their demands very quickly exceeded the initial call to cancel the demolition and transformed into an anti-government mass movement. It was not a coincidence that the possible demolition of a small park became a nationwide uprising against the AKP regime. AKP's neoliberal developmentalism was built on extractivist policies and privatization that came at the cost of severe environmental destruction and worker exploitation. Accompanied by deforestation and destruction, the regime tried to establish an image of prosperity and growth by building roads, bridges, airports,

hydroelectric plants, and coal plants (Adiguzel 2023). Construction companies grew in their size and dependence on the regime while they were granted contracts for these colossal projects (Esen and Gumuscu 2021). Meanwhile, privatization of the energy sector and subcontracting of mines increased pressure on production. The regime's cooperation with the economic elite resulted in the loosening of safety obligations, increasing workplace fatalities in labor, such as the Soma mining disaster in 2014, where 301 workers lost their lives (Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut 2021).

A few months later, yet another crisis erupted with the siege of Kobane by ISIS in September 2014. The AKP regime was accused of reluctance to support the Kurdish forces, People's Protection Units (YPG), against the ISIS offensive, while demonstrations spread across the Kurdish-populated region and major cities in Turkey (Ciordia 2018). This became one of the signs of strain between the AKP regime and the Kurdish political movement, as later in early 2015, the Peace Process initiated by the AKP in 2009 as an attempt to find a solution to the ongoing Kurdish conflict was abruptly canceled. The aim was to attract nationalist voters and to compensate for the Kurdish votes shifting to the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) (Kemahlıoğlu 2020). However, the AKP failed to attain a parliamentary majority in the June 2015 elections and which was followed by a heavy crackdown on the Kurdish-populated regions of Turkey. In the following year, the regime demonstrated its capacity for repression against Kurdish mobilization and opposition with numerous security operations, almost constant curfews and bans, accompanied by a significant level of human rights violations. (Negrón-Gonzales 2021).

Ultimately, the democratic breakdown had started to surface more clearly until in the summer of 2016, the coup attempt of July 15 opened a new era in Turkey with the declaration of a nationwide state of emergency and a regime of emergency decrees (Arslanalp and Erkmen 2020). The coup attempt and the following 2 years under the state of emergency resulted in an unprecedented erasure of democracy in Turkey. A nationwide purge took place with expulsions, arrests, and imprisonments of those part of the Gülenist Movement. In the following months, these purges expanded to leftist and Kurdish circles as elected HDP mayors were replaced with state appointees in 34 municipalities, and many politicians were imprisoned, including the co-presidents of HDP (Esen and Gumuscu 2017). Countless NGOs, news outlets, and universities were shut down. Consequently, the state of emergency led to an unprecedented erosion of rights and intense repression that eventually caused several protest episodes undertaken by those who were unfairly persecuted through emergency decrees.

With the referendum in 2017, the parliamentary system of the country was changed to a presidential system, peculiar to Turkey, where checks and balances were kept

weak, and the presidential post held significant power. The following presidential election in 2018 resulted in success for Erdoğan and marked the beginning of a new era of presidential decrees (Esen and Gumuscu 2019). However, later in 2019, AKP suffered a great loss in the local elections as candidates from Republican Peoples Party (CHP) won the two biggest metropolitan municipalities, Istanbul and Ankara, after decades of AKP governance (Deets 2024). Another result of the 2019 local elections was, once again, another wave of state appointees replacing elected HDP mayors in the Kurdish-populated eastern regions and triggering waves of protest and intense repression (Whiting and Kaya 2021).

Meanwhile, a new economic crisis was starting to present itself that grew drastically into a historical crisis in 2020 with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Aydın-Düzgit, Kutlay, and Keyman 2023). Against the backdrop of a major economic crisis and authoritarian deepening, Turkey saw a wave of protests with the loosening of lockdown measures. In the summer of 2020, debates on the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention triggered women and the LGBTI+ to take the streets repeatedly. The withdrawal came as part of a demonizing rhetoric established by the AKP in the late 2010s, where words like 'family', 'tradition', and 'normal' turned into frequent wording. With Erdoğan following suit with other right-wing populist regimes, women's rights were under attack and LGBTI+ activists criminalized (Arslanalp and Erkmen 2025; Özbay and Candan 2023). In March 2021, Turkey withdrew from the convention with a presidential decree. Around the same time, yet another presidential decree triggered a series of protests for academic freedom with Melih Bulu's appointment as rector to Boğaziçi University (Gökarıksel 2022). It was a culmination point for academic resistance as the AKP has been systematically undermining academic freedom and attacking institutions of higher education in the last decade. Since 2016, the government criminalized, persecuted, and charged over 2000 academics on the grounds of treason because they signed a petition against the security operations and human rights violations in Kurdish populated regions (Negrón-Gonzales 2021). Students and student organizations were frequently attacked, framed as 'terrorists', and imprisoned (Özbay 2022). Ultimately, the AKP regime constructed a strategy of othering and outlawing feminists, LGBTI+, academics, and students, exploiting nationalist, anti-Western, and Islamic sentiments.

Another instance where presidential decrees were utilized for repression came in December 2024, when President Erdoğan banned strikes for 60 days due to "disrupting national security" (BirGün 2024). The presidential decree was issued after Birleşik Metal-İş expanded its strikes to more factories and announced the possible addition of other companies. It wasn't the first presidential decree to ban strikes, as the AKP government has issued bans or postponed strikes a total of 21 times,

5 times before 2013 and almost every year since 2014 (Bianet 2024). Besides the purposeful weakening of labor unions to curb mobilization, AKP has taken such direct action many times to demonstrate its support for the business elite. As illustrated by Esen and Gümüşçü (2021), AKP's autocratization process is heavily shaped by mutual dependence on the business elite. Tax relief, contracts, and favors are granted to the pro-AKP companies in exchange for resources, donations, and media support. While the pro-AKP media works to censor repression and to promote pro-government rhetoric, resources and donations are used to provide social services to the voters, all in exchange for legitimacy and security of the regime.

Ultimately, the AKP government has secured its survival for the last 23 years through numerous crises and strong resistance. Most recently, in March 2025, the mayor of Istanbul and the most popular presidential candidate, Ekrem İmamoğlu, was arrested, further building tensions in Turkey and igniting a widespread mobilization that lasted for weeks (Esen and Gumuscu 2025). While the consequences of Imamoğlu's arrest are yet uncertain and the future of the AKP regime is, for now highly unpredictable, the last decade shows that repression in Turkey has significantly increased. Against the backdrop of a restricted civil society, seized universities, criminalized unions, and imprisoned opposition politicians, many of the traditional sites engendering challenges to the authoritarian regime have been either captured or crushed by the AKP government.

4.4 Data and Research Design

The threat perception theory is prevalent in the protest-repression literature, but there is no consensus on which protests are more threatening to the regime. I argue that the threat posed by a protest is shaped by the issue's proximity to the regime's core values, institutions, partners, and ultimately, survival. Issues that are directly challenging these core elements, and hence the regime, are met with more severe and brutal protest intervention tactics. Likewise, political repression is more intense for the movements with those issue types. Thus, I test the hypothesis below:

H_2: The intensity of police response to a protest increases with the perceived threat level of the protest issue.

H_3: Protests will encounter heavier repression when their issue type targets the main drivers of regime survival.

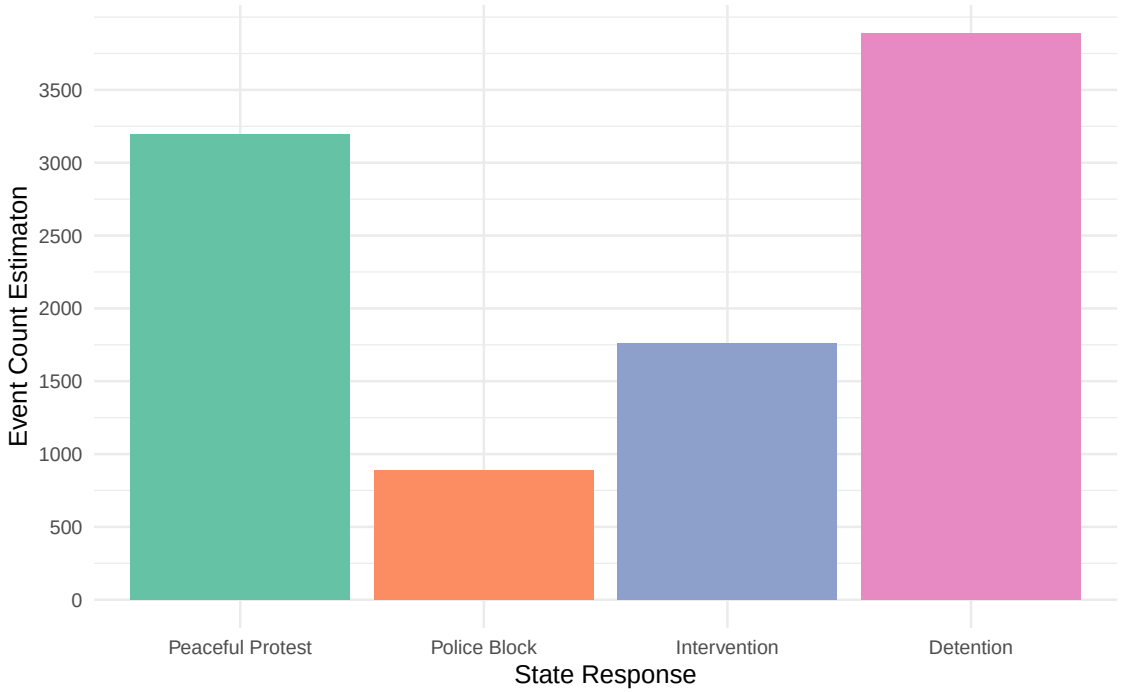
As the source of empirical analysis, I use the novel TRACE dataset that enables measuring contention and repression in Turkey since 2013. This dataset is rich in detail and in reporting repression, specifically police intervention in protests. The dataset and hence the analysis cover the period starting from February 2013 until the end of 2024, which coincides with a period of significant democratic backsliding and authoritarian deepening in Turkey.

The dependent variable is the state response to protests. When violence was first used ruthlessly in the Gezi Protests, heavy police intervention had become one of the main triggers for mass participation (Aytaç, Schiumerini, and Stokes 2018; Över and Taraktaş 2017). However, since then, police intervention in protests has been normalized and worked in favor of the regime in terms of swiftly diffusing protests and removing the challengers from the streets. This increase in the tendency to intervene in protests was accompanied by an enlarged intervention repertoire and a meticulous calculation of backlash. Thus, the analysis of state response to protests has to account for the many ways in which intervention takes place instead of relying on the common approach of using dummy variables for police presence or police intervention. Consequently, I developed a scale for the dependent variable by using four types of intervention events in the TRACE dataset: peaceful protest, police block, intervention, and detention. These levels were developed according to the most often used protest policing tactics in the last decade and the availability of measurement in the TIHV reporting. Figure 4.1 presents the distribution of the state response variable, while the exact values can be found in the Appendix.

In Turkey, large police teams, and even riot police, depending on the event, are usually deployed to demonstrations. These forces are accompanied by undercover police officers in charge of documenting the event as well as water cannon vehicles, specially designed armored cars, and even empty buses used to detain protestors. The aim of deploying this much force and demonstrating a strong presence is not only for the sake of precaution, but it is also to intimidate protestors (Uysal 2017). This is also why using a dummy for police presence is not ideal to measure protest repression in Turkey. Instead, I developed the peaceful protest level as a baseline that accounts for all protests where no action is reported to be taken by the police forces. In other words, it covers protest events where the police do not block the protest from taking place or try to disperse the protestors in any way.

The first level, police block, is a recent practice that became more commonplace as the autocratization process intensified. It refers to the actions by the police to hinder the protest from taking place, such as the police blocking the protestors from entering the demonstration site or encircling the protestors and intimidating them to disperse. Intervention is the second level and refers to repression types that involve

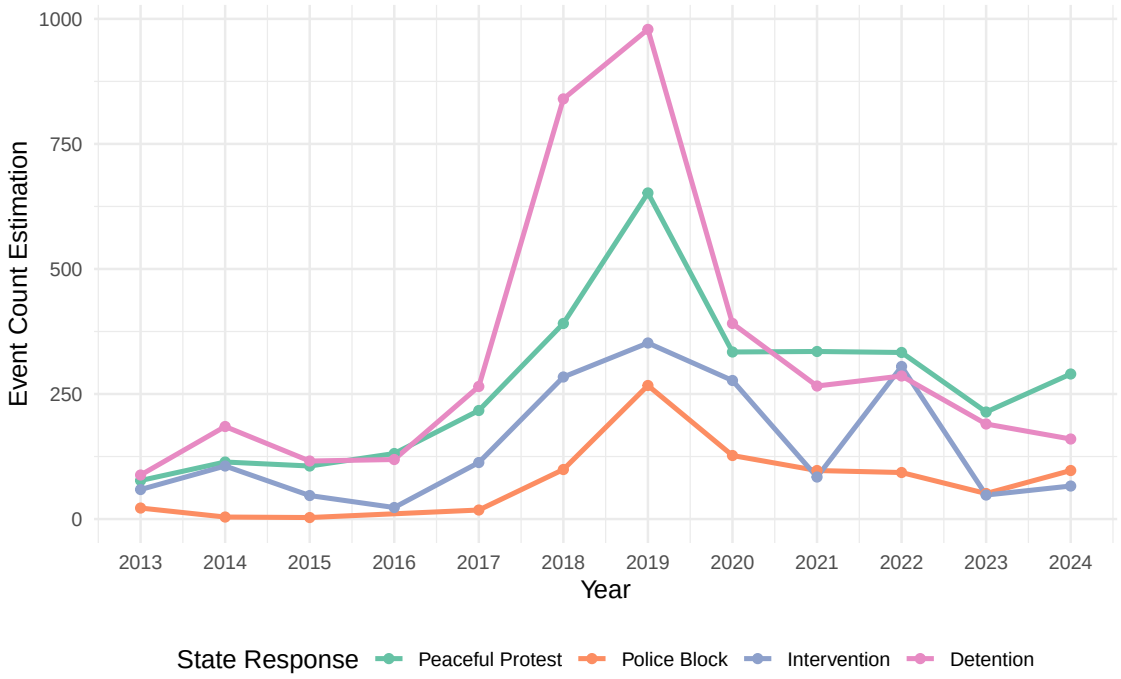
Figure 4.1 Estimated counts for state response



physically attacking the protestors. It consists of the use of brute force, tear gas, or water cannons against the protestors. The third and most intense level in the state response variable is detention, as it results can be more severe and long-term for the demonstrators. Rounding up all the protestors and keeping them under custody for hours has been a common practice during this autocratization process. This tactic is almost instant removal of the protest's signs as if it has not happened, especially for protests and protest episodes such as sit-ins, occupations, and vigils, where spatial durability is crucial. Further, on top of the simple act of exhausting protestors, the consequences of being arrested for especially young protesters start from being cut off from state-sponsored student loans, scholarships, and dormitories to not being able to find employment in the public sector. This tactic not only works to discourage and depoliticize arrested demonstrators but also sends threat signals to potential demonstrators in similar networks. Figure 4.2 illustrates the over-time trends for the levels of the dependent variable. Detailed estimation counts can be found in the Appendix.

The main independent variable is issue types in protest events. This variable identifies the issues of challenge at hand, whether contention or repression. For protest events, issue type represents the aim of the contention presented by the dissidents, whereas for repression events, it represents the reason why that repression is applied. The TRACE dataset provides a comprehensive identification of issue types in

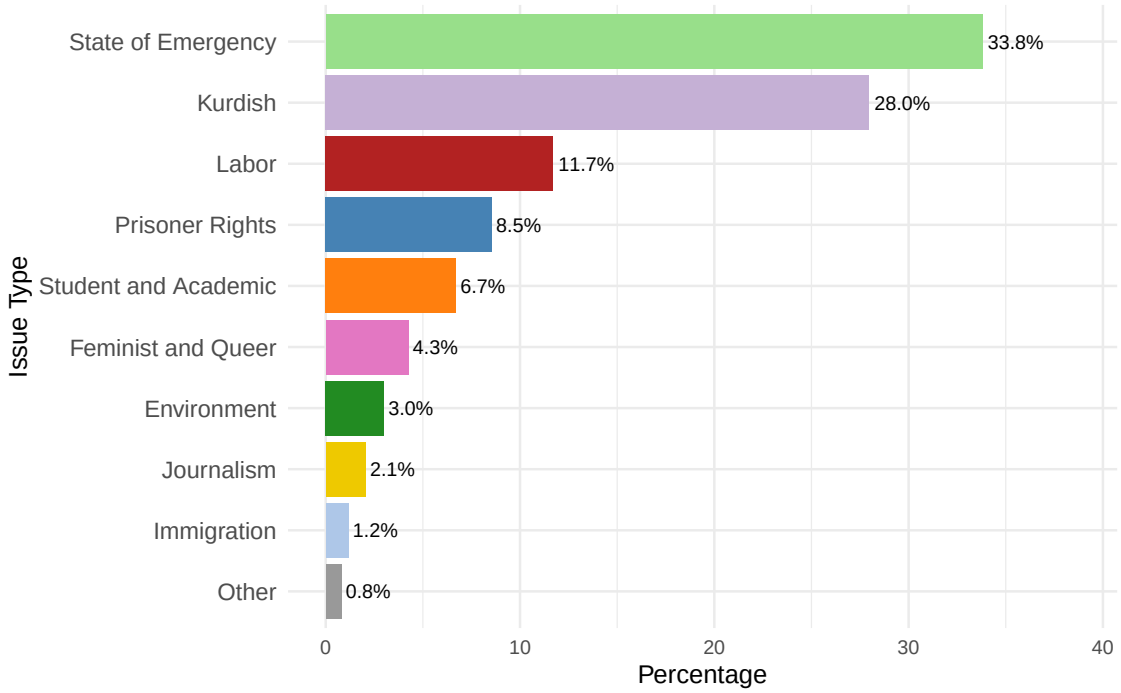
Figure 4.2 Over-time state response



both contentious and repressive events, which enables to conduct an analysis of issue types without losing challenges unique to Turkey such as the state of emergency and Kurdish issues. Figure 4.3 shows the issue types and their prevalence in contentious events. Detailed statistics for issue types are present in the Appendix.

Although used commonly, general categories of issues, agendas, and claims, such as economic, human rights, or anti-regime, cannot detect the impact of threat on repression. For a better measurement of how issue types affect protest repression over time, more specific and context-driven categorization is necessary. Some issues, such as labor, environmental, feminist, and LGBTI+, are common challenges across the world, yet according to the setting, some movements require further detailed identification of their own. For instance, the state of emergency issue type is peculiar to Turkey and cannot be measured by generalized issue types such as economy, rights, or labor. It specifically labels events related to the state of emergency declared after the 2016 coup attempt, which are involved partially with all these general issue types. Contention events about the state of emergency issue often consist of protests by public sector employees expelled from their jobs or imprisoned, which presents grievances that are related to both the economy and labor. On the other hand, repression events about the issue involve detentions and arrests of alleged members of the Gulenist Movement as well as bans and access restrictions on the grounds of terrorist activity. Thus, the political repression regarding the state of emergency

Figure 4.3 Issue type percentages in protest events



issue falls mostly under the wider category of rights. Therefore, it is not possible to put events about the state of emergency into a more general issue type without losing its particular position as a threat to the regime. Consequently, the variety of issue types covered by the independent variable allows for a better measurement of selective protest repression in the context of Turkey's autocratization process.

Lastly, I control for spatial impact by using two dummy variables: one for metropolitan cities and one for majority Kurdish populated cities. The metropolitan cities variable is a dummy for the three most crowded cities in Turkey: İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir. The Kurdish populated cities variable was created by taking prominent literature as a reference point (Celik 2005; Kibris 2011; Mutlu 1996; Tezcür and Gurses 2017). Mutlu's study on Kurdish demographics in the 20th century is the widespread approach to adopt, yet requires additions as some cities were granted city status later on. At the end, 12 cities overlapped as Kurdish cities or majority Kurdish populated cities in these studies and thus were identified as such. The list consists of: Ağrı, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Muş, Tunceli, Siirt, Şırnak, Van.

To test my hypotheses, I employ multinomial logistic regression models with an event-level unit.

(4.1)

$$\log\left(\frac{\Pr(Y_{it}=k)}{\Pr(Y_{it}=0)}\right)=\beta_{0k}+\sum_{j=1}^{8}\beta_{jk}\cdot\text{Issue}_{jit}+\beta_{9k}\cdot\text{Metropol}_{i}+\beta_{10k}\cdot\text{KurdishCity}_{i}+\gamma_{tk}$$

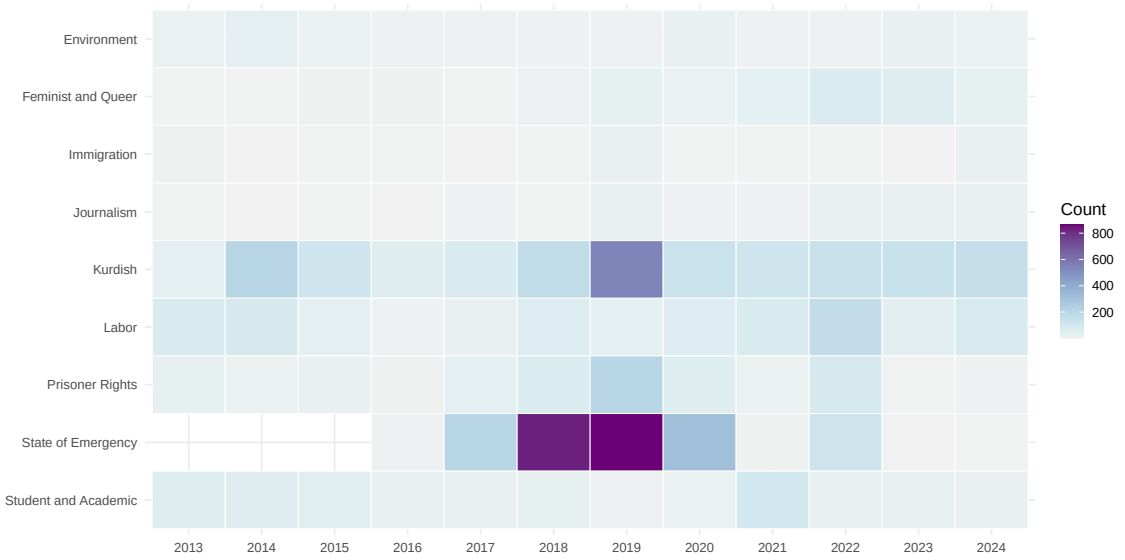
(4.2)

$$\log\left(\frac{\Pr(Y_{it}=k)}{\Pr(Y_{it}=0)}\right)=\beta_{0k}+\sum_{j=1}^{8}\beta_{jk}\cdot\text{Issue}_{jit}+\gamma_{tk}+\delta_{ik}$$

where γ_t represents year fixed effects and δ_i represents city fixed effects for each response category k.

4.5 Findings

Figure 4.4 Over-time protest count estimations of issue types



Literature on protest mobilization and repression in Turkey suggests that the Kurdish political movement and the Kurdish issue dominate the contentious politics in Turkey since 2002 (Uysal 2017). Further, the Kurdish issue is also the prominent subject of repression. Atak and Bayram (2017) finds that Kurdish mobilization was more likely to be responded to with police repression between 2000 and 2009. Examining the 2015-2021 period, Arslanalp and Erkmen (2025) show that, compared to other issues, Kurdish protests faced more protest repression. Findings in Figures 4.3 and 4.4. align with the existing research, as the Kurdish issue occupies a notable

portion of protest and repression events. Thus, the Kurdish issue was taken as the baseline issue in the estimations of Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Multinomial logistic regression results

	Model 1			**Model 2**		
	Block	Intervention	Detention	Block	Intervention	Detention
Labor	0.381*	0.973***	1.233***	0.362*	0.958***	1.146***
	(0.125)	(0.147)	(0.164)	(0.131)	(0.160)	(0.173)
Environment	−0.815^{+}	0.778***	1.535***	−0.552	0.781***	1.433***
	(0.201)	(0.216)	(0.419)	(0.225)	(0.242)	(0.455)
Feminist and Queer	−0.277	−0.293^{+}	−0.464*	−0.233	−0.246^{+}	−0.466*
	(0.163)	(0.199)	(0.225)	(0.166)	(0.202)	(0.232)
Journalism	−0.498*	−0.498^{+}	−1.743***	−0.527*	−0.623*	−1.743***
	(0.225)	(0.271)	(0.478)	(0.227)	(0.275)	(0.480)
Prisoner Rights	−1.195***	0.227^{+}	0.371**	−1.014***	0.300*	0.380**
	(0.125)	(0.139)	(0.239)	(0.131)	(0.146)	(0.249)
Immigration	−0.887**	−1.378*	−2.535***	−1.072***	−1.606**	−2.668***
	(0.300)	(0.535)	(0.727)	(0.324)	(0.560)	(0.744)
Student and Academic	−0.457^{+}	0.296	0.849***	−0.478^{+}	0.261	0.869***
	(0.140)	(0.194)	(0.245)	(0.146)	(0.205)	(0.253)
State of Emergency	−2.200***	3.544***	4.300***	−2.239***	3.337***	3.420***
	(0.175)	(0.196)	(0.532)	(0.203)	(0.226)	(0.541)
Metropolitan City	0.578***	0.699***	0.832***			
	(0.099)	(0.132)	(0.139)			
Kurdish-Populated City	0.188	0.159	0.934***			
	(0.115)	(0.151)	(0.152)			
City FE		No			Yes	
Year FE		Yes			Yes	
Num. Obs.		6622			6622	
R^2		0.432			0.468	
Adj. R^2		0.432			0.468	
RMSE		0.38			0.38	

Notes: The baseline category for the dependent variable is **Peaceful Protest**, and for the issue variable is **Kurdish**. Standard errors in parentheses. $^{+}$p < 0.1, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Models 1 and 2 estimate the probability of different types of protest repression relative to the baselines peaceful protest and Kurdish issue, while Model 2 has additional city fixed effects.

Both models suggest that the state of emergency protests are more likely to encounter police intervention and detention compared to any other issue. Coefficients are not only statistically significant but also substantially higher than any other issue type. In fact, state of emergency protests are less likely to encounter police block than any other issue type, further emphasizing the regime's inclination to use heavy repression. As the July 2016 Coup Attempt was a direct threat to the survival of the AKP regime and the state of emergency was declared in its aftermath, this outcome aligns with the expectations of H_2. Intense repression of the state of emergency issue confirms that, indeed, authoritarian regimes adopt repression according to their threat perceptions.

Following, two issue types present statistically significant and positive likelihood of heavier protest repression compared to the Kurdish issue: Labor and Environmental. The labor issue shows a higher likelihood across all types of protest repression compared to the Kurdish issue. Meanwhile, environmental protests are more likely to be intervened in, and protestors are more likely to be detained.

Coefficients of issues Feminist and Queer, Journalism, and Immigration show less likelihood of protest repression across all three levels. Protests about prisoner rights are less likely to encounter police block but more likely to meet intervention and detention. Likewise, compared to the Kurdish issue, the Student and Academic issue has a lower likelihood of police block and higher likelihood of intervention and detention. On the other hand, the results are statistically significant and substantial in detention, pointing to a proclivity to specifically adopt detention.

Lastly, findings for Metropolitan City and Kurdish-Populated City dummies in Model 1 show that protests in both sets of cities are more likely to encounter protest repression. The coefficients of the former are statistically significant across all three levels of protest repression, whereas those of the latter are statistically significant for detention only.

Overall, labor and environmental protests are consistently more likely to encounter protest repression compared to other issues. In Table 4.2, I use the same model with a dummy for labor and environmental protests. Again, compared to the remaining issue types, they are substantially more likely to encounter protest repression across all three levels. Coefficients are statistically significant and similar in both Model 3 and 4. In short, the AKP is more threatened by labor and environmental protests.

Table 4.2 Multinomial logistic regression results for labor and environmental issues

	Model 3			**Model 4**		
	Block	Intervention	Detention	Block	Intervention	Detention
Labor and Environment	0.664***	0.816***	1.102***	0.696***	0.814***	1.226***
	(0.101)	(0.111)	(0.140)	(0.105)	(0.122)	(0.146)
Metropolitan City	0.605***	1.254***	1.713***			
	(0.071)	(0.101)	(0.108)			
Kurdish-Populated City	−0.040	−0.705***	0.173			
	(0.086)	(0.117)	(0.120)			
City FE		No			Yes	
Year FE		Yes			Yes	
Num. Obs.		9374			9374	
R^2		0.088			0.193	
Adj. R^2		0.088			0.193	
RMSE		0.40			0.38	

Notes: The baseline category for the dependent variable is **Peaceful Protest**. Standard errors in parentheses. $^{+}$p < 0.1, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Additionally, I estimated a model with an interaction term between each issue type and year to observe changes in protest repression over-time. Figure 4.5 presents the over-time trends for predicted probabilities of different protest repression levels according to issue types. These trends show that protest repression has been inconsistent both across time and across all issue types.

Figure 4.5 Predicted probabilities of state response by issue type and year

Existing literature suggests that post-Cold War autocrats rely less on ideology and more on the economy compared to their 20th-century counterparts. For contemporary authoritarian regimes, public service and economic growth are the essential components of their rule (Guriev and Treisman 2019). In terms of the AKP rule in Turkey, scholars have consistently highlighted the importance of those two com-

ponents. Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut (2021) explain that the AKP regime has built its neoliberal developmentalism on extractivism and privatization. Another study by Esen and Gümüşçü (2021) reveals the AKP's mutual dependency with the business elite in providing social services to the voters and consolidating its rule. Ultimately, the AKP regime has built itself and its authoritarian transition on the exploitation of labor and the destruction of nature. Thus, any resistance against those core pillars is met with intense repression, as seen in the case of labor and environmental protests. Consequently, findings align with the expectations of H_3, the threat posed by a movement is greater when the challenge is directed at the main drivers of regime survival and autocratization.

5. CONCLUSION

Existing literature on authoritarian rule suggests that coercion is key to authoritarian control, and violence is inherent in every authoritarian regime (Svolik 2012). However, coercion is both risky and costly, especially when used against dissent (Escribà-Folch 2013). Every autocrat walks on thin ice when it comes to protest repression, as it can trigger further mobilization (Almeida 2018). On the other hand, protest repression requires resource allocation (Olar 2019), and power sharing with repressive agents (Svolik 2012), Finally, protest repression can delegitimize regimes in the eyes of both international and domestic audiences (della Porta 1997). Ultimately, contemporary authoritarian regimes cannot afford to use arbitrary and widespread repressive measures (Guriev and Treisman 2019), yet they still frequently resort to coercion, significantly more than democratic regimes (Davenport 2007). So why and when does an autocrat submit to repression?

Previous studies on protest repression suggest that the balance between cost and threat designates state response to dissent. Repression becomes an option when the regime's survival is threatened, and the threat posed by dissidence is more critical than the costs of repression (Davenport 2007). Hence, threat is the primary driver of who is to be targeted. While the threat model is prevalent in the literature, there is still no consensus on what constitutes threat perceptions in authoritarian regimes. In other words, existing research provides no clear answer as to when a regime is threatened.

Thus, this thesis examined protest repression and consequently, threat perceptions across different protest issues. The authoritarian transition of Turkey in the last decade provided a setting where both contention and repression constantly challenged each other. However, there were no available datasets that measured protest repression in detail or provided coverage for at least a sizeable part of the last decade.

The TRACE dataset introduced in the second chapter covers 12 years of contention and repression in Turkey at the event level. It provides detailed event classification alongside different levels for intensity of protest repression. By differentiating be-

tween police blocking demonstrations, intervening with brute force and tear gas, and detention of protestors, TRACE allows for observing changes in protest repression behavior. Moreover, it provides issue type identification necessary to compare state response to different movements.

While the main source of TRACE is human rights reports of TIHV, the sourcing of these reports is diverse. Alongside mainstream media outlets, TIHV's documentation sources include local and independent media outlets, NGO reports, applications received by TIHV and IHD, and their networks. With this diverse sourcing strategy in reporting, the TRACE dataset decreases the impact of ethnic bias in protest and repression coverage. Indeed, dataset comparison in Chapter 3 demonstrated how both ACLED and TPRPGRD performed poorly in Kurdish-populated cities compared to TRACE. Results of the comparison revealed how sourcing strategy can exacerbate selection bias in protest coverage, as well as a potential solution to minimize selection bias in event data.

Further, ACLED's reporting is limited to the 2016-2024 period, while TPRPGRD covers only the 2013-2016 period. The former has a longer period of protest and repression coverage in Turkey, yet lacks fine-grained protest repression information. On the other hand, the latter provides immense detail in protest repression but covers a very limited time window in Turkey's autocratization. With its span of 12 years since 2013, the TRACE dataset overlaps with a substantial period of autocratization in Turkey and has a fine-grained event classification for protest repression. Ultimately, the TRACE dataset was found to be the most suitable for an analysis of protest repression across different issues.

Utilizing TRACE, Chapter 4 examined the differences in protest repression across different issue types. In line with the literature, I expected the intensity of repression to increase when the threat posed by an issue against the regime was greater. Empirical evidence showed that protests concerning the state of emergency issue were significantly more likely to be responded to with intense repression. Since the coup attempt signified a direct threat to the survival of the regime, and the state of emergency was declared in its aftermath, heavy repression to state of emergency protests confirms my expectation and the positive correlation between threat and repression. Further, I argued that issues were perceived as more threatening if they were targeting the regime materially. In other words, authoritarian regimes would draw a red line in structures that ensure their survival. Results presented a high likelihood of protest repression on labor and environmental movements in Turkey. As existing research suggests, extractivist and exploitative policies (Adaman, Arsel, and Akbulut 2021) alongside a symbiotic relationship with the business elite (Esen and Gumuscu 2021), are the main drivers behind AKP's authoritarian transition

and rule. Thus, the AKP's intolerance towards labor and environmental protests confirms that the regime is more likely to be threatened by issues challenging its central pillars.

Ultimately, Chapter 4 establishes that protest repression is not uniform across different issues and depends on how threatened the regime is by the mobilization. Hence, this analysis fills the gap in the literature on protest repression by providing an insight into the threat perceptions of authoritarian regimes. While providing evidence to the threat model, it also shows the advantages of differentiating between different types of protest repression instead of using a singular intervention indication. Further, with a fine-grained event classification approach, the novel TRACE dataset paves the way for many other studies about protest and repression dynamics in Turkey. Lastly, Chapters 2 and 3 address challenges of sourcing protest and repression events and contribute to the literature on event data with evidence on selection bias.

However, while the TRACE dataset provides a detailed analysis of protest repression, it comes with limitations. The dataset comparison reveals that while TRACE is able to reduce ethnic bias in reporting events, its coverage of peaceful protests is weaker than other available datasets. Consequently, TRACE is more suitable for conducting research on political and protest repression instead of protest mobilization in Turkey. It is also limited in its ability to provide certain details, such as protest size or district-level information.

On the other hand, this thesis is concerned with targeted protest repression, yet previous literature suggests that political repression tactics can significantly undermine collective action potential (Demirel-Pegg and Rasler 2021). Mapping out ten action modes of political repression, Boykoff (2007) outlines four different mechanisms in which repression can cause demobilization. Thus, by focusing on protest repression, this analysis might be discounting the efforts to weaken the mobilization of certain issues more than others with the use of other repression tactics. Further, existing research demonstrates that discreet and preemptive political repression is prevalent in contemporary authoritarian regimes (Guriev and Treisman 2019; Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent 2022), which can also differ across issue types. Preemptive tactics such as protest bans are more frequently being adopted, specifically to certain mobilizations (Arslanalp and Erkmen 2020; Tertytchnaya 2023).

Consequently, protest repression alone cannot account for the ways in which authoritarian regimes try to curb collective action potential. To understand repression against dissidence, scholars need to examine various levels and modes of political repression (Earl and Braithwaite 2022). Thus, future research should also examine

the relationship between issue type and political repression events to uncover threat perception in autocracies.

This thesis examined the case of Turkey's democratic backsliding and hence found what triggers the AKP regime to adopt heavier protest repression. However, not all authoritarian regimes will be more threatened by labor and environmental protests. The key finding of this thesis is that authoritarian regimes will be threatened the most by those issues that challenge the main mechanisms on which their regime has been built, has undertaken its authoritarian transition, and ensures survival. In the case of AKP and Turkey, that soft belly has been challenges directed at the business elite, privatization, and extractivism. In other regimes, ideology, economy, religion, or minority issues can be perceived as the biggest threat, yet whatever it is, that challenge will always be directed at the main drivers behind authoritarian control and survival.

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APPENDIX A

Confusion Matrices

The final model parameters were: batch size: 8, learning rate: 3e-5, weight decay: 0.01, and number of epochs: 5.

Table A.1 Confusion matrix for contention event classification

Actual \ Pred.	Pub.	Dem.	Hunger	March	Sit-in	Vigil	Celeb.	No Cont.	N/A
Public Statement	100	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Demonstration	0	101	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hunger Strike	0	3	88	1	0	0	0	0	0
March	0	0	0	81	0	0	0	0	0
Sit-in	0	0	0	0	67	0	0	0	0
Vigil	0	0	0	0	0	58	0	0	0
Celebration	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	0
No Contention	2	2	1	0	1	0	7	25	1
N/A	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	13	12

Table A.2 Confusion matrix for repression event classification

Actual \ Pred.	Det.	Arr.	Ban	Access	Tort.	Ill-tr.	Intv.	Block	Death	No Rep.	N/A
Detention	102	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	5	2	1
Arrest	0	103	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Ban	0	0	109	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Access Block	0	0	0	101	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Torture	0	1	0	0	98	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mistreatment	0	0	0	0	0	97	0	0	0	0	2
Intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	66	0	0	0	0
Block	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62	0	0	0
Civilian Death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62	4	0
No Repression	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	82	0
N/A	1	0	0	7	1	0	1	0	1	2	129

Rules and Practices of Labeling in Training Data

This section presents detailed definitions and coding rules for all contention and repression event types.

Contention Event Types

Public Statement

If the event is explained as a "*Basın Açıklaması*", it is labeled as public statement. Often they are followed by another protest repertoire and used as a start or and end to the second event. Thus, those protests with another type of protest repertoire as well as a public statement are not coded as a public statement but as the second event as it is a rather common practice for protesting in Turkey. In short, if there is only "*basın açıklaması*" there the event is coded as public statement. The press meetings or briefings held indoor with the presence of members and journalists are not coded as public statement, but N/A.

Demonstration

If the event is described as "*eylem*" or "*protesto*" without more specific details, it is taken as demonstration. However, since "*eylem*" in Turkish refers to a broader event type where all protests are often called an "*eylem*", this category also possibly contains other event types that are not reported as such or when there is no enough information to report a more detailed protest repertoire. Hence, those not so common protest repertoires are also coded as "*eylem*" which essentially makes this category an umbrella event category. For instance, workers' strikes are often mentioned as "*eylem*" in the reports and not strikes, hence labeled as "*eylem*" by the author. Physical boycotts and blockades as protests are not common, so they are labeled by the author as "*eylem*".

March

If an event is described as a "*yürüyüş*" or protestors are reported as marching somewhere, the event is taken as a march. This event type is frequently combined with a public statement, starting off or ending with one. In that case, the event is labeled as a march. Although mostly one-time events, occasionally these marches are long, multiple-day and even multiple-month protests. Those long marches are coded as such but since the reports often don't cover every day of these marches, only certain updates are coded.

Sit-in

If the event is described as "*oturma eylemi*" it is taken as a sit-in. Occasionally there are "press statements" in addition to sit-ins, which is again coded as a sit-in.

Vigil

If the event is described as "*nöbet*" it is labeled as such. Sometimes, vigils last a long time and the reports do not cover every day but instead give updates. Hence, if the vigils are long-lasting, only updates are present in the dataset.

Celebration
If there is an event regarding Newroz or occasionally Qaxan celebrations, the event is taken as a celebration due to the contentious nature and the symbolism of the celebrations.

Hunger Strike
If the event is defined as "*açlık orucu*" or "*ölüm orucu*", it is labeled as a hunger strike. These events are often reported at their start and end even though they are long-term contentious events.

No Contention + N/A
No contention is when there is an event of repression but the repression is not related to a contention event. N/A are those events that are unrelated—neither contention nor repression. A considerable portion of these N/A events are court followings and updates.

Repression Event Types

Detention and Arrest
If someone is detained, as in "*gözaltı*", the event is labeled as detention. If someone is arrested, as in "*tutuklama*, the event is taken as an arrest. If in the same sentence some people are released whereas some are detained or arrested, the event is labeled as one of the latter. If the sentence describes a detention and an arrest at the same time, the event is labeled as an arrest.

Ban
This event encompasses bans declared by governmental offices. It can include curfews, protest bans, bans on certain protests or events or locations, as well as blocking access to locations by shutting down transportation, rejecting an application for an event or protest, and bans on books or their distribution.

Access Block
If a website or an online news article is banned or access is restricted by a court order, the event is coded as access block. It is usually reported as "*erişim engeli* in Turkish.

Torture
I labeled those events that are specifically called "*işkence*" in the reports as torture. In sentences with multiple events, the label of torture differs. For instance, if there is ill-treatment and torture mentioned in the same sentence, the event is labeled as torture, since it is the more intense repression event. Additionally, if people are

detained with torture, which is frequent, the event is labeled as detention since the purposes of the data project prioritize detentions over torture. However, if the sentence phrasing intends to report not the detention itself but the torture that took place during custody, it is coded as torture.

Ill-treatment

If the report is from a prison and the title reports some variation of "*kötü muamele*", and the event involves deprivation from the rights of a prisoner, a beating, mistreatment, ban, disciplinary action, or anything reported from the prison but not named as torture, it is labeled as "*kötü muamele*". Outside of prisons, if there is mention of violence or harm from a law-enforcement agent against civilians, it is also coded as "*kötü muamele*". This may occur during custody or a police raid. While such incidents during a protest may be coded as intervention, if the mistreatment happens during custody or in a separate context, it is labeled as ill-treatment.

Intervention

If a law-enforcement agent (the police, security guards, gendarmerie, or armed forces) uses violence against protestors—depriving them of physical integrity—or if the report simply mentions "*müdahale*", the event is coded as intervention. Use of tear gas, water cannons, physical violence, or rounding up protestors for detention all count as "*müdahale*".

Police Block

If a law-enforcement agent blocks protestors from continuing or starting their protest—either with or without a legal basis—but doesn't intervene violently as in intervention, the repression event is coded as police block.

Civilian Death

The aim of this event type is to measure civilian deaths that are reported by TIHV. This category mostly includes: (1) civilian deaths due to police intervention during protests; (2) extrajudicial executions ("*yargısız infaz*"); (3) deaths during clashes; (4) those who die due to blocked access to hospitals; (5) workers who die due to workplace incidents.

No Repression + N/A

No repression means there is a protest but no repression event related. N/A includes events unrelated to protest or repression—often legal updates or court monitoring events.

Keywords List for Issue Types

Following is the list of regular expression (regex) keyword patterns used to detect issue types in events.

Labor:
işçiler .* grev, grev yasağı, sendikal .* mücadele, 1 mayıs.*?(kutlama|eylem|protesto)?, disk, kesk, işçi, işçilerin, sendikalar, sendikası, sendika, sendikaların

Kurdish:
hdp .* (tutuklama|gözaltı|kapatma), kürt, kobane.* gösteri, newroz(kutlaması)?, roboski, uludere, tecrit, cumartesi anneleri, barış anneleri, öcalan, hendek operasyonları, anadil(hakkı)?, TJA, kayyım, kayyum, DEM Parti, rojava, Kobanê, kürtçe, jiyan, yeşiller ve sol gelecek, ysp, hdp

Environmental:
kazdağları, akbelen, cerattepe, ekoloji, köylüler, ağaç kesimi, çevre, yıkım kararı, orman, santrali, santral, hidroelektrik, nükleer, baraj, barajı, inşaat

Feminist and Queer:
kadına yönelik .* şiddet, istanbul sözleşmesi, 8 mart.*?(eylem|yürüyüş), 25 kasım.*?(etkinlik|yürüyüş)?, kadın cinayet(leri)?, feminist.*(eylem|protesto|yürüyüş), cinsiyet eşitliği, onur yürüyüşü, lgbti+?, trans.*(hak|eylem|yürüyüş)?, homofobi, transfobi, spod, kaos gl, kuir, queer, gökkuşağı

Student and Academic:
öğrenci(eylemi)?, yurt sorunu, barınamıyoruz, boğaziçi(üniversitesi)?, rektör ataması, odtü, ortadoğu teknik, üniversite(öğrencileri)?, yök, akademi, akademik

Prisoner Rights:
mahpus?, hasta tutuklu, cezaevi, kuyu tipi, hükümlü hakları, tek tip

Immigration:
sığınmacı, mülteci(hakkı)?, göçmen(karşıtı)?, geri gönderme merkez(leri)?, suriyeli, iranlı, afgan, suriye, afganistan, Suriye'den, Afganistan'dan, Azerbeycan, Azeri

Journalism:
ifade özgürlüğü, gazeteci(gözaltı | tutuklama)?, sansür, rtük cezası, sosyal medya paylaşımı, twitter engeli, gazeteci

State of Emergency:
15 temmuz(darbe)?, khk(ile)? görevden alma, olağanüstü hal, kararname(ile)? tasfiye, darbe girişimi, İşimi geri ver, ByLock

APPENDIX B

Descriptives Tables for Dataset Comparison

Table B.1 Descriptive statistics of TRACE vs ACLED (2016–2024)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
TRACE: Protest	1.87	7.79	0.00	95.00	4758
TRACE: Intervention	0.85	5.06	0.00	70.00	4758
ACLED: Protest	5.86	11.93	0.00	140.00	4758
ACLED: Intervention	0.62	3.19	0.00	44.00	4758
Metropol	0.07	0.25	0.00	1.00	4758
Kurdish Populated	0.21	0.41	0.00	1.00	4758

Table B.2 Descriptive statistics of TRACE vs TPRPGRD (2013–2016)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
TRACE: Protest	0.59	1.46	0.00	17.00	2097
TRACE: Intervention	0.26	0.80	0.00	11.00	2097
TPRPGRD: Protest	3.75	12.14	0.00	280.00	2097
TPRPGRD: Intervention	0.68	2.67	0.00	67.00	2097
Metropol	0.07	0.25	0.00	1.00	2097
Kurdish Populated	0.18	0.39	0.00	1.00	2097

Descriptives Tables for Protest Repression and Issue Types

Table B.3 Protests by state response

State Response	Estimated Total Count
Peaceful Protest	3195
Police Block	888
Intervention	1764
Detention	3889

Table B.4 Event count estimations by issue type

Issue Type	Protest	Repression	Total
State of Emergency	2364	5150	7514
Environment	210	365	575
Feminist and Queer	298	426	724
Immigration	82	365	582
Journalism	144	1158	1302
Kurdish	1956	5104	7060
Labor	818	1393	2211
Prison	598	5902	6500
Student	569	903	1372
Other	56	75	131