Research Agenda
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How do governments legitimate and justify their human rights abuses? How do narratives undermining human rights advocacy diffuse, and what are the consequences? How do these same narratives enable radicalization and trigger acts of state and non-state political violence? My research contributes to these broad questions, and others intersecting the human rights, political violence, and propaganda/misinformation literatures. I rely on large scale event-data analysis, but I consistently produce mixed-methods work and I am beginning to engage with automated text analysis as well.

Currently published research focuses on understanding how governments develop and use propaganda to suppress dissent, undermine opposition narratives, and legitimize structural and state violence. I examine this strategy in my paper published in *Terrorism and Political Violence*. I find that properly calibrated public statements by the government suppresses protest movements. Less intense violent repression is required in these cases, and there is less backlash from repression, compared to governments that rely on repression alone. Furthering this work, co-authors and I examine how the volume of propaganda varies across autocratic regimes. We find that single party regimes both work to legitimize themselves and de-legitimize dissidents more than other authoritarian regimes, which we reinforce with a case study of China's reaction to the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests.

Two of my projects in progress interrogate how propaganda can be used to build counter-norms against human rights advocacy, tracing how Russian anti-LGBT rhetoric is adopted by US opponents of LGBT rights and how narratives of femininity and motherhood are used to recruit women into extremist groups like QAnon. In other related projects, I am examining how changes in discourse of the US far right influence the likelihood of lone actor terrorist attacks, and whether histories of gendered intimate violence are useful predictors of politically motivated violence.

My long-term research goal is to improve understanding about how propaganda and misinformation is used to interfere with human rights advocacy and enable the perpetration of political violence. I am also working to expand event-data resources. For the most part, these sources ignore the ways state media, pro-regime information sources, or extremist groups talk about events.

This research agenda makes several important contributions to the current literature. First, it improves our understanding of how human rights protections change by considering how (de)legitimation by governments interferes with advocacy and civil resistance. Second, it addresses yet unexamined ways in which governments and radical groups can trigger and enable political violence. Lastly, it contributes methodologically by furthering the measurement of event-recording and text analysis to better understand the interaction of propaganda and violent political action.