Taking to the Streets: Protest as an Expression of Political Preference in Africa

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Abstract

Between 2011 and 2014, there were five times as many protests per annum in Africa as there had been in 2000. The majority of these protests were related to deteriorating economic conditions, poor service delivery, inadequate wages, and economic inequality. These protests, which we term "valence protests," do not fit easily into typical narratives about contentious behavior: they are neither social movements, nor revolutionary, nor a manifestation of organized labor—instead, many of these protests are a collective expression of a valence issue of which the government is well aware. We argue for a different conceptual framework for valence protests and contend that they are a way for politically engaged citizens to express their political preferences when voting is insufficient. Using Round 5 Afrobarometer data, we find empirical support for this claim. We also find that citizens more readily communicate political preferences through protest in countries governed by dominant parties.

Introduction

Between 2011 and 2014, the African Development Bank estimated that there were five times as

many protests per annum in Africa as there had been in 2000. According to the Bank, the

overwhelming majority of these protests were related to deteriorating economic conditions,

particularly public service delivery, inadequate wages, and economic inequality. In the aftermath

of the Arab Spring, Africans have increasingly taken to the streets to voice their frustrations.

However, unlike the revolutionary fervor that spread through North Africa, these protests have

generally lacked revolutionary intention. With some exceptions (such as the 2016 protests

against corrupt electoral practices in Kenya or Burkina Faso's 2014 popular coup), these protests

involve making demands on the government rather than advocating a change in government or regime. Protests over increased bus fares in Mozambique in 2012, rising food prices in Kenya in 2011, and removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria in 2012 are key examples of protests that are becoming more common across the continent.

Protests such as these do not fit easily into typical narratives about contentious behavior: they lack the ideology of social movements and fall short of revolutionary intention—instead, many of these "service delivery protests" are a collective expression of the importance of a valence issue of which the government is already well aware that it is failing to sufficiently address.[1] On the spectrum of political behavior, protest is a high-cost method of political expression. Why, in so many African countries, are people taking to the streets more often to protest issues that are neither particularly contentious nor revolutionary? We argue that the answer lies in the limited effectiveness of more traditional modes of political participation.

Protest is an especially dramatic form of political participation, distinct from 'everyday politics' in its level of intensity and the attention it draws. Rather than indicating 'exit' from the political system, the very nature of protest indicates that citizens are attempting to amplify their 'voice' (Hirshman, 1970). In developed democracies, protest behavior often emerges from social movements that use contentious acts to draw public attention (Tarrow and Tilly, 2009). The social movement literature speaks to some forms of protest in African polities, such as the democratization movements that swept across Africa during the 1990s and some contemporary reactions to neoliberalism (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009). However, this approach is better suited

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[1] This is not to say that incumbents know precisely what voters want. Even in developed democracies such as the US, incumbents are not always aware of what voters want, hence the use of polling. Rather, we argue that while African regimes are low information contexts generally (Posner 2005, Gottlieb 2016), governments throughout Africa are aware, for example, that education and health need improvement, that jobs are needed, and that people rely on a variety of price subsidies. This is to say that governments are generally aware that many key sectors need improvement.

to explaining elite-level movements.[2] There is a categorical difference between such elite-level movements and what we term "valence protests," which do not follow the same logic. Rather than reflecting a deeply held ideology, valence protests are often related to the pursuit of material goods: subsidies on food and fuel, service provision, and school fees are all prominent triggers of such protests. While ideologically-driven social movements might use such valence issues as a frame for mobilizing people around campaigns (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009, p. 51-57; Branch and Mampilly, 2015), a large number of protests occur around valence issues *without* ideological content.[3] Yet, governments are well aware that these goods are important to their constituents. Why would people undertake such a costly form of political behavior to demand goods that the government already knows they need and want?

We argue that protest in African countries is a way for citizens to express their political preferences and communicate the relative importance of a valence issue when other acts, like voting, are insufficient. We focus specifically on electoral regimes in which formal channels for political expression are likely to be inadequate. Expressing political voice is a challenge if the electoral arena does not provide citizens with the opportunity to vote around salient issues. In African politics, three common circumstances inhibit citizens' ability to express their political preferences through conventional channels: countries in which ethnicity (or other forms of identity) rather than programmatic preferences determine vote choice, volatile party systems in which parties lack programmatic platforms, and dominant party regimes with low levels of political competition. In such systems, voters cannot rely on the electoral arena to communicate their preferences; therefore, protest may be a more effective alternative. Valence protest accomplishes two things: first, it gives citizens a way to amplify their voices in expressing their

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[2] Women's movements are an important exception, though even these tend to be elite-driven, see Tripp et al (2009).
[3] Branch and Mampilly (p.69) also draw this distinction, excluding protests without "political society participation" from their analysis.

preferences to the government. Second, it allows citizens to designate which issues are salient enough to warrant a willingness to challenge entrenched parties or elites.

This re-conceptualization of protest is motivated by Hern and Harris's fieldwork in Zambia and South Africa, respectively. While Zambia has held democratic multiparty elections since 1991, the party system remains volatile and there is little programmatic distinction between major parties. While Hern's (forthcoming) survey indicated that support for the ruling PF still hovered around 45%, many respondents indicated that they "support the ruling party because it is the ruling party," rather than supporting the party based on its platform or performance. Indeed, 40% of the sample indicated that they did not support any party at all, expressing the sentiment that the parties are "all the same." While most Zambians expressed their intention to continue to vote, they expressed little faith that this political act would make a difference.

Despite the general political malaise, some segments of the population remained highly politically engaged, as evidenced by periodic protests by students and other groups over specific policy decisions that the government had made, such as reducing subsidies on staple foods.[4] Among the survey respondents, an interesting trend emerged: those who were likely to report protest behavior were not the disaffected and angry, but those who were optimistic that their actions could precipitate change. For them, protest was not a way of sanctioning the government—it was a way of communicating their preferences to government officials. Indeed, in this data, the best predictor of protest behavior was not political affiliation, but a measure of perceived government responsiveness: those who reported that they thought the government "generally tried to help them with access to goods and services" were 64% more likely to report protest behavior than those who reported they had been marginalized or ignored by the

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[4] For example, 18 May 2013, "Zambia Police Arrest 31 Students Protesting Over Food Subsidies," *Mail & Guardian*

government, *ceteris paribus* (Hern, forthcoming). This understanding of protest behavior dovetailed with Harris's findings (based on survey data) in South Africa that many of those who participated in service delivery protests against the ANC were in fact ANC supporters who wanted to communicate their preferences to the government rather than change who was in power. In both cases, protest was a way of expressing the importance of valence issues over which the government was already well aware, with the hope that protest would be more effective than the ballot box in triggering government action. These observed patterns led us to seek a re-conceptualization of the drivers of these valence protests.

We hypothesize that if valence protests are a more dramatic method of expressing political preferences, then those who undertake the high costs of protest activity are those who believe that the government might be responsive to them. We take up this analysis first by defining our concept of 'valence protest' as it relates to other forms of contentious politics. We then use multi-level regression analysis to test our primary hypothesis, using reported participation in protests from the Afrobarometer Round 5 surveys. To increase certainty that reported participation in protests captures valence protest, we use the Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD) to limit the sample to those countries in which valence protests are the most common type of protest. We then proceed to examine circumstances that may strengthen the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and valence protest, using regression analysis to examine whether the relationship is stronger under conditions of ethnicized politics, volatile party systems, or dominant party regimes. We conclude by discussing some of the implications of this research, the limitations of our research strategy, and avenues for further exploration.

Conceptualizing Valence Protest in Africa's Electoral Regimes

Recent scholarship conceptualizes African protests as occurring in three waves: the first was associated with the end of colonialism and demands for independent governance; the second was against austerity and for (a return to) multiparty democracy; the third and current wave is linked to the rise of public demonstration exemplified by, but starting prior to, the Arab Spring 2011 (Branch and Mampilly, 2015, Ch.2-4). Earlier waves of protest were characterized by a high level of organization, particularly on the part of labor unions (Cooper, 1996; Bates, 1981). The second wave of protests, pushing back against austerity and ushering in multiparty democracy, persisted through the early 2000s as social movements advocated for government protection against neoliberalism (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009, p. 51). These social movements, generally led by civil society organizations and often with transnational linkages, tend to be elite, top-down movements. While they used material deprivation to frame their actions, issues such as access to basic services were often subordinate to a broader agenda regarding the nature of power and transformational political goals.

The contemporary wave of protests is challenging to categorize. While the Arab Spring has received the lion's share of attention and triggered popular uprisings in some sub-Saharan countries as well, in most African countries these third-wave protests have generally fallen short of revolutionary. Rather, they have often been oriented around demands for material goods. Some have resisted characterizing these protests as simply "service delivery protests" or "food riots," noting that many demonstrations ostensibly about material goods are actually well organized with broader ideological goals. Branch and Mampilly (2015) note that, though framed in terms of material or distributional issues such as rising food prices, these protests often have an explicit political element, demanding reductions in political repression and promotion of political reform (p. 122). Bond and Mottiar, too, point out that the demands of such protests

"were not limited to service delivery but also drew in 'governance' politics of democratic power relations, participation, voice, and anti-corruption" (Bond and Mottiar, 2013). Yet, as Ellis and van Kessel observed, "distributional issues are still central in Africa…[and] need to be an explicit component of the theory-building agenda of social movement scholars" (pg. 56-57). While ideologically-driven social movements do use demands for material goods as a frame for broader issues, there has also been growth in protests about material goods *without* an ideological component. Harsch (2009) illustrates the increase of such protests in Burkina Faso around service delivery, displacement, and access to land. Similarly, Mueller (2013) argues that a spate of protests in 2009-10 in Niger were motivated by economic grievances rather than revolutionary fervor (as had been generally assumed).

While analysis of social movements and ideologically-driven protest is essential for understanding contentious politics in Africa, we are concerned with the portion of protest that is not well theorized by this framework. Bond and Mottiar (2013), for example, distinguish between protests ostensibly about service delivery that have a distinct political component, and "popcorn protest," which has a "tendency to flare up and settle down immediately," indicating that it is not embedded in a broader political struggle (p. 289). Branch and Mampilly (2015), too, exclude apolitical protests from their examination: when they list the protests that comprise their sample, they explicitly state that they only include protests that have "significant political society participation," and exclude those around specific demands (p. 69). Yet, this type of protest is on the rise, and requires a different framework for analysis. As de Waal and Ibreck (2013) point out, there are good reasons for "popcorn protestors" to avoid association with established social movements: such social movements are often linked to the political opposition, and in patrimonial political systems, "there is no place for systemic dissent" (p. 304-9). While protest

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behavior by social movements is more likely to have a deep-seated ideological motivation, protest without a broader political agenda is more challenging to explain. Protest is a high-cost activity relative to other forms of political participation. It can be dangerous, even life-threatening; even if protestors do not anticipate repression, it still requires a much greater investment of time and energy than more formal modes of political expression such as voting. It is also more challenging, as it requires overcoming a substantial collective action problem (Tarrow, 1996; Kuran 1991). In the interest of better understanding the motivations behind different types of protests, we present the following typology:

1. **Valence protests** have as their goal *only* to seek a resolution to a grievance without any binding ideology or larger claims. They seek change in government action but do not call for the removal of a government or for regime change. These are rarely organized from the top down and are often relatively more spontaneous. Examples include the youth protest over increases in bus fares in Mozambique in November 2012 and South African squatters protesting a lack of housing in September 2011.

2. **Ideological protests** can and often do seek to resolve a grievance over a valence issue, but this grievance is part of a larger ideological goal or binding perspective that drives the movement. These protests are more often organized from the top down by leaders of the ideological movement. This includes what the literature refers to as social movements as well as protests organized by political parties.

3. **System-changing protests** have as a stated goal the removal of the current president/ruling party or regime. These protests may also involve claims over valence issues.

We do not consider this typology to represent a linear conceptualization of protest, or to predict what kinds of protests arise in which systems. For example, while it is possible that system-changing protests are more likely during transitions to democracy and valence protests more likely after democracy has been consolidated, we do not assume this to be the case. Rather, we suspect that those engaging in these different types of protests have categorically different motivations and are seeking to address different types of problems. Work on social movements and revolution have offered theorization of ideological and system-changing protests, but valence protests require a separate conceptual framework. We argue that valence protest is a tool that citizens can use to magnify their political voice and signal their preferences (and the strength of their preferences) to governing officials when formal political channels are inadequate to make such demands. Those who engage in valence protests are trying to communicate with government officials, not overthrow the government. As Harris (2015) observed in South Africa, protestors took to the streets "in order to change *what is done* by those in power rather than changing *who* is in power" (p. 3, emphasis in original). The crux of our argument is that, in African electoral regimes where formal avenues of political participation are insufficient for communicating preferences to the government, valence protest is a way for citizens to signal to officials which of their grievances are salient enough to warrant added attention from the government.

While the logic underlying this argument is not new, this is the first conceptual framework presented for this type of protest. In 1990, Herbst argued that protest would increase in African countries as citizens lost their exit option and would instead have to rely on voice in closed political systems. While some may choose to simply circumvent unjust political rules, other distributional issues require government action—especially in urban areas where

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community collaboration is insufficient to grapple with the hardships caused by inadequate service provision (Scott 1985; Tripp 1997). More African countries now have the trappings of democracy, but many of these countries have struggled to maintain open avenues for political choice in the face of dominant-party systems, identity-based voting, and non-programmatic parties (van de Walle, 2002). Furthermore, many African political systems are organized around entrenched political parties or a revolving door of elites who may not be easily unseated. Citizens may not be able to express their preferences through voting or credibly "vote the rascals out."

When vote choice is invariant or uninformative, valence protest is a way to magnify voice. When protestors assert their dissatisfaction over reduced fuel subsidies or load shedding, they are not providing new information to governing officials about the *nature* of their preferences (no government believes the population is happy about the removal of subsidies on basic goods or lack of access to services). Rather, they are signaling the *magnitude* of their preference and their willingness to challenge the government on that particular issue. Such demonstrations are valuable in political systems where voting is not a credible signal of public opinion. As one Burkinabe put it, 'since we have no channel for communicating with the authorities, we have chosen the streets to show our discontent' (Harsh, 2009, p. 285).[5] In Zambia, one young man explained his decision to protest conditions at the state university rather than pursue other political channels because "There was no forum…there was no other way to tell the government."[6] Other Zambians who had not personally protested viewed it as an effective way to get things done because "when you go in a group, you will be heard much

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[5] Burkina Faso did later have a popular overthrow of the government. We do not consider our typology to indicate that only one type of protest occurs in each country at a time, rather that they are distinct categories of protest behavior.

[6] Author interview, conducted July 4, 2016, Lusaka, Zambia

faster."[7] In these cases, people were not describing partisan, ideological, or political motivations, but attempts to draw attention to requests for specific goods and services. Importantly, we do not imply that voting and protesting are substitute behaviors, rather that protest magnifies voice when voting is insufficient (and may be complementary to voting and other political behaviors). However, valence protest only makes sense in this framework of political participation if people believe that the government will respond to the signal. Therefore, we expect the following:

> H_1: In African countries, those who believe the government will be more responsive will be more likely to engage in protest behavior.

This hypothesis captures a core feature of valence protests that we believe distinguishes them from ideologically-driven social movements: if valence protests are part of a repertoire of political participation, then those who engage in such protests will be those who perceive the government to be responsive. We first examine this hypothesis in a large cross-national sample of African countries, then we explore the conditions under which the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and an individual's choice to protest may be stronger.

We consider and theorize the effects of three common conditions in African electoral systems that may make individual vote choice an inadequate avenue of political expression: ethnicized political systems where identity drives political choice, volatile party systems in which party is not a meaningful indicator of platform, and dominant party systems in which the same party always wins. We suspect that each of these conditions may undermine the utility of voting and other more commonplace forms of political participation, making protest a more attractive form of political communication *for those who think the government will be responsive to it*. If that is true, then the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and

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[7] Author interview, conducted July 18, 2016, Livingstone, Zambia

protest should be stronger in such contexts, captured in these three secondary hypotheses (see

below for extended theoretical arguments for each):

> H_2: The relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest
>
> behavior will be stronger in countries with *ethnicized politics.*
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> H_3: The relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest
>
> behavior will be stronger in countries with *volatile party systems.*
>
> H_4: The relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest
>
> behavior will be stronger in countries with *dominant party systems.*

We are agnostic about whether these conditions will generate a greater overall level of protests;

rather, we are interested in whether the individuals who protest perceive their government to be

responsive. Such a result would indicate that their protest behavior is a way for them to magnify

voice absent other avenues, rather than contentious or revolutionary behavior best conceptualized

by existing literature.

Data and Methods

Our data primarily come from the Round 5 Afrobarometer (Afrobarometer, 2015), though we

rely on other sources of data to develop additional measures. We measure protest in two ways.

The survey asks each respondent whether she has "attended a demonstration or protest march" in

the past year (and if so how many times), has never done this, or has never done this but would if

she had the opportunity. We collapse this information into two dummy variables. The first takes

a value of one if the respondent has protested in the past year (any number of times) and zero

otherwise (*Protested*). The second measure takes a value of one if the person has protested in the

past year or would protest if she had the opportunity (*Would Protest*). Protest is not overly

common in the sample: 9% participated in a protest (N=4,537) and 29% either have or would if

they had the chance (N=14,668).

Given the available data, we cannot distinguish the type of protest that each individual

reported. In order to ensure that the protest activity we are picking up actually reflects valence

protests and not ideological or system-changing protest, we also run the analysis on a restricted

set of countries: those that experienced at least as many valence protests as other protests in the

year prior to the Afrobarometer survey. To determine which countries experienced more valence

protests, we use the Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD; Salehyan et al, 2012). This

dataset codes, among other events, protests in Africa from 1990-2015. Importantly, each entry in

the database includes information regarding the claims of the protests, the protesters themselves

(e.g. squatters, women, opposition party), and the target of the protest (e.g. government). To

determine the prevalence of valence protests we used the above typology to code all protests that

took place the year leading up to and during Afrobarometer Round 5 survey implementation. We

then included in the restricted sample all countries for which valence protests were the plurality

or at least tied as the most common protest type (see the appendix for complete coding rules and

the list of countries in the restricted sample). Below, we report results using both the full sample

and the restricted sample.

We acknowledge that these three ideal types often bleed into one another. Often a

valence protest could be part of a larger ideological movement or a movement against the

government. To address this overlap, we take each protest event in isolation such that if a protest

for better services does morph into a larger ideological movement or regime challenging

movement over time, we still code the particular event as valence. Further, we conservatively

code valence protests. Any time there is a protest against a president's rule, even if valence claims are part of the protest, the protest is coded as regime changing. For example, in Mali, protests against a deal between the junta and interim President Traore on the grounds that the agreement did not involve the Malian people is coded as a system changing protest. While the involvement of the people in such negotiations is likely a key valence issue, this protest is coded as a system-changing protest because it 1) challenged the rule of Traore with him being physically attacked and 2) challenged the entire process of negotiating a regime change. Similarly if an ideologically-defined group (e.g. political party, union, etc.) makes valence claims, then the protest is coded as ideological rather than valence. For example, in Guinea in May 2012, protesters demonstrated against the delay in legislative polls. While a lack of electoral delays is likely a valence issue, because only the opposition supporters protested, it is coded as ideological. Despite such overlap, the authors' codings agreed for 89% of the cases, and the final 11% were reconciled using additional outside information. Changing the coding of the 11% borderline cases does not change which countries are included in the restricted sample (see appendix). In practice, the valence category is made up of the residual protests that make valence claims and are not ideological or system changing in nature. Examples of valence protests include the protests in Nigeria in 2012 over fuel prices and subsidies, the protests in Swaziland in 2012 in which citizens demonstrated their solidarity with teachers protesting low wages, and the food riots in Togo in 2012.

While using the SCAD data to restrict the sample to countries in which valence protests were more prominent should reduce some of the noise in the dataset, it is also important to note the limitations of the SCAD data: While it is the best dataset of its kind available, it is inevitably biased towards high profile events (given its methodology, which relies on news reports). This

approach could underestimate protests generally and valence protests specifically, given that they are the most common and not as "revolutionary" (and therefore newsworthy) as other types of protests. Hendrix and Salehyan (2015:395) estimate that the dataset captures 76% of actual social conflict events, but that the detection rate is significantly higher for events that involved more than ten deaths, more than 1,000 participants, and government repression. As such, the events we are interested will likely be undercounted, and some countries in which valence protests take place will be absent from the dataset due to under-reporting. This restricted sample is thus a highly conservative test of our theory—it includes only countries that we know had a high proportion of valence protests, and excludes some in which valence protests took place but were not reported.

Based on our coding of the SCAD data, the plurality of protests across the full sample is in fact valence protests (49%, N = 94) followed by ideological protests (44%, N = 83) and regime-changing protests (7%, N = 13).[8] Additionally, respondents in the Afrobarometer sample were most likely to identify valence issues as 'the most important problem facing this country': 40% identify 'public services' as one of the three most important problems, 34% identify unemployment, 23% identify water supply, 20% mention poverty, and 19% mention food/famine.[9] Given that respondents in our sample identify valence issues as 'most important', and valence protests form the plurality of all protests in these countries the year prior to the survey, we can be relatively sure that the protest behavior reported reflects valence protests. If other forms of protest related to ideology or regime change dilute our measure, then we are likely

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[8] Because we only code protests for one year prior to the survey in which the government is the subject, and because SCAD underestimates the total number of events in each country, the total number of protests captured is inevitably limited.

[9] Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could list multiple issues.

to *underestimate* the relationship between valence protests and perceived government responsiveness.

Further, absent direct questions regarding individual motives for joining a protest, the SCAD coding of protests is the next best approach to capturing valence protests and reducing noise in the data. Of course, it is nearly impossible to interpret individual motives for joining protests by assessing the focus of the protest (Mueller, 2013): some protesters could participate in a valence protest for non-valence reasons, or vice versa. The problem here is the possibility that the Afrobarometer sample includes more people who participate in ideologically-motivated or revolutionary protests than we suspect because of the problem of rough coding. However, such contamination in the sample would bias us *against* finding a result. Our theory suggests that in valence protests perceptions of higher government responsiveness have a positive effect on participation. In other types of protest - ideological or revolutionary – participants are likely motivated by a perceived *lack* of response from the government to people like themselves (e.g. the participants in the Women's March after the election of Donald Trump were clearly those who felt disregarded by the new government). Once again, this works against our ability to detect an effect and suggests that our estimates are conservative. Future research would do well to gather data necessary to determine which respondents participated in which protests and why.

We use three Afrobarometer questions to construct an index of perceived government responsiveness, reflecting the respondent's belief that the government is both responsive and capacious. The first two questions ask respondents how much they think their members of parliament and local government councilors listen to what they have to say. We coded these responses to create ordinal variables that take the value of 0 if the person believes that the MP or LC never listens, .5 if the MP or LC sometimes listens, and 1 if the MP or LC listens often or

always. The third question asks whether the respondent would support paying higher taxes for more services, which we use to create a dummy variable in which those who believe in paying taxes for public services are coded as 1. We then averaged these three responses[10] to generate a continuous index. The resulting proxy measure of *Perceived Government Responsiveness* ranges from 0 to 1, with a mean of 0.45.

This measure of government responsiveness is ideal given data availability because it captures each respondent's feelings of how government responds to people like her. The first two questions measure responsiveness directly, but these responses could be subject to bias if, for example, those who are more likely to protest also want to illustrate their importance by showing that they receive attention from government officials. Furthermore, these indicators only capture responsiveness of two officials. Including the third question allows us first to measure government responsiveness in an indirect manner to minimize the influence of response bias from the direct questions, second to measure government responsiveness more broadly, and third to measure respondents' perceptions of government capacity. We assume one would be more open to paying taxes for services if she expects an improvement in the services she needs. Such an expectation should correlate with a belief in government responsiveness. By averaging the indirect and direct questions, we have a more reliable measure of perceived government responsiveness.[11] In the appendix, we report results that test the robustness of this index to alternative specifications. Specifically, we estimate the models below based on each constituent

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[10] Question 1 was not asked in Madagascar and only 30 people in Malawi answered Question 2. For these countries, the other questions determine the responsiveness index. We calculated a responsiveness index for all respondents who answered the three questions. Because the measure is an average, the scale remains the same for all countries.
[11] We also ran the results using an index of only questions 1 and 2, and the results are significant and in the hypothesized direction (see results in the appendix). However, we use the index presented here because we feel it is a more accurate and complete measure of government responsiveness. While results are significant using both independent variables, the size of the effect is larger when using the three-question index. We take this as evidence that our index more accurately measures our independent variable of interest, which includes beliefs about the government's *capacity* as well as willingness to listen to constituents.

part of the index and on an alternative configuration of the index. The results are largely robust

and suggest that our index is an appropriate measure for our theoretical concept. While this index

is likely influenced by partisanship, a control for supporting the ruling party addresses this issue.

We include a number of individual-level control variables in the analysis that are generally

thought to influence protest behavior: urban/rural residence, gender, education, age, poverty,

employment status, propensity to engage in collective behavior and political participation (per

McAdam and Tarrow, 2010; indices explained fully in the appendix), support for the ruling party

(Beissinger, 2011), and satisfaction with democracy (Almond and Verba, 1963). We also include

a measure of presidentialism in our models to control for varying levels of government

responsiveness attributable to different electoral systems. Details on coding, operationalization,

and descriptive statistics are available in the appendix. In the appendix, we also report models

that include an additional set of control variables as robustness checks.[12] The results are

unchanged when including these additional controls.

  In the analysis below, we employ multi-level mixed effects logistic regression in which

individuals are nested within countries with a random intercept for each country. This approach

allows us to account for the fact that individuals within countries are not independent from one

another while still estimating country-level variables. We exclude the North African countries

from the analysis. Importantly, these countries are missing survey questions that are included in

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[12] In these models, we control for the level of democracy in a country using the polyarchy score from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Dataset (Coppedge, 2018). We include a measure of power distribution across social groups from the V-Dem dataset, as minority control of the government may influence protest behavior. We also include the frequency with which an individual feels her ethnic group is "treated unfairly by the government" from the Afrobarometer surveys. Finally, building from Mkandawire (2010), we include a dummy variable for whether or not the country relies more heavily on domestic taxes to control for variation in taxation capacity, given that our key independent variable involves, in part, perceptions on taxation. Mkandawire (2010) argues that colonial economic history determines the degree to which countries are reliant on and are able to extract domestic taxes. Counties identified as "labor reserve economies" rely more heavily on taxes; therefore, we control for whether or not a country was historically such an economy using Table 2 from Mkandawire (2010) to control for heterogeneity in taxation capacity. The appendix also reports more details for the coding of these variables.

our perceived responsiveness measure: Egypt is missing the question about local councilor responsiveness and all (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia) are missing the question regarding willingness to pay higher taxes for better services. Therefore, we cannot measure our key independent variable in these cases.

In addition, at the time of the surveys (October 2011 – April 2013), these countries were just coming out of/still in the midst of the Arab Spring.[13] Crucially, respondents in these contexts are likely to interpret protest to mean something very different from the rest of the sample. While some revolutionary protests took place in some of the Sub-Saharan countries included in our sample--Burkina Faso, Benin, Kenya, Malawi , Senegal, Uganda--none of the countries that saw a rise in regime-changing protest due to the Arab spring have a plurality of protests that are regime-changing (according to the SCAD data). Thus, while demands for better democracy and regime change took place in Sub-Saharan Africa, such protests did not constitute the plurality of protest activity. Because other types of protest were more common even in the Sub-Saharan African cases noted here (in the full sample, only 7% of protests were regime-changing), respondents in these Sub-Saharan nations are not likely to see protest as only anti-regime, which is likely the case in the North African countries.

Results and Discussion

Table One below displays results of the test of our primary hypothesis: that, if valence protest is a way to signal preferences to the government, those who perceive the government to be responsive will be the more likely to report protest behavior. The results displayed in Panel A of Table One indicate support for our hypothesis in the full sample. Those with the highest value of the government responsiveness index are 77% more likely to protest compared to those who

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[13] While Egypt and Tunisia saw the removal of leaders, Algeria and Morocco saw major protests with no change in regime, and Sudan only saw minor protests.

have the lowest value of the government responsiveness index. These results are robust, and

marginally stronger, when estimating the model on the restricted sample (see Table One, Panel

B). The other coefficients confirm findings from earlier studies: being urban, male, educated, and

young are all positively associated with protest. Protest is also positively associated with other

measures of political participation, including collective behavior and formal political

participation, lending further support to our theoretical claims: protest across Africa is more

common for those also involved in other forms of political action.

Table One: Perceived Government Responsiveness and Protest Behavior

Panel A: Full Sample		
	Protested	Would Protest
Perceived Government Responsiveness	0.51** (0.09)	0.36** (0.05)
Urban	0.13* (0.05)	0.09** (0.03)
Male	0.29** (0.05)	0.25** (0.03)
Education	0.12** (0.01)	0.06** (0.01)
Age	-0.50** (0.07)	-0.75** (0.05)
Poverty	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.01)
Employed	0.09 (0.05)	0.00 (0.03)
Collective Behavior Index	0.82** (0.05)	0.43** (0.03)
Participation Index	0.30** (0.02)	0.24** (0.01)
Supports Ruling Party	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.20** (0.05)
Presidential System	-0.22 (0.22)	-0.29 (0.32)

Satisfaction with Democracy	-0.13*	-0.18**
	(0.05)	(0.03)
N	25,336	25,336
Wald Chi^2	818.54	1065.71
Prob>Chi^2	0.00	0.00
Panel B: Restricted Sample		
Perceived Government Responsiveness	0.54**	0.38**
	(0.11)	(0.07)
Controls	Yes	Yes
N	15,021	15,021
Wald Chi^2	437.97	591.93
Prob>Chi^2	0.00	0.00

Mixed effects logistic regression reported. Individuals clustered within countries, with random intercept for country. Standard errors parenthesized below. Significance denoted by * if p<0.05, ** if P<0.01.

Running the baseline regression by country uncovers variation in the strength of the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest behavior. For nineteen of the twenty-eight countries, the coefficient indicates a positive relationship. In Figure One, darker shading indicates a stronger, positive relationship; white indicates a stronger negative relationship, and grey indicates a small or null relationship (exact regression coefficients are reported in the appendix). Figure One illustrates that the theory seems to readily apply to Ghana, Madagascar, and Tanzania, but not to Mali, Malawi, and Benin.
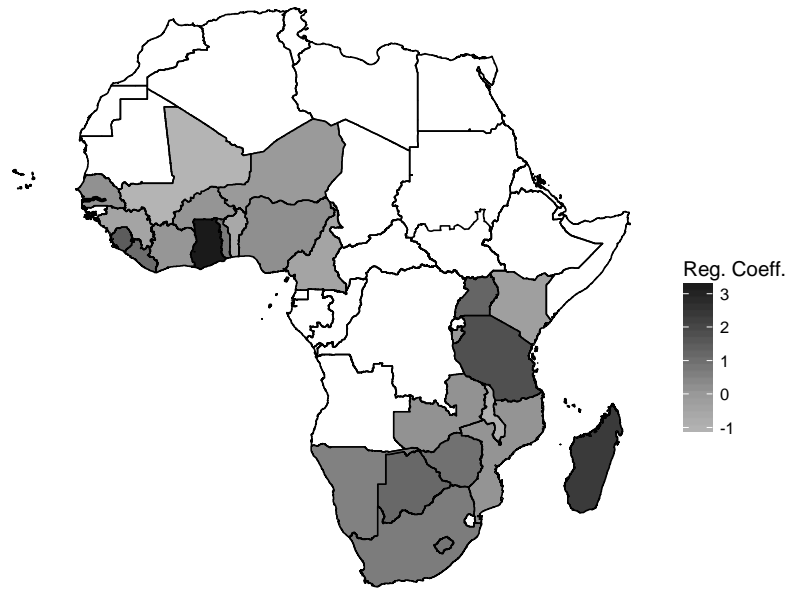
Figure One. **Relationship between Perceived Government Responsiveness and Protest (Regression Coefficients), by Country**

The SCAD data help to illuminate some of this variation. First, of Mali's fourteen recorded protests in the year prior to the Afrobarometer survey, only one was valence, while the remaining protests are nearly equally divided between ideological and regime-changing. Given the low frequency of valence protests, it is unsurprising that protest behavior in Mali does not adhere to our theory. Similarly, in Benin, only one of the six protests is valence. It *is* surprising that Malawi does not fit our theory, given that six of its nine protests were valence. One potentially important consideration in Malawi is who protests. Most of the valence protests in Malawi in the year prior to the Afrobarometer survey were attended by university students and legal professionals, while only two were attended by the general population. While we cannot definitively explain this case, we can speculate that only certain segments of the population in

Malawi see protest as a key mechanism for magnifying their voice.[14] Such speculation is worth further investigation in future research.

Given this variation, the analysis proceeds to our secondary hypotheses to determine the conditions under which government responsiveness is more likely to be linked to protest behavior. Among the six countries that have the strongest positive relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest, two are highly ethnicized contexts (Ghana and Sierra Leone), one has a relatively volatile party system (Madagascar), and three are dominant party regimes (Tanzania, Uganda, and Botswana). We thus explore each of these contexts.

Conditions Influencing Expression of Political Preference in African Countries

We have argued that people who believe the government to be more responsive will be more likely to resort to valence protest as a way to express political voice, because protest is an important avenue for political expression in countries whose electoral systems are inadequate for expressing political preferences. In African polities, identity-based party systems, volatile party systems, and dominant party systems may each undermine the ability of citizens to express their preferences through vote choice. Therefore, we expect the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest behavior to be stronger under these conditions. We first present the logic behind why each condition would strengthen the relationship between government responsiveness and protest, and then we examine whether this is the case by generating a measure for each condition and interacting it with perceived government responsiveness to determine whether the condition moderates the relationship.

Ethnicity and identity-based voting

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[14] It could be that the time period we are studying in Malawi is unique in that there are few popular protests and only very niche protests. However, the timing of the Afrobarometer survey is likely exogenous to protest timing, so this does not necessarily bias our estimate. It does suggest that for an individual country, a single moment in time may not be sufficient to determine how people conceptualize protest. However, our goal in this paper is to understand average tendencies of individuals rather than individual countries.

First, we hypothesized that the link between perceived government responsiveness and protest would be stronger in countries with ethnicized politics: where vote choice is overwhelmingly determined by ethnicity or other identity-based characteristics rather than a party's programmatic platform. Much ink has been spilled regarding ethnic politics across Africa, with few firm conclusions drawn except that voters tend to vote for their co-ethnic (Posner, 2005; Chandra, 2005).[15] In countries where ethnicity looms large for vote choice, elections are unlikely to give voters an opportunity to express policy preferences. As Ferree (2006) argued, ethnicity or other identity markers may serve as a heuristic for voters about which political party is most likely to advance their interests. If identity makes a citizen's vote invariable, then voting resembles an "ethnic headcount" rather than an expression of policy preference (Chandra, 2005). Importantly, in ethnicized contexts, policy is not a primary concern in electoral campaigns and thus is not a clear differentiator between parties; vote choice is highly restricted and less correlated with the individual's political preferences insofar as they diverge from the group's preference (Harris, 2018; Lust, 2016). Therefore, the electoral arena is less likely to provide an adequate venue for expressing political preferences, making protest more appealing for those who think the government will respond to them.

To test whether the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest behavior is stronger in countries with highly ethnicized politics, we use Huber's (2012) measure of group voting fractionalization (GVF). This continuous measure ranges from zero to one, increasing as identity becomes a better predictor of vote choice. For example, this measure is closer to one if most members of an ethnic group vote for the same party, and closer to zero

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[15] Recent notable exceptions include Ichino and Nathan (2013), Carlson (2016), Weinstein (2017), and Harris (2018).

when members of ethnic groups vote for various parties at similar rates.[16] In short, the variable increases as vote choice and politics is more ethnicized.

Following Huber, we construct GVF using four different 'group' definitions, which we call ethnicity, language, 'Fearon', and religion. The 'ethnicity' measure includes any ethnic group (as defined by responses to the Afrobarometer question: "What is your ethnic group, cultural community or tribe?") that constitutes at least 1% of the population. The 'language' measure includes any language group (as defined by responses to the Afrobarometer question: "Which language is your home language?") that constitutes at least 1% of the population. The 'Fearon' measure includes the groups that Fearon (2003) identifies as politically relevant for each country. Finally, the 'religion' measure includes the following groups (per the Afrobarometer): Christian (general), Catholic, Evangelical Christian, Traditional, Muslim, Hindu, None/Other.

In our sample, the average GVF measure based on ethnicity is 0.19, which suggests fairly low levels of group voting fractionalization. However, there is great variation across countries: Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique all have GVF values less than 0.08 (little ethnic voting), while Kenya and Sierra Leone have values above 0.39 (groups vote as ethnic blocs).

If ethnicized politics magnifies the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest, then an interaction term between our GVF and responsiveness measures should be positive. We run our models interacting each of the four GVF measures with our perceived government responsiveness index. The results (Table Two) are null: The

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[16] Huber develops a second similar measure, group voting polarization (GVP). We ran our models with both measures with similar, null results. Only the models using GVF are reported here. We also estimate models using an alternative construction of Huber's measure. It may be the case that using only one of Huber's measures overlooks that some countries may be systematically higher in one version than the other. To account for this we code a new variable that takes that highest value of the two Huber variables to account for different manifestations of ethnicized politics. This does not change the results. We also estimate models with the squared term of GVF to account for the possibility that ethnicized politics may not have a linear effect on protest behavior, but we still find no significant effect of this squared term. See the appendix for this analysis.

interaction term is never statistically significant in any of the models, and the sign of the coefficient is negative, which suggests that any effect would be in the opposite of the hypothesized direction. On average, ethnicized politics does not magnify the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest. The results remain null when restricting the sample.

Table Two: Government Responsiveness and Protest in Ethnicized Party Systems

	Protested (GVF Ethnicity)	Protested (GVF Fearon)	Protested (GVF Language)	Protested (GVF Religion)
Perceived Government Responsiveness	0.57** (0.19)	0.57** (0.18)	0.51** (0.17)	0.51** (0.14)
Ethnicized Politics (GVF)	-0.62 (0.87)	-0.18 (0.79)	-0.39 (0.73)	0.24 (1.35)
Ethnicized Politics (GVF) * Perceived Government Responsiveness	-0.37 (0.87)	-0.69 (0.80)	-0.06 (0.78)	-0.12 (1.45)
N	24,144	21,847	23,602	24,144
Wald Chi^2	748.76	707.07	741.08	747.55
Prob>Chi^2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Mixed effects logistic regression reported. Individuals clustered within countries, with random intercept for country. Control variables included but not reported. Standard errors parenthesized below. Significance denoted by * if $p<0.05$, ** if $P<0.01$.

Volatile party systems

Next, we hypothesized that volatile party systems might magnify the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest. One function of political parties is to provide heuristics that simplify decisions for voters, but unstable party systems precipitate more uncertainty in the electorate and lower voter confidence (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). As Kuenzi and Lambright (2005) argue, high levels of electoral volatility can "undermine citizens' ability to…maximize their interests via electoral participation" (p. 425). In their 2005 study, the average level of legislative volatility across thirty-three African countries was 31.3%, indicating that in each election nearly a third of legislative seats changed hands. In a highly volatile

electoral arena, where parties emerge and disappear with each election, citizens are less able to express their preferences through vote choice or hold parties accountable over time.

To test whether volatile party systems create conditions that magnify the relationship between government responsiveness and protest, we adopt Weghorst and Bernhard's (2014) measure of party volatility for African countries. They examine African countries that have had at least two consecutive multiparty elections, and devise a measure of party volatility based on the difference in the percentage share of legislative seats that parties have from election to election. Their variable ranges from zero, if the distribution of seats remains the same, to one hundred, if all parties present after one election failed to win any seats in the following election. We use their measure of overall volatility from the most recent election in each country that exists both in the Afrobarometer and in their dataset.[17] The average level of party volatility in our sample is twenty-eight, ranging from four in Cape Verde to seventy-six in Kenya. The appendix contains more detailed summary statistics.

If our hypothesis were correct, we would expect a positive interaction term between party volatility and perceived government responsiveness. Table Three displays the results for the twenty-five countries in both datasets. The coefficient on the interaction term is nearly zero, though slightly negative, indicating that citizens who perceive high levels of government responsiveness and live in countries with higher party volatility are slightly *less* likely to protest than those in less volatile electoral settings. This finding runs counter to our initial expectations. However, the magnitude of the interaction coefficient is so small (in highly volatile contexts those who perceive government responsiveness are 2% less likely to protest than those who do not) as to suggest that living under a volatile party system has little effect at all on the

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[17] Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

relationship between perceived responsiveness and protest. The results are unchanged when estimating the model on the restricted sample.

Table Three: Perceived Government Responsiveness and Protest in Volatile Party Systems

	Protested
Perceived Government Responsiveness	0.89**
	(0.15)
Party Volatility	-0.00
	(0.00)
Party Volatility*Perceived Government Responsiveness	-0.02**
	(0.00)
N	22,520
Wald Chi^2	783.04
Prob>Chi^2	0.00

Mixed effects logistic regression reported. Individuals clustered within countries, with random intercept for country. Standard errors parenthesized below. Significance denoted by * if p<0.05, ** if P<0.01. Control variables included but not reported.

Dominant-party regimes

Our final hypothesis was that the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest would be stronger in dominant party systems. If volatile party systems suffer from excessive competition, dominant party systems suffer from the opposite. While some of Africa's democracies may appear "formless," the legacies of one-party states and long-reining authoritarians in others has led to an inflexible form (Sartori, 1976). Bogaards noted that dominant parties may "undermine the new democratic dispensation through their monopoly of power" (Bogaards, 2005). Decades of experience with single-party elections, or the dominance of "liberation parties" that gained power after independence, allows ruling elites to become firmly entrenched in government, using patronage networks to eliminate rivals and consolidate power over long periods of time (van de Walle, 2007; Arriola, 2009).

The lack of competition in dominant party regimes presents a serious challenge to citizens' ability to express their preferences through vote choice. If the same party regularly wins an overwhelming majority of legislative seats and maintains control over government, then a vote for that party is not necessarily indicative of policy preferences—especially if the party maintains its dominance through the distribution of patronage and manipulation of electoral rules rather than the implementation of popular policies (Schedler, 2002; Albaugh 2011). Citizens of countries that are ruled by former liberation movements (the ANC in South Africa, SWAPO in Namibia, FRELIMO in Mozambique, and the NRM in Uganda) may not be willing to vote against the dominant party, even when they are disappointed with the party's performance, because to do so would betray all that the party has provided (i.e. democracy, stability/security, self-determination, dignity). Thus, voting may be a way to express one's support for the current political order rather than an opportunity to hold parties to account. If the same party retains control over the government for extended periods of time, voters may not believe that the ballot box is the best way to express their political preferences.

To operationalize party dominance, we follow Sartori's classification of dominant party systems per Bogaards (2005). We classify as dominant those countries in which the current ruling party has won at least 50% of legislative seats in the most recent three elections and the government is not divided. The resulting dummy variable, *Party Dominance*, takes the value of one if the current ruling party is dominant (and zero otherwise). In our sample nine countries have dominant regimes: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda.

Again, if the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest is stronger in dominant party systems, then we would expect a positive interaction term between

our dominant party dummy and the responsiveness index. The results presented in Table Four based on the full sample indicate support for our hypothesis. While this might seem counter-intuitive given that dominant regimes are generally intolerant of protest, our theory provides a clear interpretation: dominant party regimes largely make voting an ineffective way to express political ideas. Therefore, those who feel that they can effect policy change are significantly more likely to use protest as a means of voice (even with its added risks). In dominant party contexts, those with the highest perceived government responsiveness are 53% more likely to protest.

Table Four: Government Responsiveness and Protest in Dominant Party Systems

	Full Sample	Restricted Sample
	Protested	Protested
Perceived Government Responsiveness	0.32** (0.12)	0.38* (0.17)
Party Dominance	0.20 (0.18)	0.39** (0.15)
Party Dominance*Perceived Government Responsiveness	0.43* (0.18)	0.25 (0.23)
N	24,942	14,627
Wald Chi^2	816.53	440.76
Prob>Chi^2	0.00	0.00

Mixed effects logistic regression reported. Individuals clustered within countries, with random intercept for country. Standard errors parenthesized below. Control variables included but not reported. Significance denoted by * if p<0.05, ** if P<0.01.

In the restricted sample, the interaction term (though still positive) is no longer significant. These null results could be due to loss in power given the smaller sample size, especially given that the restricted sample excludes one-third of the dominant party regimes

(Cameroon, Tanzania, and Togo), and this is a country-level variable.[18] For reasons explained above, we take the restricted sample to be a highly conservative test our theory. In concert, we take this evidence as merely suggestive that dominant party systems magnify the relationship between perceived government responsiveness and protest behavior.

To explore the mechanisms that link perceived government responsiveness to protest behavior under dominant regimes, we turn briefly to South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) has dominated South African politics since the introduction of democracy in 1994. Its dominance is well established and, while weakening, is not likely to break down for another two national election cycles, barring any unforeseen events that critically destabilize the ANC.[19] Protest is a common occurrence in South Africa and has generally been on the rise. After 2004, the number of service delivery protests in South Africa steadily increased, peaking in 2009 (Alexander, 2012). Importantly, the vast majority of protests did not call for a change in government, but rather improvement in service delivery, and thus they fit into the category of valence protests discussed here. Furthermore, the majority of protesters in South Africa are from demographics that overwhelmingly support the ANC: the poorer black community. Journalists have lamented these protests as a threat to South African democracy:

> The question [that the protest of August 2012] raises is why the community of Wesselton doesn't take its dissatisfaction to the polls. This raises a more troubling issue: are service delivery protests perceived to be an increasingly legitimate and

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[18] This exclusion does not mean that there were no valence protests in these countries, but that they were not detected by SCAD. As Hendrix and Salehyan (2015) note, event underreporting is more likely in countries where the government censors the media—a condition that Freedom House notes in all three of these countries.
[19] Local elections in 2016 indicate a faster breakdown of ANC dominance, but this shift was unforeseen at the time of data collection. Local elections are much more competitive than national elections, which suggests that at the local level one's vote can be an effective means of holding elected officials accountable.

possibly more effective alternative to our country's hard-won democracy? (Hesse

and Allan, 2011)

In fact, only 36% of South Africans believe that elections are an effective means to hold

government officials accountable (Lekalake and Nkomo, 2016). Using data from a survey

experiment conducted in 2011, Harris (2015) finds that when ANC supporters are reminded of

the ANC's role as liberator from apartheid, they are more likely to report willingness to both

vote for the ANC *and* protest against it for better services. While voting is a way to express

support for the status quo (ANC rule), protesting pushes the ANC to reach the potential that its

supporters desire by communicating which of the many valence issues are top priority. Voting in

this case is a way to voice support for democracy, liberation, or patriotism, while protest is used

to voice concerns over service delivery and government performance. In the 2016 local elections,

opposition parties were able to win key municipalities because rather than vote against the ANC,

many ANC supporters simply stayed at home (Griquana, 2016). Yet 2016 saw 137 major service

delivery protests (valence protests), which is just below the average level of protests (153) across

the previous five years (Municipal IQ, 2017). The decrease in voter turnout and the steady

stream of protests suggests, in line with the results above, that protest may be a more effective

means of expressing preferences in dominant party regimes.

While South Africa is unique in many respects, we suspect similar dynamics in other

dominant party regimes. Those in Tanzania, Uganda, and elsewhere may vote as a means to

express support for stability, security, or patriotism associated with the ruling party and use

protest to express material concerns. Further research should systematically test the various

possible mechanisms that drive the empirical relationship between perceptions of government

responsiveness and protest behavior in dominant party regimes.

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Conclusion

During the third wave of democracy, many African countries introduced democratic reforms that liberalized the political arena, paving the way for an increased degree of political participation. Yet, in many such polities, certain features of electoral politics render vote choice an insufficient action for expressing political preferences. Over the same period of time, there has been an increase in what we have termed 'valence protests': protests over valence issues, like service delivery, that serve primarily to inform governments of the importance rather than the nature of the issue. We theorized that, under electoral regimes in which vote choice is uninformative, citizens who perceive the government to be more responsive may rely instead on protest in order to communicate their preferences to political actors.

In the twenty-eight-country sample, we find support for the argument that citizens who perceive greater government responsiveness are more likely to engage in protests. These results suggest that, on average, people may view protest similarly to other forms of political behavior (albeit with higher costs). However, the strength of this relationship varies considerably across countries. Examining the conditions under which this relationship is strongest yielded mixed results, but supported our expectation that perceived government responsiveness is a stronger predictor of protest in dominant party systems. The case of South Africa demonstrates why: voting is unlikely to have much effect on the composition of the government, and continuing to vote for the ruling party may provide psychological benefits or may be the only way to gain access to patronage resources. Therefore, protest is a more effective method of communicating preferences to the government—for those who believe it to be responsive.

Despite our initial expectations, the same was not true of ethnicized or volatile party systems. We expected ethnicized systems to operate similarly to dominant party systems because

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vote choice is invariable. However, identity-based voting may in fact be a way to voice certain demands. Importantly, polities with ethnic voting will also likely have governments that practice more overt ethnic favoritism, thus banding together with one's ethnic group at the ballot box is effectively a bid for ethnic favoritism that benefits one's own group. Volatile party systems may not completely obviate the allure of lower-cost forms of political participation, especially if voters feel that elections truly are competitive. Additionally, our measure of party volatility is an imperfect proxy for "programmatic parties." Less volatile systems may still have parties that serve as revolving doors for political elites or as bully pulpits for charismatic leaders rather than a basis for programmatic politics.

While we take these results as evidence of support for our theory of valence protests, especially in dominant-party systems, our empirical strategy has limitations. First, we took measures to ensure that our analysis focuses on valence protests, but given the available data we cannot empirically differentiate how perceived government responsiveness influences different types of protests, or whether it disproportionately influences valence protests as we theorize. Second, while our measure of perceived government responsiveness is the best possible given the data, it would be useful to systematically measure perceived government responsiveness directly across African countries. Third, our analysis only presents correlations between our key variables of interest, so any causal interpretation is speculative. Despite these limitations, the analysis here has illustrated the importance of considering how valence protests are distinct from other types of protests.

This study represents an initial attempt to better understand when and where protest behavior occurs in Africa's electoral regimes. However, these political circumstances are not limited to the African context. Similar political phenomena may occur in other electoral regimes,

particularly those dominated by a single party. Valence protests have occurred in the Middle East and North Africa (i.e. Egypt and Jordan) and Eastern Europe (most notably, Ukraine). Egypt saw protests over rising prices (namely bread) in 2008 that did not explicitly demand regime change (Telegraph, 2008), and in many instances in the post-Arab Spring era people are careful to protest specific issues (rising prices, food shortages) and not the regime (Michaelson, 2016; Sakr, 2016). If valence protest is a response to certain limitations in electoral arenas, a useful extension of this research would be to determine the scope conditions that bound the applicability of this theory. In addition, future research would do well to investigate how valence protests morph into ideological or system-changing protests/movements as well as vice versa.

Many analyses highlight the flaws in African political systems—and electoral regimes elsewhere—particularly the degree to which structural or institutional characteristics undermine the quality of democracy and citizens' ability to engage meaningfully in the political sphere. We feel it is also important to understand the way citizens of such countries adapt to these "flawed" systems. If African electoral regimes differ in important ways from older, better-established democracies, it follows that the citizens of these countries will engage in different political behaviors as well. Other works have highlighted how would-be autocrats adapt to the introduction of electoral rules (e.g. Albaugh 2011), but we find here that citizens adapt their behavior to changing political landscapes as well. Our contribution is an attempt to understand better how protest may be an essential part of "politics-as-usual" in polities where more traditional modes of political behavior are less effective.

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