Repression and Protests
A Comparative Case Study on the Causes of Protest Violence

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1. Research question

1.1. Introduction

Within the field of peace and conflict studies, tremendous effort has been put on mapping out the causes of armed conflict. The main interest in this essay is to contribute to this field by examining the phenomena of protest, a collective action that many times in history has been the lead-up to the outbreak of armed conflict. For instance, during the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, the mass protests in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen, whose goals were to oust long-standing leaders, all turned violent due to violent interruptions by their respective governments (Amnesty International, 2016). The violent actions used during the Arab Spring included acts so severe it ultimately led to hundreds, and even thousands, of deaths and injuries in each country (Styrman, 2016a). For example, the protest in Egypt started in the capital, Cairo, and soon included millions of people across the country. The government tried to stop the protest with threats and violence, but the protest only grew in numbers. By the time the president at last resigned, hundreds had died and thousands of people had been injured (Lindahl, 2016). Thereupon, and with that in mind, this study aims at contributing to the field of war onset by answering the research question “Why do some protests result in violence whereas others do not?”. The interest lies in examining why some protests escalate into violence whereas other stay peaceful, with the hope that new pathways will emerge for how the risk of armed conflict can be reduced. The question is grounded in the immense literature on the causes of armed conflict, where escalation of violence is described as one of the causes (see Pruitt and Kim, 2004). However, escalations of protests are understudied in previous research as the main focuses has concerned the onset and the main outcomes of protests. Hence, this study set out to examine why some protests turn violent and if the violence escalates. If the latter is the case, that would mean that protest violence can be a potential cause of armed conflicts. Therefore, it is important to study why protests turn violent. Many scholars have studied how protests turn violent, and the evidence found that the government’s actions played an important role. Moreover, other literatures studied the regime type in relation to the likeliness of state repression, meaning the coercive actions the government use to respond to dissent, such as protests. The evidence showed that intermediate regimes are more prone to use repression, and I will further argue that state repression towards protests similarly increases the likeliness of protest violence and an escalation thereof. This will be examined by comparing two protests in intermediate regimes
with a protest in a democracy.\(^1\) Hence, the main argument in this essay is that state repression towards protests in intermediate regimes increase the likeliness of protest violence escalations. Therefore, the expected pattern to be observed in this study is that only the protests in the intermediate regimes turned violent and escalated, and that they did so as a consequence of state repression. Even though the results in this essay turned out to in parts be ambiguous, the study do find evidence for a relationship between state repression, protest violence and an escalation thereof.

The thesis will be structured as follows: firstly, the key concepts used in this essay will be defined, followed by a more thorough review of the previous research on the subject which leads to a greater explanation of the research gap this study emerge from. Thereafter, the theoretical framework will be mapped out together with the main argument and the hypothesis. The third part of the study will concern the research design. First, the cases and the case selection procedure will be gone through, followed by the method selection, the method discourse and the operationalization of the variables, and a brief discussion on the sources of empirical data. The fourth part will include the analysis of the selected cases as well as the results, and the last part will consist of a short conclusion of the findings and a summary of the essay.

1.2. Definitions of key concepts

To increase the understanding of the arguments and findings in this essay the concepts of state repression, protest, protest violence and the different regime types will be defined. State repression is defined as coercive actions taken by the government, and their proxies, to discourage the will and/or capacity of people who are trying to influence a political outcome (Ritter, 2014: 145). In this essay, state repression includes the police’s actions towards the protesters as well, as they are considered to work as a proxy for the government. The actions can take the form of increased police presence, beatings, tear gas and shootings (Davenport and Moore, 2012: 704). The next concept is protest, which is a kind of peaceful, public gathering with a purpose of displaying opposition to the government or other authorities (Banks and Wilson, 2017a). Moreover, the type of actions that are counted as protest actions in this study are large gatherings in public places, such as on squares or outside government buildings, where

\(^1\) I am both aware that the comparison would have been different if I would have included autocracies in the study, and that another comparison could have included it. However, this is beyond the scope of this thesis.
the goal clearly is to protest the government. The next concept to be defined is that of protest violence, and is the intentional use of physical force or power against another person or group that either results in or has a high likeliness of resulting in injury or death (World Health Organization, 2017), and should be used in proximity to the protest, both in time and place. The kinds of actions include burning, stabbing, beating, shoving, or other assaults with weapons objects and lastly, murder. The last concept to be defined is the regime types. There exist three types of generally recognized regimes, being democracies, intermediate regimes and autocracies. Only the two former are present in this study, but the latter will also be defined to increase the understanding of the other regime types. Democracies has characteristics such as regular, competitive, free and fair elections with equal suffrage, an independent media and civil society with rights of assembly, stable national and local governmental systems and a judiciary that are independent, impartial and can defend fundamental political, civil and human rights (Freedom House, 2017a). Autocracies tend to be closed societies with dictators who prevent political competition and pluralism and usually are responsible for widespread violations of basic political, civil, and human rights. Freedom of expression and independent media further tend to be non-existent, and corruption is widespread (ibid.). Lastly, intermediate regimes are described as electoral democracies that tend to only meet minimum standards for the selection of leaders. The countries’ democratic institutions are fragile and there are usually large challenges to the protection of political rights. The civil society is however independent and rights of assembly are generally protected, whereas the national and local systems of government are weak and lack transparency. In short, an intermediate regime is a mix of a democracy and an autocracy, and is usually the result of a country moving from one of the two regime types to another (Freedom House, 2017a).

1.3. Previous research

Given that the research goal in this essay is to look at the influence state repression has on protests in intermediate regimes, this paper will be built upon previous research on protests, state repression and the influence of different regime types.

Previous research on protests has mainly focused on its causes and outcomes, as was mentioned above. Other studies have also focused on who the participants are in protests, the characteristics of protests, the major grievances that enforce the decision to participate in protests and the government's' responses to the protests. Moreover, as social media has played an important role in more recent protests, its influence in the organization and as an instigator
and facilitator of protests have also been studied. The evidence showed that it creates incentives and motivations to protest, gives opportunities to both express opinions and mobilize the protest, and lastly help with information revelation and asymmetries from both sides (see Bastos, Mercea and Charpentier 2015, Valenzuela 2013 and Earl, McKee Hurwitz, Mejia Mesinas, Tolan and Arlot 2013). Apart from this, scholars have further studied the main outcomes of protests and concluded that the characteristics within the country when the protest broke out have proved to be important. This because certain predominates such as societal structures, goals and level of development could have prolonging effects on the protests and affect the outcome (see Pappas and O’Malley 2014 and Reznik 2016).

The next set of research to be the foundation in this essay is the field that have studied the governmental response to protests, or what often is referred to as state repression. Many scholars have examined how the police handle protests, and the assessment of when, how and what the impact were of state repression in democratic countries. Moreover, studies have suggested that the police’s increased reliance on less-lethal weapons such as rubber bullets, encourages more coercive actions by the police (see Sutton, Butcher and Svensson 2014, Marx 1998, Baker, Bronitt and Stenning 2017, Atak 2017). More in-depth research on state repression concluded that it is strategically used and what drives protests into violence, and other studies aimed at improving the general understanding of how the actions influences the behaviour from the protesters towards the government. Although, the results on the potential relationship between state repression and protests had been heavily varied, which lead to the creation of a framework which stated that the influence repression has on protests is dependent on where it occurs, and when it occurs within the conflict. This is the essence of the so-called “Dissent-Repression Nexus”, which have been extended by many scholars to help explain what the challengers do against the government, and what the government do as a response. The results of this concluded that government’s respond to the behaviour of challengers, such as protests, with coercion and repression (Pierskalla 2015, White 1989, Tilly 1985, Davenport and Inman 2012, Sullivan, Loyle and Davenport 2012, Davenport and Moore 2012 and Davenport 2007a).

The last field of research is the influence and importance of specific regime types. There exists almost a unilateral agreement that the kind of regime type plays an important role when it comes to the influence on internal factors such as protests and state repression. In short, different regime types respond different to challenges (Bove, Platteau and Sekeries 2016, Davenport 2009, Tilly 1985). Other scholars have argued, and found evidence for, the so-called ‘inverted-
U’ relationship between level of democracy and the probability of internal armed conflict, or peace (Boswell and Dixon 1985 and Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates, and Gleditsch 2001). Furthermore, evidence has also been found that intermediate regimes are more repressive than democracies and autocracies, and that they are more prone to violence and political instability (Regan and Henderson 2002). Moreover, a study on how dissent influence state repression in different political regimes suggested that only certain activities increased the probability of repression. Peaceful activities such as protests were considered to not pose an enough threat for governments and were thus not expected to increase repression. The conclusion was thus that, as no statistical significance were found for the impact of protests, that form of dissent was not threatening enough for the government to respond with repression (Carey, 2010).

To sum up, past studies have put large amounts of focus on the characteristics of protests, state repression, and how the regime type relates to the governments’ responses. A study found that protests were not threatening enough for the government to use repression, something this study aims at proving wrong. Instead, I argue that governments do use repression towards protesters in intermediate regimes, which in turn sparks violence and an escalation thereof. Moreover, as much of the past evidence was found when conducting quantitative studies, this study will focus on doing a qualitative case comparison. Furthermore, escalations of protests are understudied in previous research as it instead largely has focused on the protest onset and the outcome of the protests. This study will therefore examine whether protests in intermediate regimes are more likely to experience protest violence and violent escalations because of state repression, than democracies. The importance of the study is that the results from the analysis may help shed light on if state repression, or more specifically police violence, towards protests potentially could be the cause of protest violence and violent escalations, something that can be a predecessor to internal armed conflict.

2. Theory

2.1. Theory and main argument

In consideration of the identified research gap, the theory to help explain the puzzle in this essay builds upon previous research and includes a structural change model in combination with the theories on dissent and repression. The latter have previously concluded that when a government’s authority or legitimacy is threatened they tend to respond by repressing the dissidents so that their threatening behaviour will change (Ritter, 2014). Moreover, the
structural change model is a type of conflict spiral model and states that heavy tactics from side A will lead to a structural change in side B that encourages a harsh reaction from the latter. This does in turn produce a structural change in side A that encourages them to use a heavy tactic towards side B, and so on (Pruitt and Kim, 2004: 102). It is called structural changes because “they are changes in one or another feature of the situation affecting the parties’ choice of tactics”, and the tactics used tend to go from light to heavy, thus causing an escalation (Pruitt and Kim, 2004: 97, 101). In addition to this, the theory stating that there is an inverted-U relationship between level of democracy and internal armed conflict is included together with the evidence that have found that intermediate regimes both are more repressive and more prone to violence and internal instabilities than democracies.

In consideration of this, I argue that intermediate regimes are more likely to see an escalation of protest violence than democracies. This because they are inherently weaker as they are in a so-called transmission period, meaning that they either are a failed democratic regime going towards autocracy, or vice versa. Moreover, in comparison to democracies, intermediate regimes lack legitimacy and accountability, two factors that otherwise limits the democratically elected political leaders’ ability to use repression as it gives their citizens the possibility to oust them of office. The presence of inherent non-violent norms within the governmental institutions further plays an important role in the use of state repression, and exists within most democracies but in few intermediate regimes (Regan and Henderson, 2002: 120-121). Furthermore, in intermediate regimes political leaders are likely to perceive the protesters demands as a threat to their already fragile legitimacy, and are therefore more likely to repress them than to address the demands. The inherent fragile governmental institutions intermediate regimes inhibit, together with the limited range of other options than repression available, thus causes the government to respond harshly to oppositional threats out of fear of political usurpation (Regan and Henderson, 2002: 124). In sum, intermediate regimes are more vulnerable to threats and have weaker governmental institutions, and are thus more likely to repress protesters than democracies. Therefore, as repression is more likely in intermediate regimes, this further increases the likeliness of the escalation scenario as that can spark structural changes.

When taking all of this into account, the theorized process in this essay is thus, firstly, that within an intermediate regime an anti-government protest is likely to experience state repression and get interrupted by the police, as can be seen in the second box in figure 1 below. This is theorized due to the threat the protest pose to the government’s legitimacy and authority,
because when a government feels threatened it is expected to use force to strengthen its own position and to defend the status quo (Carey, 2010: 167). Consequently, an anti-government protest will be perceived as an internal threat by the government and will lead to an intervention by the police to end the protest. The actions used in this step should be non-lethal measures, such as arrest and the usage of stun grenades and water cannons. In line with the structural change model and as can be seen in the third step in figure 1, step two in the theorized process concern the response by the protesters to the police’s actions, and entails an escalation. More specifically, I argue that the interruption will backlash on the police and instead of ending the protest, the protest actions will escalate and turn violent. This due to the structural change that occurs in the group and the view of the police’s actions as illegitimate, something that is especially likely to escalate a conflict (Pruitt and Kim, 2004: 103). Moreover, as intermediate regimes are more likely to be politically unstable, the instability together with the police’s actions causes incentives for the protesters to not back down. This is further in line with the cycle of escalation, as instabilities encourages harsh reactions to provocation, which is a building blocks of escalation (Pruitt and Kim, 2004: 25). Therefore, an escalating action from the protesters towards the police is likely, and may take the form of objects being used as weapons or being thrown at policemen or buildings. This in turn leads to the final step in the theory, and the fourth step in figure 1, being that the police respond with lethal violence such as the usage of batons or guns to deter the protesters violence. This because the threat ultimately increases as the protesters turn to violence, and thus, to end the protest the police must use heavier tactics than the protesters. The theorized process thus estimates protest violence to occur based on the political instabilities, the perceived threats and the expectation that escalated measures will cause the opponent to change their behaviour. This can be found in the fifth and final step in figure 1:

**The Theorized Process in an Intermediate Regime:**

![Figure 1: The theorized process on the impact of state repression, in the form of actions by the police, on protests in intermediate regimes](image-url)

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Peace and Conflict Studies C
To conclude, the argument made in this essay is that protests within an intermediate regime have a higher probability of experiencing protest violence and an escalation thereof than democracies, because the former is more prone to use state repression. Thus, the independent variables in this essay are regime type and state repression, whereas the dependent variable is protest violence escalations, and were derived from the hypothesis in this thesis, which is:

\[ H1: \text{In intermediate regimes, state repression increases the risk of protest violence and an escalation thereof} \]

3. Research design

3.1. Case selection

In this essay, an across-case comparison between three cases is made, where two of the cases were intermediate regimes and one case a democratic regime during the time of their respective protests. Three cases were selected because it was considered easier to make a strong deduction on a potential relationship between the variables with more than one case for the regime type of interest, being intermediate regimes. Consequently, the cases examined in this essay were selected based on the regime type the countries had when their protests occurred. The selections were based on only one of the independent variables because state repression, the second independent variable, was hypothesized to only be a cause of protest violence in an intermediate regime. Therefore, the cases were only selected based on the former. Moreover, to be able to conclude anything based on the research the presence of a large protest action also had to take place within the selected countries. Apart from regime type and the presence of a protest certain other criteria’ were also taken into consideration when selecting the cases. Those criteria’s’ concerned other variables that needed to be as similar as possible between the cases. This, in line with Mill’s Method of Difference, would then make sure that other possible explanations could be ruled out in case of a potential variation in the independent and dependent variables (Gerring, 2017: 79- 80). The control variables that were selected were the level of development in the countries, their proximity to an armed conflict, the duration of their regime type, and lastly, the goal of each country's protest. Thus, a strategic case selection where cases were selected based on their regime type, the presence of a protest and four control variables were conducted.
The regime type is established based on three indexes that measures the level of democracy, namely Freedom House’s, the Economist Intelligence Unit’s (henceforth EIU) and the Varieties of Democracy’s (henceforth V-Dem) index on electoral democracies. These were selected based on their comprehensible and well-established measures, and because they all had measures for all the needed years, something that was lacking on other indexes. Given that the level of democracy can differ from index to index, three sources are used so that the information can be triangulated.

The development variable is determined based upon the United Nations Development Programme’s (henceforth UNDP) Human Development Index (henceforth HDI). The countries should have had the same or similar levels of development, and preferably a level over 0.7 on the HDI as they then were considered to have either high human development or very high human development (UNDP, n.d.a). Thereby, it is made sure that the selected cases did not lack on basic needs, had access to education and had a relatively high life expectancy. Thus, it is possible to rule out that the development affects the outcome of the protest, which previous studies had found evidence for that it can. In clarification, only one index is selected to determine the level of development because the HDI was deemed to provide many in-depth factors on development. This in comparison to other indexes, such as the Gross National Product index, which merely captures economic factors. Therefore, the HDI is considered sufficient for this study.

The next variable is the proximity the cases had to an armed conflict. The score of the variable is established by data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (henceforth UCDP). The countries are considered to be similar if they had not seen any armed conflicts in the last decade before the protest broke out. If the countries recently had experienced an armed conflict they would have, arguably, been unstable and more vulnerable to the instability a protest cause (Boyle, 2014: 8). The time period was selected as I argue that a sufficient amount of time then had passed since the conflict, and should thus not affect the study. Consequently, what is looked at is the number of battle related deaths in a year, for the ten years prior to the protest. Thus, if there were either no or less than 25 battle related deaths in a calendar year (Wallensteen, 2015: 25) in any of the ten years leading up to the protest, the country had not been in an armed conflict.
The third control variable is the duration of the regime type the country had during the protest. This means how long the democratic or intermediate regime had been in place before the protest broke out. This variable is, as with the regime type, determined based on Freedom House’s, EIU’s and V-Dem’s index’s. The variable is considered important because a regime change could possibly affect the stability in the country as it, arguably, influence the political and societal structures within a country. Hence, none of the selected countries should have changed the regime within the last decade. The time period was, just as with the conflict duration, selected as I argue that a sufficient amount of time then had passed since the country changed their regime, and should thus not affect the study.

The last variable is the goal of the protest which should be similar between the cases. It is established by an examination of the reports and news articles that concerned the protests, as the goals should be stated there. The goal of the protest is likely to influence both the protests outcome and the incentives to not back down when being opposed, as certain goals can mean more to the protesters than others. If then the goals were to be different between each selected case it is hard to tell whether it is the independent variables that influence the dependent variable, and not the goal the protest wanted to achieve. The goals are further considered to be similar based on what larger field it belongs to, but should have an anti-government component, meaning that they are protesting something the government has done or will do.

Considering all the necessary variables, the main population in this study are those countries that have experienced a protest within the last ten years. This time span is selected merely on the premise that the technology and communication tools have been enhanced to the degree that it can influence the shape of protests. The emergence of social media has for instance played an important role in recent protests as it has created a platform where protesters easier can organize, communicate and share information about the protests (Bastos et. al. 2015: 333-334). Adding that social media were not available to everyone worldwide until 2006, that year, arguably, marked the start of social media’s (Phillips, 2007). Therefore, the time span of ten years fit well when taking this into account. However, this leaves a rather large population to draw cases from as almost all countries in the world have seen some form of protest action toward the government in the last decade, according to the Domestic Conflict Event Data (Banks and Wilson, 2017b). However, when the search is adjusted to the independent and control variables, the sample slims down. Firstly, all cases with an authoritarian regime type were disregarded. Secondly, all countries that prior to their protest had a level of development
below 0.7 on the HDI were removed. Thirdly, all countries that had experienced an armed conflict with at least 25 battle related deaths during the decade before their protests occurred were also left out. Fourthly, all countries that had recently changed regime before the protests were disregarded. Lastly, from the remaining cases those who had protest goals that were hard to compare to other cases or had other inherent structures that were deemed as a potential influence on the protest were ignored.

This left the most suitable and compatible cases to be compared the protests in Albania in 2011, in Ukraine in 2013, and lastly, in Poland in 2015. The two former were intermediate regimes during the time of their protests, whereas Poland were a democracy (see EIU 2012: 6, 2014: 5 and 2016: 5 for instance). Neither of the three countries had further seen an armed conflict (UCDP, n.d.a, n.d.b and n.d.c) nor changed their regime type during the ten years prior to their protests (Freedom House, 2017b, 2017c and 2017d for instance). Albania and Ukraine were labelled as having high human development in 2011 and 2013, whereas Poland was labelled as having very high human development in 2015 (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.a). The goals of the protests all concerned corruption, and included to oust either single ministers or the entire government, manipulations of state institutions or moves away from democratic values (Raxhimi 2011, OHCHR 2014 and BBC 2015a for instance). See table 1 for a better overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Regime Type</th>
<th>Level of Development</th>
<th>Duration Since Armed Conflict</th>
<th>Duration of Regime Type</th>
<th>Goal of the Protest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania 2011</td>
<td>Intermediate regime</td>
<td>0.752 High Human Development</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>Oust the prime minister and government due to a corruption scandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine 2013</td>
<td>Intermediate regime</td>
<td>0.746 High Human Development</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>Oust the government, due to not signing an EU-agreement and corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland 2015</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>0.855 Very High Human Development</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>Make government respect the rule of law, due to corruption and manipulations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: A conclusion of the results from the case selection*
3.2. Method selection
In this essay, a qualitative analysis is conducted with the method structured focused comparison. This method was chosen to help answer the research question and to help conclude whether the hypothesis is correct or not. A structured focused comparison allows for a focused and structured data collection for both the independent and dependent variables. This makes it possible to compare cases, which is the aim of this study. The essence of a structured focused comparison is to ask the same set of standardized, general questions for each selected case to measure the independent and dependent variables in each case, and to only ask those questions that are relevant to do so (George and Bennett, 2005: 67, 69). Moreover, by using the same set of questions for all three cases the knowledge about the phenomenon of interest is cumulative and systematically compared (George and Bennett, 2005: 67). Hence, this qualitative, comparative case study aims at both testing and generating the theory that was introduced above, and to see if the independent variables affects the dependent variable. Furthermore, in terms of validity it is highly likely that the measurements capture what they intend to do. This because the questions are structured, meaning that they are standardized and general, and focused, meaning that only relevant questions that help measure the variables are asked. Thus, only relevant answers should be produced, and thereby a relevant measurement. This also paves way for reliability, as the data collection each time will include the same structured and focused questions, and should thus produce similar result each time.

3.3. Operationalization and method discourse
The questions asked in the structured focused comparison, as was mentioned in the section above, make up the measurements for each of the three variables. Thereby, the operationalization of each variable consists of a few questions that are used to conduct the research analysis in this essay. Moreover, this section is structured as follows: first the questions for each variable is posed, as can be seen in table 2 below. That is followed by a short description on how the questions for each variable will be answered. To recall, the independent variables in this essay are regime type and state repression, and the dependent variable is protest violence escalation. The questions can be found in table 2:
Questions for the Structured Focused Comparison:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime Type</th>
<th>State Repression</th>
<th>Protest Violence Escalation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Was the country labelled as a:</td>
<td>• Did the police use coercive actions towards the protesters, such as:</td>
<td>• During the duration of the protest, were there reports of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Authoritarian regime</td>
<td>o Hostile dispersing?</td>
<td>o Vandalism, objects thrown, burning, beating or shoving?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Hybrid regime</td>
<td>o Mass arrests?</td>
<td>o Clashes between the police and the protesters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Flawed democracy</td>
<td>o Beatings, tear gas, water cannons or shootings?</td>
<td>o Use of assault with weapons, such as knives, bats or guns?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Full democracy</td>
<td></td>
<td>o Injuries causing hospital visits and/or deaths?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• How did the country score on a scale between 0 and 1 on the Varieties of Democracy index?

3.3.1. Regime type

The answer to the first question about regime type will be based on EIU’s measure on the level of democracy. The EIU have four different categories of regime types which all have an interval of scores which equal the specific regime type. The closer a country score to 10, the more democratic it is, and the scores are stated in the parenthesis. The different types are authoritarian regimes (1-4), hybrid regimes (4-6), flawed democracies (6-8) and full democracies (8-10) (Kekic, 2007). A country is considered an intermediate regime if it scored somewhere between 4-6, and a democracy if it scored between 6-10.

The answer to the second question about regime type will come from Freedom House, that measure the democracy score by looking at the progress and setbacks of democratization. They further use a five-step scale and state that a country closely embodies a democracy if it scores between 1-3.99. The higher the score the more flawed the democracy is (Freedom House, 2017a). Just as above, the scores for each regime type can be found in the parenthesis: consolidated democracy (1.00–2.99), semi-consolidated democracy (3.00–3.99), transitional government or hybrid regime (4.00–4.99), semi-consolidated authoritarian regime (5.00–5.99) and consolidated authoritarian regime (6.00–7.00) (Freedom House, 2017a). In this thesis, a
country is considered a democracy if it scored between 1-3.99 and an intermediate regime if it ended up at a score between 4-4.99.

The answer to the third question about regime type will come from V-Dem’s index and is based on their electoral democracy index. This was selected as it measures the extent to which the ideal of an electoral democracy was achieved (V-Dem, n.d.a.). A country that scored close to 1 on the index is considered a perfect democracy, whereas a score of 0 equals a perfect autocracy. Thus, a score of around 0.5 equals an intermediate regime (V-Dem, 2015).

To conclude, a country is measured as an intermediate regime in this study if it lied somewhere between 4-6 on the EIU index, were considered to have a transitional government or hybrid regime by Freedom House and scored close to 0.5 on V-Dem’s index. Moreover, a country is measured as a democracy if it scored between 6-10 on the EIU index, was considered a consolidated democracy or a semi-consolidated democracy based on the data from Freedom House, and lied close 1 on V-Dem’s index.

3.3.2. State repression and protest violence escalation
The questions about state repression will be answered by using sources such as news articles and reports from non-governmental organizations (henceforth NGO). The police is considered to have been hostile towards the protesters if what was asked for in the questions regarding state repression was present in the cases. The same procedure goes when answering the questions about the dependent variable, protest violence escalation. The first question proves to be correct if any of the violent actions were present, and the second question if the tactics went from light to heavy. They are considered to have done so if, for each time any side used violence, they used a heavier tactic, as exemplified in the theory.

3.4. Sources of empirical data
The sources to be used in this essay are mainly new articles, NGO reports, previous research, statistics and the above mentioned indexes. All the material used to help answer the questions are relevant for the study. It has a wide range of viewpoints and many sources mention the same information which makes it possible to triangulate the empirical facts. Considering that the protests that were selected occurred during the last five years, there are further a lot of news articles available that cover each of the protests. This makes it possible to easily triangulate and
double check critical information. However, potential bias could be a problem in reports on the protests, as the information could have come from the police, government or the protesters, which in this study are potential actors and might have distorted the information to their favour. Although, given the large amount of news coverage, this type of bias problem is avoided by the usage of many sources and several checks on critical information. Moreover, as the protest in Ukraine lasted longer than the other protests, it is natural that there exists more material on that case than the other two. This is however not considered a problem, as the same type of information concerning the protests are available for all cases.

4. Results and analysis

4.1. Analysis of the variables

This part is structured as follows: firstly, all three cases is analysed one by one, on all the variables. Thereafter, a section follows where the results are interpreted and where potential weaknesses and alternative explanations are handled. The first case examined is Albania, followed by Ukraine and lastly by Poland.

4.1.1. Albania

The protest in Albania broke out in January 2011. The analysis of the first independent variable, regime type, shows that the EIU in 2011 gave the country a score of 5.81 on their democracy index, meaning that Albania were labelled a hybrid regime (EIU, 2012: 6). Freedom House labelled the country a transitional government or hybrid regime, as it scored 4.04 (Freedom House, n.d.). Lastly, V-Dem gave the country approximately 0.6 on their index, meaning that it was considered an intermediate regime (V-Dem, n.d.b). Therefore, Albania was indeed an intermediate regime during the time the protest broke out.

The background to the outbreak of the protest in Albania goes back to the parliamentary election the country held in 2009. Ever since the results were made public the opposition party had been calling for new elections (Koleka, 2011). They further accused the government of corruption, abuse of power and election rigging (BBC, 2011a), but the Albanian Supreme Court did however judge the election orderly (Raxhimi, 2011). Nevertheless, this lead up to the outbreak of the protest, in which tens of thousands took to the streets in the Albanian capital, Tirana, on the 21 of January 2011 (Koleka, 2011). Approximately a week before the protest broke out, the much-contested government’s deputy prime minister resigned as he was implicated in a
corruption scandal (Brunwasser, 2011a). More accurately, the corruption scandal concerned a video leaked by an Albanian new agency in which the deputy prime minister made deals that could be interpreted as corruption (Raxhimi, 2011). The goal of the protest was to oust the prime minister from office as well due to the alleged allegations of corruption and election fraud (Raxhimi, 2011), and the protesters were later calling for the entire government to resign and for early elections (BBC, 2011a).

The protest took place on the main boulevard in Tirana, and it did not take long until violence erupted. Reports stated that some of the protesters had broken away from the main group and witnesses claimed that they smashed paving stones and hurled them at the police (Al Jazeera, 2011a). Some also reported that the protesters threw Molotov cocktails at some of the policemen (Raxhimi, 2011), and that cars were set on fire (Koleka, 2011). Sticks and stones were also thrown at government buildings (Berton-Hunter, 2011). The police responded to the protesters actions with tear gas, rubber bullets and truncheons, and used water cannons and stun grenades towards the protesters. Witnesses also stated that they heard gunfire (Berton-Hunter, 2011), and four protesters were indeed shot dead when the protesters and policemen clashed (Al Jazeera, 2011a). The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights reported that the gas grenades the police fired were one of the main contributions to the tense atmosphere. Moreover, the first policemen attending the scene of the protest did not have shields, weapons or other riot gear, but once the violence had erupted the first line of policemen were replaced with ones with better equipment (Hammarberg, 2011: 4).

After about three hours of clashes between the police and the protesters, police in riot gear took control of the boulevard on which the protest were held. Video footage shows the police chasing after lone protesters and beating them with truncheons (Koleka, 2011). Hundreds of riot policemen and national guard officers further swept through the centre of the capital, beating protesters (Al Jazeera, 2011a). There were also reports of people not linked to the protest being beaten and detained by the police (Hammarberg, 2011: 3). 113 people were arrested, mainly on charges of violence against the police (Semini, 2011). Moreover, at least 33 protesters and 17 policemen were wounded during the clashes (Koleka, 2011), as well as officers from the government’s security forces (Al Jazeera, 2011a). As stated above, four protesters were also shot dead during the protest. The victims had taken bullets to the head and chest from close range, and the protest and the violence were thereby, allegedly, the worst the country had seen in over a decade (Koleka, 2011).
The authorities blamed the deaths of the protesters on their main political rival who were apart of the protest, but he blamed the police as he claimed they had provoked the protesters by using water cannons and tear gas (Raxhimi, 2011). Moreover, Amnesty International urged the authorities to investigate the deaths, and stated that the police “must not use excessive force against those carrying out their legitimate right to protest”. The opposition and the protesters further vowed to stage more anti-government protests after a short mourning period of the dead, as they blamed the government for the deaths (Al Jazeera, 2011b), something that however did not happen. Although, in February, the parliament withdrew the immunity for prosecution for one of their former ministers so that he could face charges for alleged corruption, and they also started an investigation concerning corruption against the former deputy prime minister (Landguiden, n.d.).

Furthermore, after the protest, allegations of excessive use of force and ill-treatment by the police were reported (Hammarberg, 2011: 2). The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights did however state that it seemed clear that also the protesters committed acts of violence against the police and the government’s security forces. Moreover, the security forces are entitled to use violence once the security perimeter around government buildings have been breached, something that, however, did not happen. However, the protesters were attempting to enter the yard of the prime minister's office building (Hammarberg, 2011: 3). After the protest, the Parliament voted for an inquiry into the causes of the violence (Brunwasser, 2011b), and Albanian prosecutors did eventually issue arrests for six members of the security forces as they were believed to be part of the deaths of the four men. TV footage also appeared to be showing shots coming from within the prime minister’s compound (BBC, 2011b).

To summarize the above outlined empirics, Albania was labelled as an intermediate regime during the time the protest broke out. Concerning the second independent variable, state repression, the evidence shows that the police did use violent measures towards the protesters. It does further seem proven that it was the police, or security forces, that shot the four protesters dead. However, the protesters were the first to make hostile moves towards the police and the government buildings, which supposedly could be what triggered the police into using violent measures themselves. Although, it could also be the other way around, meaning that the presence of the police is what caused the protesters to start to throw objects at the police and surrounding buildings. This is, however, hard to prove. Nevertheless, it is, as stated above,
possible to say that the police were using violent means towards the protesters as they used tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannons, stun grenades and truncheons towards the protesters. In addition, they also killed four protesters and conducted mass arrests, meaning that they conducted a broad spectrum of violence. So, in conclusion, state repression was present in Albania. The dependent variable protest violence escalations was also present in Albania in 2011. There were many reports of objects being thrown, vandalism and car burnings among the protesters. This further led to a clash between the protesters and the police, who were, as already stated, using tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons, among other means, towards the protest. Surprisingly, the police violence seems to be the only violence that was escalating in the tactics used, as no reports stated that the protesters were using weapons such as knives, bats or guns towards the police. However, as many policemen were injured, the protesters probably did use some sort of heavier violent means than those reported. Therefore, the protesters actions are also considered as escalating in tactics. It further appeared as it were first after the clashes between the protesters and the police the protest violence appeared to escalate.

To conclude, the theoretical framework lined out above do to some extent prove to be correctly in the Albanian case as violence between the two sides were present and as the violent means were escalating the longer the clashes went on. The police’s’ tactics for instance, went from observing the protest to using tear gas and water cannons to using their guns and truncheons, which eventually resulted in four people being shot to death. These violent measures and the order they seem to be used corresponds greatly with the theorized process. However, whether the protest violence was triggered by the police or by hostile protesters is unclear, and this phenomenon will be discussed in greater detail in the sections below.

4.1.2. Ukraine

The second case examined is Ukraine, where a protest broke out in November 2013. The EIU did in 2013 label Ukraine as a hybrid regime as it scored 5.84 (EIU, 2014: 5), and Freedom House labelled it as a transitional government or hybrid regime as it scored 4.86 (Sushko and Prystayko, n.d.). V-Dem further gave the country a score of approximately 0.5, and could thus be considered as an intermediate regime (V-Dem, n.d.b). Hence, Ukraine was an intermediate regime during the time the protest broke out, just like Albania.

The protest in Ukraine broke out in November 2013 because of the refusal by the government to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union (henceforth called EU) (Office of
The decision prompted mass protests on the 21 of November on the Independence Square in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, as the protesters were fearing that the government wanted closer ties to Russia, instead of the EU (International Criminal Court, 2014: 14-15). The protesters later widened their demands to include the fight against, what activists said, widespread government corruption and abuse of power (BBC, 2014a), such as the lack of independence of the judiciary and a perceived denial of equal rights and protection (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014: 3). The protests firstly took the form of sit-in protests at the Independence Square in Kiev but later took a violent turn (Grytsenko and Walker, 2013). Small groups of protesters stormed government buildings and clashed with riot police, and some protesters further used gas, knives and smoke bombs towards the police (ibid.). The police fired tear gas as the protesters tried to enter government buildings, and the police stated that they did so because protesters had thrown smoke grenades at them (BBC, 2013). About a week after the protest had begun, police in riot gear embarked on the Independence Square, where they, as reports said, “brutally dispersed” several hundreds of protesters. The authorities said that the force was used because of provocations from the protesters as they started to throw objects at the police (Smith-Spark and Sanchez, 2013). These events lead to Ukraine one day later seeing its largest protest in about a decade, and even though all rallies at Independence Square were banned on the 1 December the protest continued (Grytsenko and Walker, 2013). A week later thousands of riot policemen carried out a raid on the barricades in Kiev during the night. By then the protesters had been occupying the square in the centre of Kiev for about two weeks, and the riot police closed in on the Independence Square in columns. They approached from all sides and began to dismantle the barricades that had been erected the days before. Some hundred policemen struggled with some of the protesters, and some policemen were trapped behind protester lines (Walker, 2013).

On January 16, 2014, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted laws which imposed tighter restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly and association which caused the relations between the protesters and the authorities to worsen further (International Criminal Court, 2014: 15). During the weeks after the law were signed violent clashes occurred that caused injuries to both protesters and the police (ibid.). In the end of January, the government resigned, but the appointment of a new government took time and caused a political deadlock (Styrman, 2016b). On the 18 of February protesters gathered outside the parliament, which lead to a confrontation between the police and the protesters where live ammunition was used by both sides causing
26 deaths. Thus, the protest had escalated into an internal armed conflict as the threshold for the number of battle related deaths had been breached (UCDP, n.d.d). On the 20 February, protesters, armed with axes, knives and truncheons, marched through Kiev to drive the police away from the Independence Square, and the police were soon replaced by the special forces, who were armed with combat weapons (Traynor and Walker, 2014). During the days between 18-22 February about 88 deaths and hundreds of injuries were reported (International Criminal Court, 2014: 15). The president and the opposition eventually agreed on a coalition government and new election, and fixed Presidential elections for May 2014, and thereby the violence de-escalated (International Criminal Court, 2014: 15).

From the 24 of November 2013 and onwards, injuries and killings of protesters, policemen security forces were reported. Most of the crimes were, allegedly, the result of excessive force by security forces against the protesters (International Criminal Court, 2014: 15). The first deaths were reported in January, as two protesters were shot in the centre of Kiev. The opposition claimed they were shot by riot police, but the government denied the charges (BBC, 2014b). According to the International Criminal Court (henceforth the ICC), at least 118 people were killed during the time of the protest, between the 21 November 2013 and 22 February 2014. At least 110 of the deaths occurred in Kiev where the highest number of reported killing occurred between the 18-22 February (ICC, 2014: 15-16). 17 of the killed were members of the security forces. Around 1.900 people were treated in hospitals in Kiev because of injuries received during the protest (ICC, 2014: 16). Reports of incidents of ill-treatment and torture by the police and special forces during the protests were also present, and the methods included forced undressing, hosing with water cannons in sub-zero temperatures and beatings of protesters with truncheons (ICC, 2014: 16). Furthermore, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have in their report from April 15, 2014 written that “the excessive use of force by the special police and other security forces was met with impunity and led to a significant radicalisation of the protest movement” (OHCHR, 2014: 5).

When analysing the above outlined empirics, it is possible to conclude that Ukraine were labelled as an intermediate regime when the protest started in 2013. It is further evident that the police were using violent measures towards the protesters, and thus were guilty of state repression, which is the second independent variable in this essay. The police were firing tear gas and raided the Independence Square on which the protest mainly was held multiple times, as it seems totally unprovoked. The actions on the square by the police were hostile, and reports
of injured protesters arose. There were further reports of arrests and the first two casualties were allegedly shot by riot police. Furthermore, both the ICC and the OHCHR stated that the crimes during the protest often were the result of excessive force by security forces, and as was evident from the death toll, most of the dead were indeed protesters. The reports of ill-treatment and torture by the police further gives support for the use of state repression. The dependent variable, protest violence escalations, was also present during the Ukrainian protest. There were multiple times reports of objects being thrown and clashes between the police and the protesters, and just as in the Albanian case the violence did not seem to escalate until the clashes occurred. The escalation can be exemplified by the actions of the protesters, who started out the protest peaceful but eventually picked up axes, knives and truncheons to fight against the police. In addition to this, considering that the protest saw its worst days of violence in late February when 88 people were killed, this paves way for the theory that the violence escalates over time. It further supports the notion that protests can work as a predecessor to armed conflict as the protest in Ukraine escalated into an internal armed conflict.

To conclude, there were clashes between the two sides and the violent means used were indeed escalating more and more over time. This was proven as the protest started out peaceful but gradually increased in violence, and eventually to the degree that an internal armed conflict had broken out in late February. Thus, the Ukrainian case were also following the theorized process as the violence escalated because of, as it seems, the police’s interference. However, just as in the Albanian case it is unclear whether the protest violence was triggered by the police or by hostile protesters. This phenomenon will however, as mentioned before, be discussed in greater detail in the sections below.

4.1.3. Poland

The last case examined is Poland in 2015. With a score of 7.09, the EIU labelled Poland a flawed democracy (EIU, 2016: 5), whereas Freedom House labelled them a consolidated democracy with a score of 2.21 (Arak and Zakowiecki, n.d.). V-Dem gave them a score of approximately 0.85, and Poland could thereby be considered as a democracy (V-Dem, n.d.b). Thus, Poland was considered a democracy at the time of the protest.

On the 12 of December 2015, thousands of people took to the streets in the Polish capital Warsaw to protest assumed corruption. The people were protesting the newly elected government that, allegedly, were trying to manipulate state institutions. The organisers of the
protest accused the president of breaking the law, as he were appointing new judges to Poland's Constitutional Court. However, the government claimed that the court was biased as the sitting judges were appointed by the previous government (BBC, 2015a). More accurately, the government had ever since they won the elections in October 2015 tried to appoint judges of their own choice to the Constitutional Court (BBC, 2015b). The opposition deemed the act as illegal, something the governing party denied it as being. They instead argued that the judges in the Constitutional Court needed to be replaced so that the balance of power in the body was ensured as it was the previous government that broke the law when they did the original appointments, they claimed. The government further stated that the previous government had made those appointments based on a faulty law (Szary and Florkiewicz, 2015a). To have control of the court were key to the governing party, as that determined whether they could implement all the policy plans they wanted to impose, something that the court could block (Szary and Florkiewicz, 2015a).

These actions lead to the protest that started in December 2015 in Warsaw. The protests also grew and later included protest in about 20 other Polish cities. They maintained the steady goal of protesting the country’s new, conservative government, and claimed that they were defending the constitution and protecting the democracy (BBC, 2015b). The protesters were also demanding that the government respected the rule of law (BBC, 2015a). The protest ended later in December, but how and why it did is unclear. It could however be related to that the president, despite the mass protest, signed the controversial reform of the Constitutional Court into law. The change included that the court needed a higher majority to pass most of the court rulings (BBC, 2015c). The opposition said that the signing of the new law meant that important checks on the government’s power were removed, and the Supreme Court in Poland stated that the new law interfered with the court’s independence (The Guardian, 2015).

To conclude, the analysis of the protest in Poland shows that the country during the time the protest broke out was a democracy, and as was theorized the protest did not experience any state repression or protest violence escalations either. There were no reports of actions such as hostile dispersing, mass arrests or beatings, nor were there any reports of vandalism, clashes or assaults or injuries. Thus, the Poland case paves way for the theoretical claim which assume that it is protests in intermediate regimes that are more likely to experience state repression and then causing protest violence, and not democracies.
4.2. Results

4.2.1. Interpretation of the results

The interest in this essay lied in looking at why some protests escalate into violence, and was thought to be a result of the regime type as intermediate regimes are proved to use more repression towards dissent. Thus, the argument made were that in an intermediate regime, repression by the government, or by a proxy such as the police, towards protests increases the likeliness of violence and an escalation thereof. This because the perceived threat the protest uphold cause a willingness for the government to end the protest. However, because of the police’s attempt to end the protest, the protest violence escalation has begun as the protesters responds with heavier violent means.

The main problem encountered in this essay was, as has been mentioned above, who sparked the violence in the intermediate regimes. This was a somewhat grey area as it was hard to conclude whether it was the police or the protesters that were violent first. The evidence did seem to prove that it was the protesters that did, but reports and witnesses also stated that, in both Albania and Ukraine, it was the police’s’ actions that caused the tensions and provoked the protesters. Consequently, whether it was the police’s or the protesters violence that were the first trigger to the protest violence were left difficult to answer. However, considering that harsh reactions to provocation is one of the building blocks of the cycle of escalation (Pruitt and Kim, 2004: 25), it is possible to assume that the ignition to the protest violence concerned a provocation. Even though the police’s’ first actions towards the protests may not have been violent, it is possible to deduce that they could have provoked the protesters by interfering with the protest. The police on the other hand seem unlikely to have been provoked by the protesters by any less than violent means, and should, assumedly, only have used escalated tactics if that were the case. In this logic, it could be supposed that the protesters used violence first as a reaction to a provocation by the police, albeit it may have been non-violent. Thus, it could be considered that the police indeed were the first to spark an escalation as they provoked the protesters. Moreover, neither of the protests would, arguably, have seen protest violence would it not have been for the violent interferences by the police into the two respective protests. Accordingly, it does seem that the theorized process partly fit as the protests in the intermediate regimes indeed saw protest violence and escalated in the expected manner, with the use of heavier tactics from both sides’ the more time went by. Even though it was not possible to conclude who provoked who first with the available information, I claim that neither of the
protests would have experienced protest violence and an escalation thereof if the police would not have intervened with violent means in both protests.

When combining the above outlined discussion and the hypothesis in this essay, being “In intermediate regimes, state repression increases the risk of protest violence and an escalation thereof”, it seemed as the latter were proved to be correct as the protests did turn violent after the police had intervened in the two intermediate regimes, Albania and Ukraine. Adding that the protest in the democracy, Poland, did not turn violent or meet any resistance from the police this further supports the hypothesis. Consequently, the main finding in this essay is that the police’s behaviour towards protests in intermediate regimes indeed seem to trigger the usage of violence during protests. Moreover, it further seemed as the police’s’s’ interruptions of the protests covaried to a high degree with the likeliness of protest violence escalations as it first were after the primary clashes between the protesters and the police the protests appeared to escalate in their violence. Consequently, it seems as both the independent variables, regime type and state repression, influenced the dependent variable, protest violence escalations. Another important conclusion drawn from this study is that state repression on protest violence could cause armed conflicts, something this study aimed to shed light on. This finding was supported by the protest in Ukraine, which lead to an internal armed conflict because the government resorted to repression instead of meeting the protest’s demands.

Moreover, the above outlined discussion could lead to the first potential objection to the research in this essay, as other scholars may have interpreted the results differently. However, as may be evident from the discussion, the lack of information on who provoked who first are not considered as a main problem as the interest in this study is whether the police had intervened with violent measures at all. Therefore, I argue that the most credible explanation for why the protests turned violent is that the police interfered with violence. Thus, the primary actions the protesters used did not play an important role in whether the protest turned violent or not. This because the police decided to answer with violent and provoking measures, such as with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons, and thereby punished and provoked the entire protest instead of only detaining the protesters that were using violence. Moreover, even if the protesters were the ones who used violence first, it is feasible to assume that the actions the police take on in situations like those are important for how the protest plays out.
Furthermore, in the research gap found in the previous literature scholars had established that protests were not threatening enough for the government to intervene, something this essay aimed at proving incorrect. Given that the police responded to the protests with violence in both Albania and Ukraine this entails that the protests were threatening and thus had to be stopped. However, this cannot be the case if the police responded with violence to the protesters’ violence and not to a peaceful protest, as this means that it was not the protest itself that was threatening. Hence, the trigger of the protest violence does play an important role here, and thus leaves this assumption unanswered. Therefore, this study can neither prove that it is the threat the protests uphold that cause the police to intervene nor that it is what sparks protest violence.

In sum, the main result from this study is that protest violence and an escalation thereof seem to have occurred due to the police’s’ violent interference in the protests in the intermediate regimes. Thus, it can be assumed that state repression increase the likeliness of protest violence escalation, which in that case proves the hypothesis correct. Another interesting finding is that state repression on protests does seem to be a potential trigger of armed conflict. However, some uncertainties also arose. For instance, it is not possible to say whether the state repression occurred due to the threat the protest posed to the government or not. Therefore, it is not clear if the theory fully holds as it is uncertain whether the police interfered in the protests due to the threat a mass protest posed, or for another, unknown reason. To conclude, the results from this study are ambiguous, and only partly supports the theory and main argument. Although, some interesting findings were also discovered.

4.2.2. Weaknesses in the research design
Concerning the case selection, a first potential objection could be that other countries may have been better to compare or that other cases could have given a different result. However, even though a handful of cases remained after the application of the control variables there were other factors in those cases thought to potentially influence the outcome. These included the political ideologies of the ruling party, disregarding the regime type, and too specific protest goals. Thus, the selected cases were mainly chosen based on their similarities in the reasons they had to protest. It should also be noted that I am aware that the duration of the protests was very different between the three chosen cases. However, this was deemed as irrelevant as the interest lied in whether there was any protest violence escalation, disregarding the duration of the potential protest violence. The duration of the protest would only have been considered an issue if the protest violence would have occurred weeks or months in to the protest, as the
violence then could have been triggered by other reasons, such as the realization that peaceful
means did not give results, for example.

The final objection may arise concerning the generalizability of the study as the control
variables could be deemed too specific. However, a lot of countries with an intermediate regime
have a relatively high development, have been peaceful and had the same regime for about a
decade. Most importantly, intermediate regimes also tend to have incentives to protest their
governments. Considering the protest goal, it is further known that the tendency of corruption
in intermediate regimes is high, and may thus trigger protests just as the ones in Albania and
Ukraine. Therefore, I argue that it is possible to generalize this sample to a larger population as
many countries with an intermediate regime share the same characteristics.

4.2.3. Alternative explanations
Furthermore, an alternative explanation to what caused the protest violence and an escalation
thereof could be the level of oppression and discontent among the citizens before the protest
broke out. The citizens could have been oppressed and had suffered high level of grievances
related to their way of living before the protest broke out, something that could have been
missed by the HDI. That could, if the grievances were strong enough, be a reason for why the
protesters did not give in when the police used violent measures and could potentially be why
the protests saw violence at all. However, given the results from the comparison of the three
cases, it seems far off that anything other than the uncertainty and instability an intermediate
regime inherit was one of the reasons for the violence to break out the way it did. This because
it is rather unlikely that the same set of grievances and emotions existed in both Albania and
Ukraine, but not in Poland. That those grievances and emotions then also would have played a
more important role than the government’s repression seems improbable, especially when
considering that it was the government’s’ alleged misconduct’s that they were protesting in the
first place.

5. Conclusion
The purpose of this study was to answer the research question “Why do some protests result in
violence whereas others do not?”, with the hope that insights would be provided on why
protests turn violent and if state repression towards protests could work as a spark for armed
conflict. Protests were hypothesised to turn violent based on the regime type the country had in
combination with the actions the police used during the protest. More specifically, it was hypothesised that state repression towards protests in intermediate regimes increased the risk of protest violence escalations. The goal was thus to study the relationship between protests and state repression to shed light on why some protests violently escalates. The hope was further to widen the field on war onset and to find new pathways for how to reduce the risk of armed conflict, as an escalation of violence often is a predecessor to war.

The answer to the research question in this study turned out to be that some protests result in violence because they occur in intermediate regimes where the government, or police, are more likely to interfere in protests. The interference then cause protest violence and an escalation thereof. Based on this study’s scope conditions, this means that protests that do not turn violent either occur in democracies or were not interrupted by the police. This means that the hypothesis is correct. However, as it could not be proved that the violence occurred due to the threat the protest posed, the theory is not. More specifically, as it was not certain whether the police interfered in the protests due to the threat a mass protest posed or not, it cannot be said that the theory fully holds. Therefore, because the results from this study are ambiguous, the theory was not fully supported, albeit the hypothesis appear to be correct.

The main contribution of this study is the knowledge about the impact police interference could have on protests and the likeliness of seeing a violent escalation thereof. Therefore, the possibility of violence and heavy violent escalations in intermediate regimes as a consequence of the police’s actions towards protests should not be disregarded. This is especially important as evidence supported that protest violence escalations eventually could lead to armed conflicts. Thus, an important policy implications this study brings forth is to clearly encourage the government and the police to restrain from violently interfering with protests, and instead work out the issues within the frames of the law. Otherwise, a country might get trapped in an escalation spiral, which in a worst-case scenario could end in an armed conflict.

Moreover, areas for future research should consider what it is that cause protests and protest violence to end, like it did in Albania for example. Overall, more studies on why the government decides to interfere in protests at all as well as more in-depth studies on the trigger of protests should also be conducted to help with the understanding of protest violence in general.
5.1. Summary

This study aimed at answering the research question “Why do some protests result in violence whereas others do not?”, and the hypothesis were “In intermediate regimes, state repression increases the risk of protest violence and an escalation thereof”. The aim of the study was to examine if protests in intermediate regimes were more likely to experience protest violence than democracies, and the theory used to examine this included state repression, the instabilities of intermediate regimes and the structural change model.

Albania and Ukraine were selected as the two intermediate regimes to be examined, whereas Poland were selected as the democracy. The method used was a structured focused comparison, and the results from this showed that the two intermediate regimes indeed saw protest violence, most likely because of state repression, whereas the democracy did not. There were however some uncertainties concerning the trigger of the protest violence as it was unclear whether the protesters used violence as a response to provocations from the police, or vice versa. The discussion concluded that the protest violence and its escalation would not have occurred would it not have been for the police’s’ violent interruptions, and was therefore deemed as the cause of the protest violence and its escalation. The hypothesis was thus considered to be correct, but the theory was however only considered partially true as there were uncertainties concerning if the police used violence because they perceived the protest as a threat, or not. In sum, the study gave ambiguous results.

Conclusively, the answer to the research question was that some protests turn violent because of the country’s regime type and the actions the police or government take on. More specifically, and as was hypothesised, state repression towards protests in intermediate regimes increases the risk of protest violence escalations. Contributively, this study has corroborated that protests can play an essential role when it comes to the outburst of armed conflicts, as violent escalations could be a consequence of the former and a cause of the latter. Therefore, state repression of protests should be considered as a potential cause of armed conflict.
6. Bibliography


