

Ethnicity, Nonviolent Action, and Lethal Repression in Africa¹

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Introduction

When faced with popular protests and unrest, why do some governments respond with lethal force while others adopt a relatively more constrained response? In January of 2001, supporters of the Civic United Front (CUF) party—based in Zanzibar, Tanzania—demonstrated against the incumbent government, leading to clashes with the police that left 32 dead. However, an anti-government protest by the National Democratic Alliance in neighboring Malawi in February 2001 passed without incident, despite government efforts to break up a similar rally with force just a few weeks earlier. These two cases reveal both cross-national (comparing Malawi and Tanzania) as well as within-case (one event in Malawi being repressed, while the other was not) variation in state repression. Given the different types of threats faced by the government—varying on dimensions such as the issue at stake, the size of the opposition, and the use of violence—it is important to know not just which governments are repressive but also which events are more likely to be repressed.

In this paper we focus on violent and non-violent opposition activities and threat perceptions by incumbent elites. Opposition groups can pose significant, even existential, threats to the government by using violent tactics or by mobilizing large segments of society around primarily nonviolent strategies and tactics (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). We argue that while regimes are expected to respond to violence with violence, regimes have different tolerances for peaceful mass mobilization events. Given the salience of ethnicity in African politics, ruling elites that depend on a relatively small constituent base will likely see peaceful protests as more threatening, given that sizeable ethnic groups are excluded from power and can potentially be

mobilized by the opposition. Governments that are based on broad ethnic representation, by contrast, are more secure in their rule and are more likely to tolerate peaceful unrest.

Our empirical approach is relatively new in the repression/dissent literature. Some literature employs annual, cross-national data to look at aggregate levels of human rights violations, but this approach tells us relatively little about the actors and events that are victims of the state. Other approaches look at dynamic sequencing and government responses to dissent over time, but typically focus on a small set of countries. Using the Social Conflict in Africa Database, we can both account for cross-national variation in repression as well as features of the contentious action itself, including the use of violence, the issues at stake, and the location of protest, among others.

In the following section, we discuss our theory and hypotheses regarding violent and non-violent unrest and the government's decision to use lethal force. Then we describe our data and methods. Next, we turn to a discussion of our results. In particular, we find robust evidence of an interactive effect between the use of violence and the size of the ethnic group in power. While violent protests are likely to be repressed across the board, non-violent protests tend to be tolerated in countries where the regime is broadly representative of the population and repressed when the regime is narrowly based. The final section offers concluding remarks.

Theory and Hypotheses

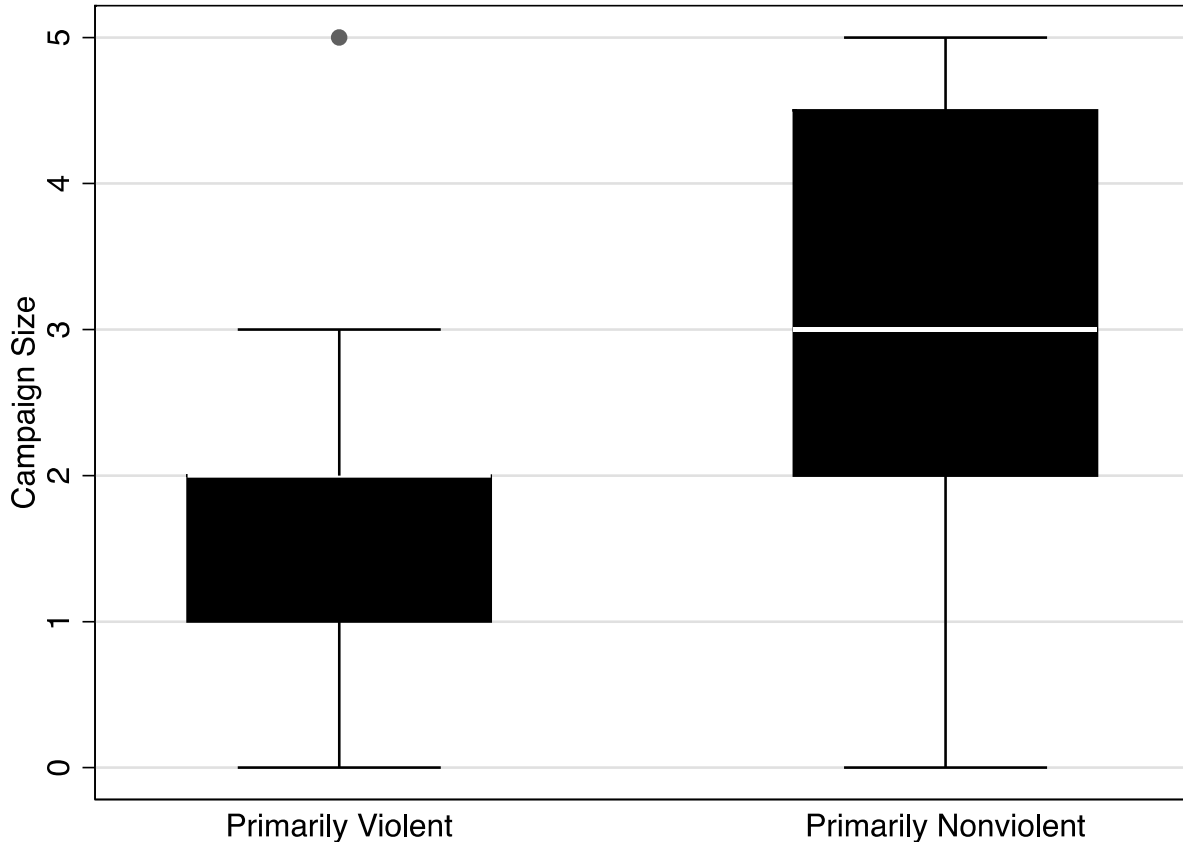
Governments with large support coalitions—in other words, those that appeal to a broad base—should be less likely to use lethal force against dissidents than those with more narrow bases of support. This insight draws on the threat perception literature, in which the decision to

repress is modeled as a function of government perceptions of the potential for dissident actions to remove incumbents from office (Davenport 1995, Gartner and Regan 1996, Earl, Soule and McCarthy 2003). While these earlier studies focused most explicitly on dissident tactics and aims, we focus on the mobilization capacity of potential dissidents. *Ceteris paribus*, groups with larger mobilization potential will be more threatening to governments, as they can tap into potential larger wells of resources – both human and material – in pursuit of their aims. Moreover, governments with smaller support coalitions and their constituents derive more private benefits from being in office, as societal patronage networks extend to a smaller portion of the population (Heger and Salehyan 2007). Smaller groups of supporters are also more threatened because being removed from office often also means death or imprisonment. However, mobilization potential is likely to have differential impacts across tactical choices by dissidents, with mobilization potential more important for nonviolent tactics than violent ones.

Through the use of violence, dissidents can impose costs that are out of proportion to their numbers. Many successful violent movements have been quite small. Francois Bozize's faction was able to topple the Central African Republic's government in 2002 with roughly 1,000 armed supporters; Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) is another example of a relatively small group which was able to capture the central government. Even those that have not achieved their ultimate aims have nevertheless been able to create havoc and significantly diminish government legitimacy while being few in numbers. Nigeria's Boko Haram militants likely number in the hundreds to low thousands (~3,000), yet the group has been able to conduct violent attacks across Nigeria that have resulted in thousands of civilian deaths and diminished confidence in the government's ability to protect the

populace (Blanchard 2014, Reuters 2014). According to the NAVCO 2.0 data, over 80% of successful violent campaigns had fewer than 100,000 participants; see figure 1.

Figure 1: Sizes of successful campaigns by primary means of contestation (violent vs. nonviolent), 1945-2006. Campaign size is coded as 0=1-999 1=1000-9,999 2=10,000-99,999 3=100,000-499,999 4=500,000-1 million 5=>1 million participants.



Source: Chenoweth and Lewis (2013).

In contrast, nonviolent campaigns usually only threaten government tenure when they can mobilize large numbers of supporters. Nonviolence succeeds in part because of lower barriers to participation: because violent repression of nonviolent dissent is less likely, and because participants are not encouraged to engage in the risky business of killing opponents, nonviolent protests and strikes are more likely to attract large and diverse bases of support (Chenoweth and

Stephan 2011). These support bases are better posed to encourage defections within the ruling elite due to more numerous ties between protesters and government officials, thus hastening negotiations for transfer of power or the granting of concessions. The modal size of a successful nonviolent campaign was 100,000-499,999 participants; 70% of successful campaigns had at least this many participants.²

Thus, the mass mobilization capacity of nonviolent challengers should be a more significant determinant of perceived threat on the part of the government. In situations where the government is supported by narrow constituencies, the perceived mobilization potential of society should be higher. When governments have large, more inclusive bases of support, the mobilization potential of dissidents should be lower. While this should not matter much for whether the government responds with force against violent actors – force will be met with force – it should matter for repression of nonviolent actions. Large (small) government support coalitions imply the proportion of the populace excluded from power is small (large). When government coalitions are large, the upward bound on mobilization capacity of dissidents should be smaller; dissident groups will be drawing on a smaller group of individuals disaffected with the current state of affairs. As this group increases in size, the potential for nonviolent challenges to remove the incumbent government increases as well. This should lead to greater perceptions of threat, and thus a higher probability of repression.

H1: As the size of the government's support coalition increases, the probability it will respond lethally to nonviolent challenges decreases.

² Many successful campaigns were much larger; 38% had at least 500,000 participants.

H2: The size of the government's support coalition should not be strongly correlated with the probability that violent challenges will be repressed lethally.

In Africa, ethnic cleavages are frequently important axes around which individuals and organizations mobilize support and contest power (Horowitz 1985, Posner 2004). Many scholars have noted that patron-client relationships and social support networks in Africa often follow ethnic lines (Wantchekon 2003, Habyarimana et al. 2007). Others have shown that political coalitions in Africa often attempt to strike a balance between excluding ethnic rivals and forming broad constituencies (Roessler 2011) and that patterns of ethnic exclusion are linked to the onset of civil conflict (Buhaug et al. 2008). Therefore, we find it reasonable to use ethnicity as a marker of inclusion/exclusion in the ruling coalition. Thus, in order to measure the size of the government's support coalition, we will use various measures of the size of the government's ethnic base of support. These measures are discussed at length in the following section.

Data, Estimation, and Results

Many of our variables are taken from the Social Conflict in Africa Database (Salehyan et al. 2012), which contains data on over 7,000 conflict events in 47 African countries from 1990-2013.³ The data were derived from keyword searches of Associated Press (AP) and Agence France Presse (AFP) news wires.⁴ Each record in SCAD refers to a unique conflict event. Events

³ The actual data span the period 1990-2013, although because of data availability for several independent variables, we end our analysis at 2009.

⁴ After several refinements and pilot studies, our search protocol is based upon keyword searches of country names and the following five terms: "protest," "riot," "strike," "violence," and

can be violent or nonviolent, last for a single day to several weeks or months, and can be reported by a single article or many news articles. To define an event, researchers determined the particular actor(s) involved, their target(s) and the issue(s) at stake. A conflict is classified as a single event if the issues, actors, and targets are the same and there is a distinct, continuous series of actions over time. SCAD reflects an intermediate approach to collecting event data between highly detailed, dyadic “action-reaction” data and global, highly aggregated data. One of the virtues of this approach is that it allows for collecting more information on event attributes – who did what to whom and why – while facilitating cross-national and inter-temporal comparisons.

The Dependent Variable: Lethal Repression

Our dependent variable is whether a conflict event was repressed using lethal force. The original data codes repression according to a three-part scheme: no repression reported (74% of events), non-lethal repression (e.g. tear gas, arrests, etc., 18% of events), and lethal repression (lethal tactics resulting in deaths, 8% of events). Lethal repression of nonviolent action is relatively uncommon: across Africa, only 3.2 percent of nonviolent actions were repressed with

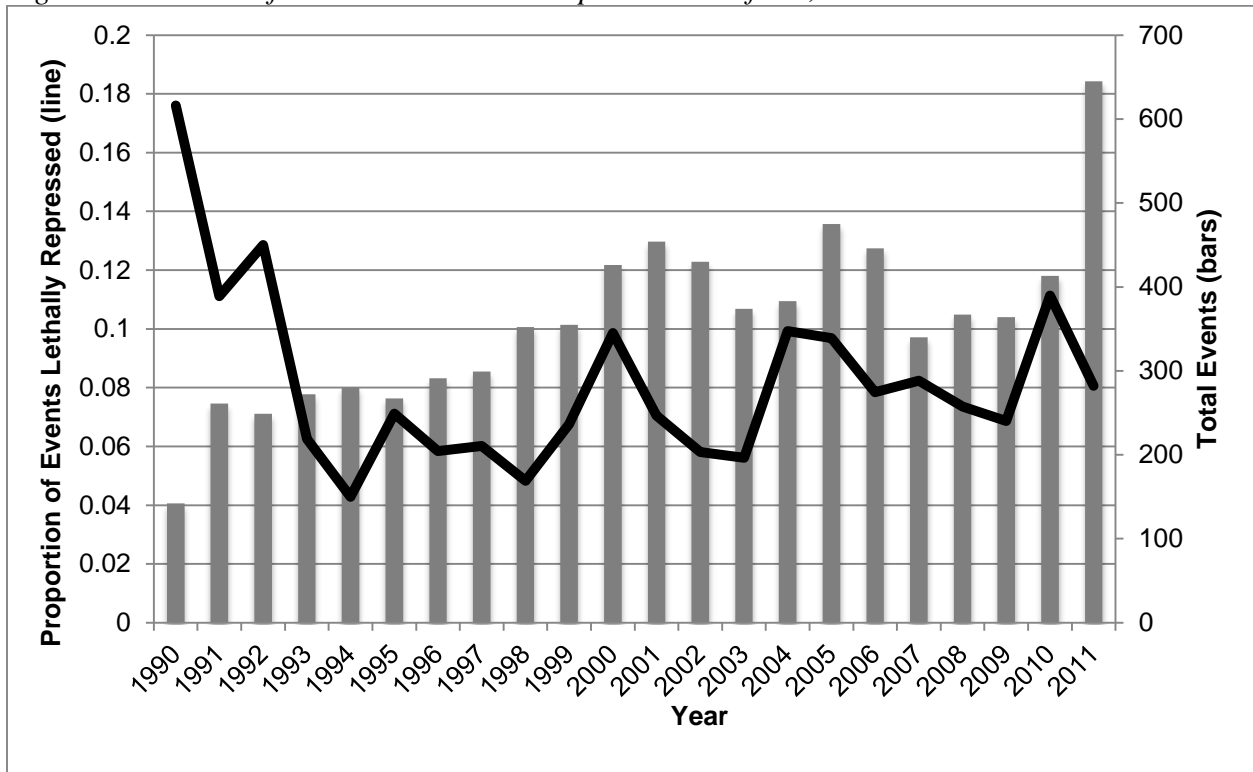
“attack”. Given thousands of newswires per day, we do not claim to have captured every conflict event on the continent. Given resource constraints, it would be impossible for journalistic sources to identify every incidence of social conflict (see Hug 2003). With these caveats in mind, our search protocol identifies the most politically significant conflict events; namely, large-scale events that draw many participants, significant acts of violence, and events that threaten political stability (Hendrix and Salehyan 2015). Below, we discuss methodological controls for media coverage of particular cases.

deadly force between 1990 and 2011.⁵ Theoretically and practically speaking, the border between non-lethal and lethal repression is somewhat blurred. The instrument of coercion used is often not a reliable metric: batons and tear-gas canisters can potentially be deadly, and it is often difficult to know if security forces did or did not use live ammunition. Therefore, rather than looking at the type of police action, lethal repression is coded if there are actually confirmed deaths that are perpetrated by state forces. This measure is much less ambiguous than alternative constructs.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of events that were lethally repressed continent-wide as well as the total number of events by year. The early 1990s were the most repressive period, with lethal repression used relatively sparingly between 1993 and 2003. Since 2003, rates of lethal repression have been higher, spiking in 2010. While there is large cross-sectional variation in rates of lethal repression – the Guinean government used lethal repression against 22% of all events, while the Somali government only used lethal repression 1% of the time - there is still significant variation within countries over time. In Nigeria rates of lethal repression fell from 2009 to 2010 (16% to 7%), even as the number of events tripled due to an uptick in ethnoreligious rioting in the north; events were repressed lethally over three times as frequently in 2000 as in 2001 (26% to 7%), even though both years saw roughly the same number of events (2000: 77, 2001: 85).

⁵ If we include those actions that began nonviolent but escalated to violence (i.e., protests or strikes which became violent riots), the share rises to 7%. However, attribution of escalation in these cases is difficult: it is often impossible to determine whether nonviolent protesters became violent and were subsequently lethally repressed or whether the escalation to violent tactics was a result of lethal repression. We explore this issue in robustness checks.

Figure 2: Social conflict events and lethal repression in Africa, 1990-2011.



Source: Salehyan et al. (2012).

Violent Tactics

In order to parse the effects of ethnic support coalitions on repression across different opposition tactics, we include an indicator variable for whether the event was violent or nonviolent. Nonviolent events include peaceful demonstrations, whether organized or unorganized, as well as strikes, both limited to a particular sector and general workplace stoppages. Violent events included riots, pro-government violence and anti-, extra- and intra-government violence.⁶ 51.4% of events in the sample are coded as violent.

⁶ These events are defined as follows: *Organized riot*: rioting planned by a formal group or organization. Participants intend to cause injury to people or property; *Spontaneous riot*: rioting

Government's Ethnic Support Coalition

We operationalize the size of the government's ethnic support coalition four ways in order to establish robustness. First, we use leader ethnicity, which is the proportion of the population coming from the leader's ethnic group. The data are from Heger and Salehyan (2007), updated by the authors from the Library of Congress Country Studies (2011) series, online biographies, as well as a variety of secondary sources. This variable ranges from 0.02 (many cases) to 0.98 (Tunisia).

Two alternate operationalizations of government coalition size come from the Ethnic Power Relations dataset (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009). Second, we use the share of population that is from the politically dominant ethnic group. Ethnic political dominance refers to a situation in which "elite members of the group hold dominant power in the executive-level but there is some limited inclusion of members of other groups", thus accounting for situations in which members of minority groups hold token appointments (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009, online appendix). The variable ranges from zero (many cases) to 0.9 (Egypt). Third, we use the size of the largest included ethnic group, i.e., the largest group that is partner in

without formal organization; *Pro-government violence*: repression against individuals or groups, initiated by government actors or violence by private actors in support of the government; *Anti-government violence*: violence against government targets by permanent or semi-permanent militias; *Extra-government violence*: violence involving at least one permanent or semi-permanent militia group. Government forces are not included as an actor or a target (e.g. communal conflict). As opposed to rioting, extra-government violence involves an organized militia or criminal group; and finally *intra-government violence*: fighting between two armed factions within the government (e.g. mutinies or coups).

government. This variable ranges from 0.07 (South Africa 1990-1993) to 0.94 (Tanzania). Though all three variables are intended to measure the relative size of the government's ethnic support coalition, table 1 demonstrates the three measures are not perfectly correlated.

Table 1: Bivariate correlations between various measures of ruling coalition size

	Share of Pop. from Leader's Ethnic Group	Share of Pop. from Dominant Ethnic Group	Share of Pop. from Largest Included Ethnic Group	Latent Measure
Share of Pop. from Leader's Ethnic Group	1.00			
Share of Pop. from Dominant Ethnic Group	0.66	1.00		
Share of Pop. from Largest Included Ethnic Group	0.58	0.69	1.00	
Ethnic Coalition Size	0.82	0.93	0.86	1.00

Source: Heger and Salehyan (2007), Wimmer, Cederman and Min (2009).

As a final measure, we can conceive of these variables as alternative measures of an underlying concept, relative size of the government's ethnic support coalition, each with varying degrees of construct validity and measurement error (Trier and Jackman 2008, Hendrix 2010). Factor analysis determines whether the interrelationships between a set of manifest (i.e., observable and measurable) variables can be expressed by a smaller set of latent variables, or factors. Eigendecomposition yields orthogonal vectors (the latent variables); these latent variables can then be substituted into the regressions in place of the manifest variables. We use factor analysis to construct a latent measure, ethnic coalition size, which is highly correlated with all three manifest variables ($r > 0.8$).

Control Variables

We include a variety of controls at both the event and country-year level in order to address potential confounds. For instance, if violent events are more frequently targeted at national or regional governments than at non-state actors, failing to account for this would bias our findings. At the event level, we include indicators for whether the central government (47%

of events) or regional government (6% of events) was the *target*, as well as whether the event occurred in an *urban* area (55% of events) or whether the event was *nationwide*, occurring in several cities and rural areas (11% of events). We include event *duration*, in days (logged), as longer events may provide more opportunity to enact repression. Despite explicitly controlling for event attributes which may affect the baseline probability of repression, there is still concern that repression will be systematically less likely in response to certain types of events: violent events in rural areas where neither the central nor regional government are a target. To the extent that these conflicts occur in peripheral areas where the state is not present, the non-repression of these events may be less reasonably attributed to political calculations and more a function of low state penetration into and authority over rural areas (Herbst 2000). Thus, we include an additional control for violent events in rural areas where neither the central nor regional government is the target; many of these events are instances of livestock raiding and reprisal violence or communal conflict in small, remote villages (*Rural Non-State Violence*, 21% of events).

In order to control for whether particular issues and opposition demands were more likely to result in lethal repression, we collapsed the information in the issue codings into three issue areas: political (28% of events), economic (29% of events), and ethnic/religious (17% of events). All other event types form the baseline, omitted category in the regression tables below. Some overlap exists because multiple issues could be coded for a single event; for instance, a single event can be both economic and political.⁷

Our country-year level controls include an indicator for consolidated democracy (Polity2 > 5, per Marshall and Jaggers 2011). Davenport and Armstrong II (2004) and Bueno de Mesquita

⁷ These overlaps are relatively uncommon (~2% of events).

et al. (2005) show that the negative effect of political democracy on government repressive behavior only appears at relatively high thresholds, and so this indicator variable should be associated with a lower probability of repression.⁸ We control for regime durability, which is the count of years since a regime change; data are from the Polity IV dataset. We control for log-transformed GDP per capita and population; based on prior studies, we expect that leaders of wealthier countries will be less likely to repress, while leaders of more populous countries will be more likely to repress (Poe and Tate 1994, Poe, Rost and Carey 2006); data are from Feenstra, Inklaar and Timmer (2014). We control also for armed conflict intensity (Themnér and Wallensteen 2012). While the literature suggests governments facing armed challenges will be more likely to repress (Poe and Tate 1994), the effect is more theoretically ambiguous at the event level. Armed conflict could make leaders more prone to repressing all challenges, suggesting a positive relationship, but it could also shift repressive capacity away from other types of conflict, suggesting a negative one.

Because reporting bias is a significant concern when using event data sourced from media reporting (Schrodt 2012) and in order to address any temporal trends that might arise due to increased volumes of reporting in later periods, we include a control for the total number of non-conflict related news reports on a given country in a given year, divided into quartiles.⁹

⁸ Interestingly, democracy is not consistently associated with more ethnic inclusivity: t-tests for Leader Ethnic Group % ($\text{mean}_{\text{democracy}} = 0.33$, $\text{mean}_{\sim\text{democracy}} = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$), Dominant Group % ($\text{mean}_{\text{democracy}} = 0.15$, $\text{mean}_{\sim\text{democracy}} = 0.004$, $p < 0.001$) indicate democracies are somewhat less ethnically inclusive, while Largest Inc. Group % ($\text{mean}_{\text{democracy}} = 0.31$, $\text{mean}_{\sim\text{democracy}} = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) indicates democracies are slightly more ethnically inclusive.

⁹ We take a count of news stories not containing the words protest, riot, strike, violence, or attack (the keywords used to identify SCAD events) in a particular year and divide this figure into quartiles. Non-conflict reporting gives us an estimate of the total amount of media effort devoted

Our data are hierarchical in nature: events are nested within years within countries, and errors are likely correlated within the grouping structure due to observed and/or unmodeled factors (Gelman and Hill 2007). For this reason, we use two different estimators. First, we use simple random effects logistic regression with observations clustered at the country-year (i.e., errors for Kenya in 2002 are assumed to be correlated). Second, we use GLAMM (Generalized Linear Latent And Mixed Models; Rabe-Hesketh, Skrondal and Pickles 2002) to estimate multilevel logistic regressions; errors are clustered within years and within countries, with years nested in countries. In all instances, likelihood ratio tests confirm the multilevel models perform better than a simple pooled logistic regression ($p < 0.001$). In the hierarchical models, random effects parameters for countries, but not years, were statistically significant, indicating there remains more unexplained cross-sectional variance than within-country variance.

Table 2 presents the results for the models without interaction terms. There is only very weak evidence that the size of the government's ethnic coalition conditions the use of lethal repression.

to a particular country/year. As a robustness check, we estimated models with time trends and year fixed effects. Results did not differ materially from those reported here.

Table 2: Government Ethnic Support Coalition Size and Lethal Repression, 1990-2009

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	RE-Logit	RE-Logit	RE-Logit	RE-Logit	GLAMM	GLAMM	GLAMM	GLAMM
Leader Ethnic Group %	-0.451 (0.242)				-0.450 (0.242)			
Dominant Group %		-0.418 (0.257)				-0.421 (0.256)		
Largest Inc. Group %			-0.459 (0.238)				-0.461 (0.238)	
Ethnic Support Coalition				-0.154* (0.074)				-0.154* (0.074)
Violent Tactics	0.988*** (0.117)	0.978*** (0.117)	0.971*** (0.117)	0.978*** (0.118)	0.988*** (0.117)	0.978*** (0.117)	0.972*** (0.117)	0.979*** (0.118)
Central Gov. Target	1.209*** (0.149)	1.202*** (0.147)	1.195*** (0.147)	1.193*** (0.149)	1.210*** (0.149)	1.203*** (0.147)	1.196*** (0.147)	1.193*** (0.149)
Regional Gov. Target	1.384*** (0.186)	1.388*** (0.184)	1.398*** (0.184)	1.368*** (0.187)	1.384*** (0.186)	1.388*** (0.184)	1.397*** (0.184)	1.368*** (0.187)
Urban	-0.480*** (0.131)	-0.473*** (0.130)	-0.474*** (0.130)	-0.489*** (0.131)	-0.480*** (0.131)	-0.474*** (0.130)	-0.475*** (0.130)	-0.489*** (0.131)
Nationwide	-0.181 (0.174)	-0.179 (0.174)	-0.180 (0.174)	-0.194 (0.174)	-0.181 (0.174)	-0.179 (0.174)	-0.180 (0.174)	-0.194 (0.174)
ln Duration	0.207*** (0.041)	0.204*** (0.041)	0.203*** (0.041)	0.209*** (0.041)	0.207*** (0.041)	0.204*** (0.041)	0.203*** (0.041)	0.209*** (0.041)
Rural Violence	-0.685** (0.214)	-0.706*** (0.213)	-0.708*** (0.213)	-0.696** (0.215)	-0.686** (0.214)	-0.708*** (0.213)	-0.709*** (0.213)	-0.697** (0.215)
Political Issue	0.584*** (0.123)	0.607*** (0.123)	0.610*** (0.123)	0.602*** (0.123)	0.584*** (0.123)	0.606*** (0.123)	0.608*** (0.123)	0.601*** (0.124)
Economic Issue	-0.013 (0.132)	0.020 (0.132)	0.028 (0.132)	0.006 (0.132)	-0.012 (0.132)	0.022 (0.132)	0.030 (0.132)	0.007 (0.132)
Ethnic/Rel. Issue	0.120 (0.148)	0.130 (0.147)	0.124 (0.147)	0.129 (0.148)	0.119 (0.148)	0.129 (0.147)	0.123 (0.147)	0.129 (0.148)
Democracy	-0.233 (0.161)	-0.237 (0.163)	-0.163 (0.159)	-0.258 (0.162)	-0.231 (0.162)	-0.232 (0.164)	-0.158 (0.161)	-0.256 (0.163)
ln GDP per capita	0.122 (0.071)	0.118 (0.068)	0.106 (0.067)	0.114 (0.069)	0.121 (0.071)	0.115 (0.069)	0.104 (0.068)	0.113 (0.070)
ln Population	0.308*** (0.068)	0.348*** (0.067)	0.351*** (0.067)	0.329*** (0.068)	0.307*** (0.068)	0.346*** (0.068)	0.349*** (0.068)	0.328*** (0.068)
Conflict Intensity	0.022 (0.102)	0.030 (0.102)	0.013 (0.102)	0.021 (0.102)	0.023 (0.103)	0.034 (0.103)	0.017 (0.103)	0.022 (0.103)

Media Coverage	-0.182*	-0.183*	-0.192**	-0.172*	-0.179*	-0.178*	-0.187*	-0.170*
	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.073)	(0.074)	(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.075)
Constant	-7.218***	-7.704***	-7.538***	-7.513***	-7.206***	-7.678***	-7.511***	-7.503***
	(0.780)	(0.795)	(0.783)	(0.806)	(0.785)	(0.801)	(0.790)	(0.811)
N	6555	6756	6756	6484	6555	6756	6756	6484
Country-Years	752	759	759	732	752	759	759	732
Countries	47	46	46	46	47	46	46	46
* p<0.05	** p<0.01	*** p<0.001	Standard errors in parentheses.					

Coefficients on the various operationalizations are in the hypothesized direction but generally fail to achieve statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Only the latent measure, ethnic coalition size, is significant ($p < 0.05$) and in the expected direction. The substantive effect is relatively small: a one standard deviation increase from the mean ethnic coalition size is associated with a 14.3% reduction in the probability that the event will be met with lethal repression.

Next we turn to testing our first hypothesis, that nonviolent challenges are more likely to be repressed as the size of the ruling coalition becomes smaller. The models with interaction terms, presented in table 3, show a much stronger and more consistent relationship between the government's ethnic coalition size and the propensity to use lethal force against nonviolent dissent. Interaction terms complicate interpretation of coefficients, as levels of statistical significance are conditional on the mediating variable taking on a value of zero (Braumoeller 2004). The uninteracted coefficient on government ethnic support coalition represents the effect of that variable when violent tactics equals zero, i.e., opposition tactics are nonviolent. In order to assess the impact of government ethnic support coalitions against violent tactics, one must calculate the conditional slope as an additive function of the coefficients on government ethnic support coalition and the interaction terms.

The un-interacted coefficients on the various measures of government ethnic coalition size are all highly statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) and negative, indicating that as the size of the ethnic base of support for the government increases, lethal repression of nonviolent dissent decreases. The coefficients on the interaction terms are highly significant, and in the opposite direction. Analysis of substantive effects suggests there is less evidence that the size of the government's ethnic support coalition conditions the use of lethal force against violent tactics; in

other words, violent tactics are repressed at roughly similar rates across regime coalition size. These findings corroborate our main hypotheses. Table 4 presents the substantive effects of one standard deviation increase in government ethnic support coalition size against nonviolent and violent tactics. Against nonviolent tactics, the mean effect of a one standard deviation increase in the size of the government's ethnic support coalition is a 30% reduction in the probability that an event will be repressed with lethal force. It bears noting that the probability that a violent event will be lethally repressed is significantly higher than for nonviolent events. Depending on the size of the government's ethnic support coalition, the difference is anywhere from 59.7% to 732.9% more likely.

Table 3: Interactive Effects of Government Ethnic Support Coalition Size on Lethal Repression, 1990-2009

	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
	RE-Logit	RE-Logit	RE-Logit	RE-Logit	GLAMM	GLAMM	GLAMM	GLAMM
Leader Ethnic Group %	-1.304*** (0.324)				-1.304*** (0.324)			
LEG * Violent Tactics	1.652*** (0.384)				1.652*** (0.384)			
Dominant Group %		-1.062** (0.342)				-1.063** (0.342)		
DG X Violent Tactics		1.212** (0.388)				1.210** (0.388)		
Largest Inc. Group %			-1.395*** (0.331)				-1.396*** (0.331)	
LIG X Violent Tactics			1.746*** (0.403)				1.744*** (0.403)	
Ethnic Support Coalition				-0.437*** (0.105)				-0.437*** (0.105)
ESC X Violent Tactics				0.510*** (0.119)				0.510*** (0.119)
Violent Tactics	0.468** (0.166)	0.823*** (0.126)	0.419* (0.170)	0.975*** (0.118)	0.468** (0.166)	0.824*** (0.126)	0.420* (0.171)	0.975*** (0.118)
Central Gov. Target	1.193*** (0.149)	1.202*** (0.147)	1.208*** (0.147)	1.192*** (0.149)	1.193*** (0.149)	1.202*** (0.147)	1.209*** (0.147)	1.192*** (0.149)
Regional Gov. Target	1.338*** (0.187)	1.366*** (0.185)	1.372*** (0.185)	1.330*** (0.188)	1.338*** (0.187)	1.366*** (0.185)	1.372*** (0.185)	1.330*** (0.188)
Urban	-0.475*** (0.131)	-0.469*** (0.130)	-0.456*** (0.130)	-0.482*** (0.131)	-0.475*** (0.131)	-0.469*** (0.130)	-0.456*** (0.130)	-0.482*** (0.131)
Nationwide	-0.212 (0.175)	-0.199 (0.174)	-0.192 (0.175)	-0.223 (0.175)	-0.212 (0.175)	-0.200 (0.174)	-0.192 (0.175)	-0.223 (0.175)
In Duration	0.210*** (0.042)	0.208*** (0.041)	0.204*** (0.041)	0.212*** (0.042)	0.210*** (0.042)	0.208*** (0.041)	0.204*** (0.041)	0.212*** (0.042)
Rural Violence	-0.655** (0.215)	-0.674** (0.213)	-0.670** (0.213)	-0.654** (0.215)	-0.655** (0.215)	-0.675** (0.213)	-0.671** (0.213)	-0.654** (0.215)
Political Issue	0.600*** (0.123)	0.614*** (0.123)	0.595*** (0.123)	0.607*** (0.123)	0.600*** (0.123)	0.613*** (0.123)	0.594*** (0.123)	0.607*** (0.124)
Economic Issue	-0.023 (0.132)	0.004 (0.132)	0.024 (0.132)	-0.010 (0.133)	-0.023 (0.132)	0.005 (0.132)	0.025 (0.132)	-0.010 (0.133)
Ethnic/Rel. Issue	0.131 (0.149)	0.118 (0.147)	0.129 (0.147)	0.126 (0.149)	0.131 (0.149)	0.118 (0.147)	0.129 (0.147)	0.126 (0.149)

Democracy	-0.242 (0.161)	-0.235 (0.162)	-0.178 (0.157)	-0.264 (0.161)	-0.242 (0.161)	-0.232 (0.163)	-0.174 (0.158)	-0.264 (0.162)
ln GDP per capita	0.108 (0.071)	0.114 (0.068)	0.082 (0.067)	0.102 (0.069)	0.108 (0.071)	0.112 (0.069)	0.080 (0.068)	0.101 (0.070)
ln Population	0.314*** (0.068)	0.352*** (0.067)	0.352*** (0.066)	0.331*** (0.067)	0.314*** (0.068)	0.350*** (0.067)	0.350*** (0.067)	0.331*** (0.067)
Conflict Intensity	0.025 (0.103)	0.044 (0.102)	0.025 (0.101)	0.034 (0.102)	0.025 (0.103)	0.047 (0.103)	0.028 (0.102)	0.035 (0.102)
Media Coverage	-0.169* (0.072)	-0.180* (0.072)	-0.177* (0.071)	-0.164* (0.072)	-0.169* (0.072)	-0.176* (0.074)	-0.173* (0.074)	-0.163* (0.073)
Constant	-6.925*** (0.783)	-7.639*** (0.793)	-7.112*** (0.781)	-7.457*** (0.802)	-6.925*** (0.783)	-7.618*** (0.798)	-7.094*** (0.786)	-7.457*** (0.806)
N	6555	6756	6756	6484	6555	6756	6756	6484
Country-Years	752	759	759	732	752	759	759	732
Countries	47	46	46	46	47	46	46	46

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

*** p<0.001

Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 4: Substantive Effects of Government Ethnic Support Coalition Size on Lethal Repression

IV	Tactics	+1 SD from Mean
Leader Ethnic Group %	Nonviolent	-29.9% (-34.8%, -24.5%)
Dominant Group %	Nonviolent	-24.1% (-28.9%, -18.9%)
Largest Inc. Group %	Nonviolent	-30.6% (-35.1%, -25.7%)
Ethnic Support Coalition	Nonviolent	-35.4% (-41.2%, -29.0%)
<i>Mean Effect</i>	<i>Nonviolent</i>	<i>-30.0% (-35.0%, -24.6%)</i>
Leader Ethnic Group %	Violent	+9.9% (3.5%, 16.8%)
Dominant Group %	Violent	+4.0% (-1.7%, 10.0%)
Largest Inc. Group %	Violent	+9.6% (3.7%, 15.9%)
Ethnic Support Coalition	Violent	+7.5 (0.2%, 15.4%)
<i>Mean Effect</i>	<i>Violent</i>	<i>+7.8% (1.4%, 14.5%)</i>

Our findings regarding control variables both confirm and challenge prior research. The most statistically and substantively significant effects are on government targeting: targeting the central government or regional government is associated with a 230% and 281% increase in the probability of lethal repression ($p < 0.001$ across specifications). Events in urban areas are 38% percent less likely to be lethally repressed than those occur in rural areas ($p < 0.001$ across specifications). Events that challenge the political status quo (political issue) are 82% more likely to be lethally repressed ($p < 0.001$ across specifications). There is no evidence that events espousing economic grievances and demands are more likely to be lethally repressed. Events that lasted longer are more likely to be lethally repressed, and rural non-state violence is less likely to be lethally repressed. These results are all basically in line with expectations derived from the literature on threat perception.

Turning to the country-year level controls, our findings are more surprising. Once event attributes are modeled, we find no evidence that economic development or democracy affect the likelihood of lethal repression. Virtually all studies of state repression find economic development and democracy to be pacifying influences. Because we model event attributes, rather than just looking at aggregate indicators, our findings provide some leverage on an

important empirical debate about the link between repression and democracy (Poe and Tate 1994, Davenport and Armstrong II 2004). The correlation between democracy and repression could be the result of at least two causal mechanisms. Democratic institutions may pacify tactical choices by the opposition: seeing more avenues for nonviolent contestation, dissidents may be less likely to use violent tactics (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). On the other hand, democratic institutions could constrain government responses to contentious challenges more generally. Once opposition tactics are modeled directly, the pacifying effect of democracy disappears – at least with respect to lethal repression.

Governments in more populous countries are more repressive, confirming earlier findings of country-year studies. Armed conflict intensity is not associated with lethal repression of particular events. Coefficients on media coverage variable are negative and significant ($p < 0.05$) in all specifications, indicating that countries that receive larger volumes of reporting in Western media outlets (AP and AFP) are less likely to engage in lethal repression. The substantive effect is significant: a one-quartile increase in media coverage decreases the probability of lethal repression by 15%. This result could be due to two non-exclusive causal mechanisms. First, it may be that increased media scrutiny affects government behavior directly. Many studies have found that international scrutiny in the form of “naming and shaming”, either by NGOs, international organization and/or the media restrains the repressive behavior of governments, though these findings are contingent and/or highly qualified (Franklin 2008, DeMeritt 2012, Krain 2012, Murdie and Davis 2012, Hendrix and Wong 2013).

Alternately, this may be due to selection bias on the part of reporting agencies. A well-known adage in the newspaper business is “If it bleeds, it leads.” Violent events, especially those with body counts, are more likely to be reported. In countries where very little reporting effort is

extended, it is possible that a higher proportion of the events that are covered will be those that involved lethal force. Further work is necessary to distinguish between these mechanisms.

Conclusions

Why do some governments violently repress nonviolent protesters? Our findings indicate the size of the government's ethnic support base is a significant determinant of how threatening – and thus how likely to be violently repressed – nonviolent action is perceived to be. When government support coalitions are small, the perceived threat potential of nonviolent mobilization is higher and the proportional benefits of being in power are larger, providing government actors with stronger incentives to respond repressively to challenges to their authority. This conjecture is tested on a sample of 47 African countries over several decades using estimators that explicitly account for the hierarchical nature of the data, and the findings are robust to several different operationalizations of the size of a leader's ethnic support coalition.

This finding exposes an apparent paradox: governments with small ethnic bases of support are more likely to engage in lethal repression, which in turn makes mass mobilization more likely. That repression of nonviolent protesters often backfires, leading to greater support for the opposition (Rasler 1996, Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), is now well established. Future work – including iterations of this paper - will have to explain why the leaders with small support coalitions, who are most vulnerable to mass mobilization engage in the very type of repression that is most likely to result in the movement gaining support?

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