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## Coercive Capacity and the Prospects for Democratization

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*Comparative Politics, Volume 44, No. 2, pp. 151-169, 2012***Abstract:**

How does the strength of a state's coercive apparatus under autocracy affect the likelihood of democratic transition? While a broad range of literature posits a negative link between repression and democracy, empirical models of the determinants of democratization rarely include measures that capture this relationship. We generate a panel dataset with global scope from 1950-2002 to explicitly empirically assess whether coercive capacity is negatively associated with democracy. We find that increased coercive capacity under autocracy has a strong negative impact on both a country's level of democracy as well as the likelihood of democratization if the country is autocratic, and that these results are robust to model specification, potential endogeneity, and alternative explanations. The analysis suggests that empirical studies of democratization should include measures of repression to explicitly account for the widely assumed link between coercive capacity and autocracy.

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