

Mobilization, Repression and the Choice between Violent and Nonviolent Tactics

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Abstract

Why do some dissident groups employ violent tactics, while others prefer nonviolence to pursue similar goals, and why do they switch tactics after embracing one? To address these questions, I analyze a formal model of tactical choice by the leadership of a dissident group and endogenous mobilization of citizens. I show that violent and nonviolent tactics are chosen in very different circumstances. Nonviolence is relatively more effective and is more likely when citizens have strong incentives to mobilize due to high grievances but expect to face low repression. Violence is relatively more effective when citizens face weak incentives to mobilize, either due to low grievances or high repression. Therefore, the conditions under which nonviolent tactics are preferred are also the conditions under which both tactics are more effective. Further, groups can change focus from nonviolence to violence in the face of increased repression, and counterintuitively, they can also shift from violence to nonviolence as grievances are exacerbated.

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1 Introduction

In Egypt, a wave of peaceful mass protests broke out against the country's authoritarian government on 25 January 2011 — ten days after Tunisia's Ben Ali was ousted by a similar wave of nonviolent action. Like their Tunisian counterparts, Egyptian protesters would also succeed in ending their leader's long reign. Elsewhere in the Middle East, peaceful protests inspired by the successful Tunisian and Egyptian examples quickly gave way to violence. Libya was engulfed in civil war by the end of its first week of peaceful protests. In Syria the primary method of resistance became violence following the establishment of the Free Syrian Army on 29 July 2011, four months after the first protests began. While Libyan rebels managed to topple their government, Syria's Assad regime proved resilient and its civil war continues to claim lives in 2020.

There is a growing body of research in political science that compares violent and nonviolent movements, and finds nonviolent movements to be (i) more successful overall, (ii) more successful in deposing dictators, and (iii) and more likely to result in a stable democratic transition (Bayer, Bethke, and Lambach 2016; Celestino and Gleditsch 2013; Stephan and Chenoweth 2008). This wave of research is rooted in Gene Sharp's pioneering work, which advocates nonviolence as a superior strategic choice (Sharp 1973). It is also spearheaded by the influential Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), which features the first statistical comparison of violent and nonviolent movements from 1900-2006, and finds nonviolent movements to be more successful in achieving their aims. The argument that nonviolent movements are more successful has quickly proceeded from groundbreaking to become "the new conventional wisdom on the subject (Davies 2014, 2).

Yet, if dissident groups strategically choose tactics and if nonviolence is more effective than violence, why do we regularly observe dissident groups embracing violence? Why did the organizers of Syrian resistance, despite having significant exposure to Gene Sharp's research¹ on the efficacy of nonviolence, nevertheless turned to violence? In contrast, there are also violent groups that eventually prioritized nonviolence in their struggles. In April 2006, amid a ten-year-long civil war with the Nepali government, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) held widespread demonstrations in Kathmandu for 19 days (Routledge 2010). These demonstrations would succeed in forcing King Gyanendra to abdicate, resulting in the end of the 240-year-old

1. See the award-winning documentary *How to Start a Revolution* for footage of Syrian dissident leaders meeting Sharp.

reign of the Shah dynasty and establishment of a republic. Interestingly, CPN-M forces had already wrestled control of two-thirds of the country away from the government by 2006. Why did CPN-M embrace nonviolence after years of successful fighting, and if nonviolence was going to be more effective, why did they choose violence in the first place? More generally, how do dissident groups choose between violent and nonviolent tactics, and why do they switch after selecting one?

I argue that the choice between violence and nonviolence involves a trade-off. While both tactics benefit from mobilization, violent tactics can be more effectively carried out by smaller groups of people, whereas nonviolent tactics are more effective when groups can mobilize large masses for their cause. As Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue, nonviolent movements with broad participation are more successful because they erode the legitimacy of government authority, and create and exploit cracks within the regime's pillars of support. Yet, nonviolent tactics' reliance on mass mobilization also makes them more vulnerable to successful curbing of mobilization, such as via government repression. When the leadership of a dissident organization decide on which tactics to employ, and when individual citizens decide on whether to mobilize, they take this trade-off into account.

Citizens are willing to mobilize when they perceive their conditions to be sufficiently bad to participate in conflict and potentially risk their lives for change. Injustices felt by people, such as economic inequality, poverty, unequal distribution of power and resulting political and social indignities, as well as identity-based deprivations, make them more willing to rebel (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Gurr 1970; Wood 2003). However, citizens would also prefer participating in a more effective resistance activity than a less effective one. The greater the level of mobilization the group can rely on, the more willing citizens are to participate in general, and relatively more willing to participate in nonviolent vis-a-vis violent tactics in particular. Similarly the more severe the government repression people expect the group to face, the less willing citizens are to participate in general, and relatively less willing to participate in nonviolent vis-a-vis violent tactics in particular.

The leadership of a dissident group will choose the more effective tactic based on their mobilization potential, which is determined by the grievances in the society and the expected level of government repression the group will face. If their potential base of supporters have strong grievances and the expected level of government repression is low, citizens will mobilize en masse,

making nonviolence the better choice of tactics. If either most of the supporter base face low levels of grievances or the group is expected to face severe government repression, mobilization potential will be limited, and the choice of tactics will be violent.

Influential scholarship arguing for the superiority of nonviolent tactics claim that nonviolence attracts more participation than violence, making nonviolent movements more successful (e.g. Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). This claim is based on two empirical patterns: (i) nonviolent tactics tend to feature higher levels of participation; and (ii) movements embracing nonviolent tactics tend to have a greater degree of success in achieving their goals. I argue that the same empirical pattern can be interpreted differently. We observe broad mobilization with nonviolent tactics, because violent tactics are more effective when groups do not expect to enjoy mass support for their cause. We observe that nonviolent movements tend to succeed more often, because the conditions under which nonviolent tactics are preferred (high grievance, low repression, high mobilization) are also the conditions under which both tactics are more effective. Importantly, if tactical choice follows the logic proposed here, it does not necessarily mean that had a violent movement instead embraced nonviolent tactics they would achieve greater success in that counterfactual world.

I develop these arguments via a formal model, which provides further novel insights into the dynamics of tactical change in conflict. First, consistent with literature on the repression-dissent nexus (Moore 2000; Shellman, Levey, and Young 2013; Trejo 2012), it shows that groups can change from nonviolent to violent tactics in the face of escalating repression, and violent to nonviolent when governments show increasing restraint in applying repression. In Syria and Libya, nonviolent protesters turned to violence when faced with a commitment to apply severe repression by their governments. Second, and more counterintuitively, groups can change focus from nonviolent to violent tactics when people's economic and political conditions improve, and from violent to nonviolent tactics when conditions deteriorate. The leadership of CPN-M could afford to switch focus from violent to nonviolent tactics in the midst of the Nepali Civil War because they were able to increase their popularity among the middle class residents of Kathmandu Valley, the economic and political center of Nepal that houses one-tenth of the country's population, who were disillusioned by the increasingly authoritarian regime of King Gyanendra.

Finally, the model also shows that, unlike nonviolence, violent tactics provide an option for a dissident organization: survival. When a group's ability to attract participants is drastically

diminished due to improving economic and political conditions for the populace, engaging in violent tactics enables the leadership to continue the struggle today in the hopes of attracting more participants tomorrow. An example is Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan's (PKK) decision to reinstate its armed struggle on 1 June 2004, when its forces were largely defeated, its leader was in a high-security Turkish prison, and when the conditions for Turkey's Kurdish population significantly improved paralleling the EU-induced democratization (Tezcür 2010).

The closest work to this paper is Bueno de Mesquita (2013), which includes an analysis of a rebel group's decision to engage in conventional or irregular warfare. The focus of his analysis is on how group strength outside of mobilization influences mobilization dynamics and the choice between conventional or irregular tactics. Here I adopt the same model to examine how groups choose between violent and nonviolent tactics as a function of mobilization, and do so by introducing repression as a core variable influencing mobilization, which is not considered in his model. That said, the formal arguments follow Bueno de Mesquita (2013), and thus the contribution of this paper is primarily substantive.

In the next section I discuss the plausibility of the model's key assumption: broad participation is more important for the effectiveness of nonviolent compared to violent tactics. I introduce the formal model in the following section, and then conclude by discussing the implications identified above.

2 Mobilization, Repression, and Tactics

2.1 Mobilization

Mobilization is a central concern for a strategic leadership deciding between nonviolence and violence as a means for their struggle. I argue that expected mobilization levels have different implications for calculating the viability of violent and nonviolent tactics. Indeed, the idea that nonviolent tactics are more strongly associated with broad participation is the core reason why scholars of nonviolence find them to be more effective and prescribe that anti-government groups shun violence (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Following this literature, the key assumption I make is that while greater participation is important for both tactics, the effectiveness of nonviolent tactics depend more heavily on participation and violence is more effective when there is

limited participation.

Following Sharp (2005), I define nonviolent tactics as a collection of methods used to wage conflict without the threat or use of violence. Sharp (1973) identifies 198 such methods, including economic and political boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, and protests. Nonviolent tactics are employed outside the bounds of institutionalized political channels, and are therefore distinct from other nonviolent political processes such as lobbying or litigating. Nonviolent tactics, like violent tactics, are aimed to achieve demands against the will of an opponent. However, while violent tactics threaten physical harm to achieve goals, nonviolent tactics do the same by eroding the opponents' sources of power via widespread noncooperation and defiance (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008). Nonviolent tactics are also distinct from spontaneous mass acts or one-off events, such as riots and revolts. Instead, nonviolent tactics are employed by a discernible leadership and are geared towards achieving specific objectives such as greater autonomy, secession, and regime change (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

The premise behind nonviolent tactics is that, every government, whether democratic or autocratic, relies on the cooperation of its citizens (Sharp 2005). Masses of people systematically disobeying laws that they reject erodes the legitimacy of those laws, making enforcement unsustainable. If enough workers stop showing up for work, their absence can hurt or even paralyze the economy. If people in the bureaucracy or in the military start refusing to carry out their duties, such recalcitrance can undermine the functioning and power of the regime. In other words, like violence, nonviolence also involves groups inflicting significant costs on their opponents in order to achieve their objectives. However, to inflict these costs on the opponent, nonviolent tactics require mass participation. That is the reason behind the consensus among scholars of nonviolence that broad participation is the key to success for nonviolent tactics (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Cunningham 2013; Schock 2013).

While greater participation is important for any group regardless of the tactics it employs, the effectiveness of violent tactics does not hinge as critically on participation as nonviolent tactics. Scholars of political violence emphasize factors such as the ability to procure arms, access to a steady flow of revenue, or a permissive topography for rebels to maintain their activities (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Buhaug, Gates, and Lujala 2009). In fact, irregular violent tactics, such as terrorism or guerrilla warfare, are widely perceived as the "weapon of the weak," precisely because they

can be used effectively by organizations lacking broad support and resources against stronger adversaries (Crenshaw 1981; Bueno de Mesquita 2013). This is also consistent with real-world observations, where small insurgent groups routinely survive and stay active for many years and in diverse settings from Spain to Myanmar, and from India to Colombia.

2.2 Repression

Given the stronger emphasis on broad participation for effective use of nonviolent compared to violent tactics, it follows that the nonviolent tactics should also be more sensitive to factors influencing mobilization. In other words, if groups employing nonviolent tactics derive greater benefit from increased mobilization, they should also suffer greater costs as a result of diminished mobilization potential. Repression is the primary tool used by governments to counter dissent and suppress participation. If people expect to face severe repression, this reduces their incentive to participate in any conflict, but more so for nonviolent conflict.

The relationship between dissent and repression has been difficult to untangle empirically (Davenport 2007; Lichbach 1987). This difficulty stems from self-censoring behavior that underlies *observed* dissent and *observed* repression (Ritter and Conrad 2016). Observed challengers emerge despite expecting to face repression, and others never mobilize fearing repression, which means the most successful repression is never observed, and observed repression signals a likely deterrence failure. While the scholarly community continues to discuss the long run relationship between repression and mobilization, there is agreement on the short run, or direct, effect of repression on curbing mobilization (Francisco 1995; Sullivan, Loyle, and Davenport 2012; Rasler 1996). Further, there is broad recognition in past theoretical work that state repression can be an effective tool for suppressing mobilization by increasing the risks of participation (Acemoglu and Robinson 2000; Lichbach 1987; Svobik 2013).

Another reason why groups engaged in nonviolence as opposed to violence are more vulnerable to government repression has to do with visibility. Violent tactics often rely on secrecy, and are employed in areas that are sparsely populated and difficult to reach by government forces. Therefore, if a dissident group expects to face severe government repression, violent tactics can increase the odds of survival and provide participants recourse in fighting (Amat 2018). Non-

violent tactics, on the other hand, need to be employed in urban areas, in front of the public eye, where participants rely on their government to exercise restraint. If participants expect their government to apply severe repression on unarmed citizens, it follows that their involvement in nonviolent tactics will turn them into easy and vulnerable targets. Numerous atrocities against unarmed protesters from Libya, where protesters were wiped out by government forces during the 20 February 2011 protests in Tripoli,² to China's 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, where the death toll ranges anywhere from several hundreds to tens of thousands,³ illustrate this point.

The key assumption I make here is that the expectation of facing more repression always hurts mobilization, which in turn incurs greater costs on nonviolent tactics. However, sometimes repression leads to increased, not decreased, mobilization. In the nonviolent action literature this is called the backfire effect, or "political jiu-jitsu," and is cited as one reason why nonviolent tactics can be effective even when faced with severe repression (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Sharp 1973). The idea is that repression against unarmed participants of nonviolent conflict can cause outrage among the bystander population, which can increase participation. That said, the backfire phenomenon is not *sui generis* to nonviolent movements. Scholars of violent movements and terrorism have long provided theoretical arguments and empirical evidence for the existence of backlash against government repression in those settings as well (Faria and Arce 2012; Kydd and Walter 2006).

Although we know that excessive repression against nonviolent movements can backfire (Schock 2013), we have a limited understanding of why states ramp up repression in such cases despite the possibility of backlash. I argue that my assumption is still reasonable despite the empirical observation of the backfire effect. First, backfire effect describes the impact of *observed* repression on future mobilization, whereas my assumption highlights that *expected* repression increases the costs of entering into conflict. Suppose that expected repression universally reduces the amount of mobilization. If we observe people mobilizing, we should infer that they did so notwithstanding their expectation of repression. If *observed* repression is to have any effect, positive or negative, on future mobilization, it needs to be different than *expected* repression. If *observed* repression is less severe than *expected* repression, we would expect people to revise and lower their expectations

2. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13785053>

3. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-42465516>, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/tiananmen-square-massacre-death-toll-secret-cable-british-ambassador-1989-alan-donald-a8126461.html>

with regards to the severity of repression, and more people to mobilize. In this regard, these are not mutually exclusive mechanisms.

3 The Model

I analyze the interaction, over two periods, between the leadership of a dissident group and citizens that form the group's potential supporter base. It is possible to think of the leadership as a smaller collective of resistance entrepreneurs whose members are ideologically more motivated than the general population. Each citizen in the game is described by the parameter η , which indicates how well-off that citizen is compared to the society at large. The population of individuals is characterized by a uniform distribution that has unit mass: $\eta \sim U[\underline{\eta}, \bar{\eta}]$. This distribution of η is common knowledge.

A game period can either be a peace period or a conflict period. In a conflict period, the interaction unfolds in the following manner. First, each citizen individually decides whether to mobilize for conflict ($a_i^\eta = 1$) or stay at home ($a_i^\eta = 0$). Citizens make this decision by taking into account: (i) the amount of repression they expect to face if they participate in —violent or nonviolent— conflict; and (ii) their outside options to conflict. This outside option is the status-quo payoff an individual receives if she stays out of the conflict, and can be thought of as a compound term that reflects a given individual's economic and political grievances, or lack thereof.

Once citizens decide whether to mobilize for conflict, the leadership observes this mobilization potential as the fraction of the population $\lambda_t \in [0, 1]$ of citizens who decided to participate in conflict. The leadership then decides whether to engage in conflict or withdraw, and if the former, whether they will use violent or nonviolent tactics; $a_t^L \in \{W, V, N\}$. This decision is made based on whichever tactic is going to be more effective at that mobilization level, λ_t . The game starts in a conflict period, and progresses into a peace period if and only if the leadership decides to withdraw from conflict in the first period. In a peace period, there is no mobilization, no tactical choice, and hence, no conflict.

Citizens and the leadership differ in how much utility they receive from choosing not to mobilize, or in the event of no conflict. This outside option to conflict for both citizens and the leadership is composed of two components: u_t and η . The former, u_t , is common across population

members, as well as the leadership. The common outside option captures the conditions in the country that is experienced by the whole population, such as the state of the economy and the political atmosphere. The term u_t is distributed according to an absolutely continuous cumulative distribution function $G_{u_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1}}$ with support $[\underline{u}, \bar{u}]$, and density $g_{u_{t-1}, \lambda_{t-1}}$. All actors observe the realization of u_t at the beginning of each stage. Further, I assume that these distributions are ordered according to a first-order stochastic dominance relationship in both u_{t-1} and $-\lambda_{t-1}$. The expected value of the outside option tomorrow is increasing in the value of the outside option today. If things are going well (poorly) today, we expect them to go well (poorly) tomorrow. The relationship between tomorrow's outside option and today's mobilization level is the opposite: The expected value of tomorrow's outside option is decreasing as more people decide to mobilize for conflict today. The conflict is assumed to be more severe as more people join, and thus deteriorates the conditions under which people live. For the first period, we have λ_0 and u_0 , and their distributions are common knowledge.

The second component of the outside option, $\eta \sim U[\underline{\eta}, \bar{\eta}]$ for population members and $\eta_L < \underline{\eta}$ for the leadership, pertains only to the individual actor. This generates heterogeneity within the population in terms of citizens' outside options and captures the idea that some people are better-off than others. The leadership's outside option is assumed to be worse than $\underline{\eta}$, which can be interpreted in three ways. One, the leadership cares more about the movement than the population members. Two, compared to the general population, fewer options within the society will be available to the opposition leaders once they decide to withdraw, due to their deeper engagement in the movement. Three, the leadership is ideologically more extreme than the general population. This assumption implies that it is more difficult for the leadership to give up their struggle compared to the general population.

3.1 Payoffs and Characteristics of Tactics

I argued above that, while greater mobilization increases the effectiveness of both tactics, it is more important for nonviolent tactics. Then, violence and nonviolence differ in how much they benefit from increased mobilization, and how much they suffer from decreased mobilization. Let θ^V and θ^N govern how the effectiveness of violent and nonviolent tactics are affected as mobilization

changes. The fraction of citizens who decide to mobilize in a given period t is $\lambda_t \in [0, 1]$. Let $\rho \in [0, 1]$ be the amount of state repression that the actors expect to face if conflict happens. Citizens and the leadership both discount future payoffs based on the common discount factor $\delta \in [0, 1]$, and their preferences can be expressed by von Neumann-Morgenstern expected utility functions.

If in a period t , the leadership decides to engage in conflict, the leadership's utility depends on the effectiveness of the chosen tactic. If the choice of tactics is nonviolence then this is captured by the following expression:

$$U_t^L(a_t^L = N, \lambda_t, u_t) = \theta^N \lambda_t - \theta^N \lambda_t \rho$$

The term $\theta^N \lambda_t$ is the effectiveness gain of the group in a conflict period t as a function of the chosen tactic, which is nonviolent here, and the fraction of the mobilized population. The effectiveness of the chosen tactic is increasing as more people join the group. The second term, $\theta^N \lambda_t \rho$, is the effectiveness loss due to repression. Since $\rho \in [0, 1]$, this term can be interpreted as subtracting a fraction of the effectiveness of the group due to mobilization, proportional to the amount of repression applied. Together, these two terms capture the idea that the strength of nonviolent movements lies predominantly in broad participation, and thus repression hurts the movement via the participation channel.

If the chosen tactic in period t is violence then the leadership receives the following utility:

$$U_t^L(a_t^L = V, \lambda_t, u_t) = \theta^V \lambda_t + \alpha - \theta^V \lambda_t \rho - \beta$$

Differences in the violent case are captured by conditions $\alpha > 0$ and $\beta > 0$. These two parameters serve to differentiate violent tactics from nonviolent tactics by incorporating aspects of violence that are not as dependent on participation. The term α implies that, even when participation beyond the ideologically committed core group is low, or even nonexistent, violent tactics could still be carried out effectively and could hurt the state. The term β captures the idea that responding to violence with force is easier for the state due to lower legitimacy costs: β is the added amount of repression independent of ρ and λ that a movement expects to face just by virtue of choosing to employ violent as opposed to nonviolent tactics.

I assume that $\alpha - \beta = \tau > 0$. If the chosen tactic is violence, the penalty due to the extra re-

pression faced by the group does not overwhelm the advantage of using violent tactics in absence of broad participation. This assumption ensures that violence is more effective than nonviolence under limited or no mobilization, and is key for the results of this model. If $\tau \leq 0$, violence is never feasible and groups will always choose nonviolence. Given the existence of small violent groups active in settings as diverse as Spain and Myanmar, this assumption seems reasonable for a broad range of cases.

I also assume that $\theta^N > \theta^V + \tau$. Together with the above assumption, this condition implies that the effectiveness of nonviolent tactics is more sensitive to mobilization than violent tactics. In other words, nonviolent tactics both benefit more from an increase in participation and lose more from a decrease in participation, compared to violent tactics. Further, when everybody mobilizes, nonviolent tactics are more effective than violent tactics. Note that $\theta^N > \theta^V + \tau$ implies $\theta^N > \theta^V$. Since nonviolent tactics are more sensitive to mobilization and repression costs are scaled with mobilization, these also mean that violent movements are hurt by increases in repression (ρ) at a lower rate than nonviolent movements.

Repression, $\rho \in [0,1]$, is exogenous, that is, the state is not a strategic player in this game. While states do apply repression strategically, I argue that this simplification is useful here, where the focus is on mobilization dynamics and their impact on tactical choice. Citizens and leadership can correctly anticipate the amount of repression if variables pertaining to the movement, such as the salience of the issue or the nature of the group's demands, are important predictors of repression. Further, prior repression history of the state is available to the leadership, who can use this information to arrive at an accurate expectation of the extent of government repression. States also commonly engage in preventive repressive acts prior to the beginning of a conflict, which are informative about the amount of repression groups will face once the conflict starts. Finally, the assumption $\alpha - \beta = \tau > 0$ subsumes cases where violent tactics do attract more severe government repression yet the extra repression cost is not enough to nullify the advantage of violent tactics outside of mobilization.

Finally, the payoff to withdrawal for the leadership is:

$$U_t^L(a_t^L = W, \lambda_t, u_t) = u_t + \eta_L$$

Citizens receive the same payoffs as the leadership if they decide to mobilize, except in the event of withdrawal, in which case the mobilized citizens receive their own outside options. That is, we have $U_t^L(a_t^L = V, \lambda_t, u_t) = U_t^\eta(a_t^L = V, a_t^\eta = 1, \lambda_t, u_t)$, and $U_t^L(a_t^L = N, \lambda_t, u_t) = U_t^\eta(a_t^L = N, a_t^\eta = 1, \lambda_t, u_t)$. The idea is that once mobilized, population members' preferences are synchronized with the movement's effectiveness: they receive higher payoffs when the movement is more effective and lower payoffs when it is not. Citizens receive the following payoff if they decide not to mobilize or in the event of a withdrawal:

$$U_t^\eta(a_t^L, \lambda_t, u_t) = u_t + \eta$$

3.2 Solution Concept

The solution concept of the game is pure-strategy subgame-perfect Nash equilibrium. With regard to the coordination game played by the population, in each period, I restrict attention to the equilibrium with the highest mobilization level sustainable for that equilibrium. In the second period, this criterion selects the equilibrium with the highest mobilization. In the first period, this prevents the population members from sustaining higher mobilization levels by threatening a zero mobilization equilibrium in the second period. This assumption thus prevents population members from coordinating to leverage non-payoff-relevant aspects of a history, which is similar to a Markovian restriction (Bueno de Mesquita 2013, 329-330).

4 Analysis

We will start working for the solution from the second period. I will first show the second period mobilization decisions of individual citizens, given their outside options and the repression they expect to face if mobilized. These will inform both the leadership's decision to engage in conflict and their choice of tactics in the second period. Next will be the analysis of the first period choice of tactics, which is important to understand how considerations for the future impacts the leadership's decision to engage in conflict or withdraw.

In the second period, the leadership decides on which tactics to use according to Proposition 1.

Proposition 1. *In the second period:*

- If $\lambda_2 = 0$, the opposition leaders employ violent tactics if $\tau \geq u_2 + \eta_L$, and they withdraw if $\tau < u_2 + \eta_L$.
- If $\lambda_2 > 0$, then the opposition leaders employ nonviolent tactics if $\lambda_2 \geq \frac{\tau}{(1-\rho)(\theta^N - \theta^V)}$, and use violent tactics if $\lambda_2 < \frac{\tau}{(1-\rho)(\theta^N - \theta^V)}$

The results follow from a comparison of the payoffs generated by the three possible actions. According to Proposition 1, when there is no mobilization, the leaders will engage in violence only if their outside option is low enough; otherwise they will withdraw. When the fraction of citizens who mobilized is positive, the choice of tactics depends on the severity of repression, the size of τ , and the advantage of nonviolence over violence in terms of benefiting from participation. Nonviolence is preferred for lower τ and lower repression.

Suppose a fraction λ of the population is mobilized. Following Bueno de Mesquita (2013), I call the person with the best outside option within this group the λ -marginal participant, and label this person's type $\eta^*(\lambda)$. When $\lambda \in (0, 1)$, this person must be indifferent between mobilizing and not mobilizing. Since $\eta \sim U[\underline{\eta}, \bar{\eta}]$ and has unit mass, we have:

$$\eta^*(\lambda) = \begin{cases} \underline{\eta} & \text{if } \lambda = 0 \\ \underline{\eta} + \lambda(\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta}) & \text{if } \lambda \in (0, 1) \\ \bar{\eta} & \text{if } \lambda = 1 \end{cases}$$

Define $\lambda_2^V(u_2)$ as the largest fraction of the population who prefer violent conflict to not mobilizing at this level of mobilization. $\lambda_2^V(u_2)$ is the largest λ such that the following inequality holds:

$$\theta^V \lambda - \theta^V \lambda \rho + \tau \geq u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda_2)$$

The expression to the right of the inequality is the outside option of the λ -marginal participant. $\lambda_2^N(u_2)$ is defined the same way: $\lambda_2^N(u_2)$ is the largest λ such that the following inequality holds:

$$\theta^N \lambda - \theta^N \lambda \rho \geq u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda_2)$$

Lemma 1.

$$\lambda_2^N(u_2) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \rho \leq \frac{\theta^N - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^N} \\ 0 & \text{if } \rho > \frac{\theta^N - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^N} \text{ and } u_2 + \underline{\eta} > 0 \\ \frac{u_2 + \underline{\eta}}{\theta^N(1-\rho) - (\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta})} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

$$\lambda_2^V(u_2) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \rho \leq \frac{\theta^V + \tau - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^V} \\ 0 & \text{if } \rho > \frac{\theta^V + \tau - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^V} \text{ and } u_2 + \underline{\eta} > \tau \\ \frac{u_2 + \underline{\eta} - \tau}{\theta^V(1-\rho) - (\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta})} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Lemma 1 describes the maximum sustainable mobilization levels for each tactic.⁴ Figure 1 displays maximum sustainable mobilization levels in the second period as a function of repression, ρ , and common outside option, u_2 . Remember that this reflects mobilization decisions of citizens prior to the choice of tactics by the leadership. The rightmost region is where the common portion of the outside option is so high that no citizen is willing to mobilize for any type of conflict. Immediately left of that is a region where people are only willing to mobilize for violent conflict, and mobilization level is interior. This is due to the effectiveness of violence when mobilization levels are low, since $\tau > 0$. Given this advantage, some citizens whose η 's are on the lowest end are willing to participate, because they believe they can make a difference notwithstanding their low numbers. On the other hand, the outside option is high enough for even the worst-off member of the society not to consider mobilizing for nonviolent conflict. This is because nonviolence will not be effective with such limited participation. Even if citizens with low η 's would be better off engaging in nonviolent conflict, they are still not willing to mobilize knowing that others will not participate.

To the left of this area is where λ_2 is interior for both tactics; both tactics attract a mass of citizens. Here u_2 is low enough that people are willing to mobilize for either tactic, but not low enough to ensure full mobilization. Below this area is a triangular region where we see full mobilization for nonviolence, but not for violence. This difference is due to nonviolence being more effective with broader participation. In this region, the expected repression level, ρ , and the common outside option u_2 are low enough that people believe everyone else would participate, and

4. All proofs are in the appendix, unless otherwise noted

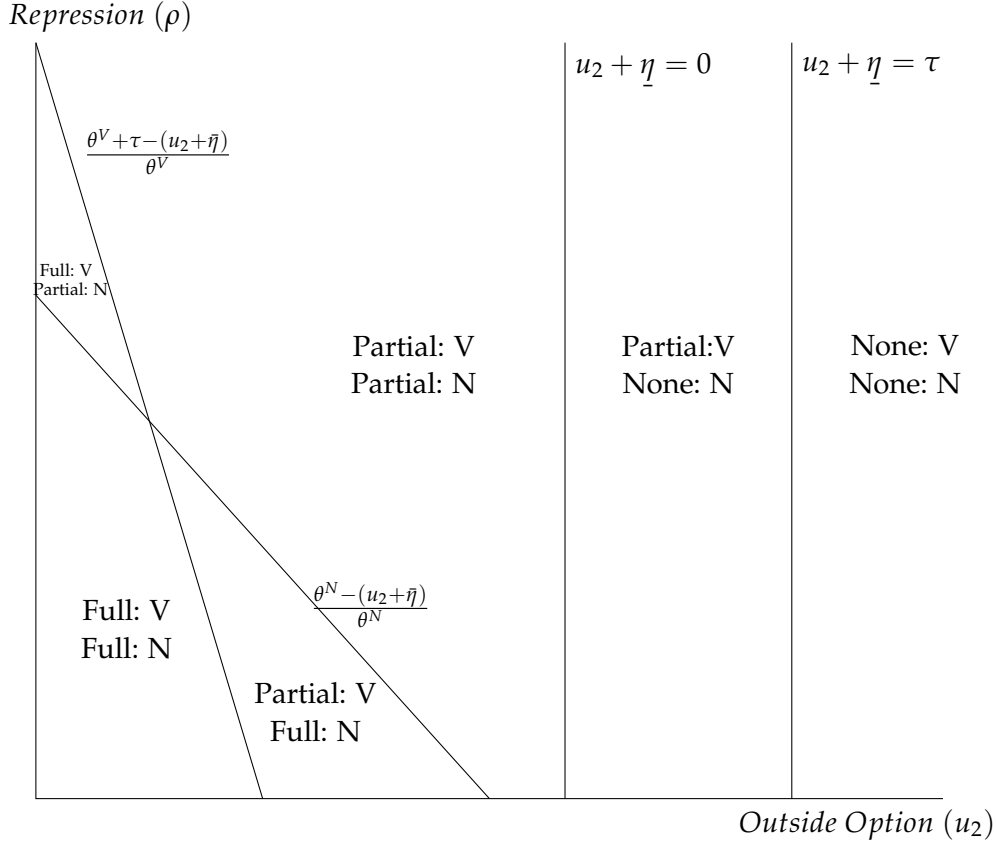


Figure 1: Second period mobilization levels for violent (λ_2^V) and nonviolent (λ_2^N) conflict as a function of repression and outside option ($\tau = 0.3, \theta^V = 0.3, \theta^N = 0.9, \bar{\eta} = 0.3, \underline{\eta} = -0.7$).

thus they themselves participate. For violent conflict, participation levels induced by u_2 are not high enough to entice the more better-off citizens with high η s, although a mass of citizens are willing to mobilize for violent conflict.

The bottom left region is where both the outside option and the anticipated repression levels are low enough that people are willing to fully mobilize for both tactics. Finally, in the upper left corner is the region where everyone is willing to mobilize for violent conflict but not for nonviolent conflict. Here repression is high enough to hurt mobilization for nonviolence despite low outside options — but not for violence. Citizens with higher η s find it worthwhile to mobilize for violent conflict but not for nonviolent conflict. This makes violence the more effective choice in this region.

Proposition 2. *The second period equilibrium is nonviolent tactics with mobilization $\lambda_2^N(u_2)$ if and only if $\lambda_2^N > 0$ and $\lambda_2^N(u_2) \geq \lambda_2^V(u_2)$. The second period equilibrium is violent tactics with mobilization $\lambda_2^V(u_2)$ if and only if one of the two conditions hold: (1) $\lambda_2^V(u_2) > \lambda_2^N(u_2)$ or (2) $\lambda_2^V(u_2) = \lambda_2^N(u_2) = 0$ and*

$$\tau \geq u_2 + \eta_L.$$

According to this proposition, (i) when there is positive mobilization, the leadership selects whichever tactic attracts the most people; and (ii) when mobilization level is zero, they select violence if their outside option is low enough and withdraw otherwise. The second point follows from the assumption that violent tactics are effective without broad participation. If the leadership's idiosyncratic outside option, η_L , is low enough, they still find it worthwhile to pursue violent tactics. The first point is because more people are willing to mobilize for the type of tactic that will be more effective. Next, Lemma 2 establishes when citizens mobilize for nonviolence in greater numbers compared to violence.

Lemma 2. *Suppose $u_2 + \underline{\eta} < 0$ and $\rho > \max\{\frac{\theta^V + \tau - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^V}, \frac{\theta^N - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^N}\}$, that is, second period mobilization for both tactics are interior. Then, $\lambda_2^N \geq \lambda_2^V$ if and only if*

$$\rho \leq 1 - \frac{(\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta})\tau}{(\theta^V - \theta^N)(u_2 + \underline{\eta}) + \theta^N\tau}$$

The results follow from Lemma 1 and a comparison of payoffs. Propositions 1 and 2, together with Lemma 2 characterizes all second period equilibrium outcomes. These are depicted in Figure 2.

The rightmost region of Figure 2 is where outside option, both for citizens and the leadership, is high enough that nobody finds it worthwhile to engage in conflict. To the left is the region where citizens' outside option is still high enough to preclude them from mobilizing. However, since the leadership's outside option is lower than citizens' ($\eta_L < \underline{\eta}$), they still benefit from engaging in conflict. Here violence is the equilibrium choice as it is more effective with fewer participants.

Nonviolence is featured as second period equilibrium outcomes at the lower left corner of Figure 2, because it is more effective when there is broad participation. Here outside option is low enough for people to find it worthwhile to participate en masse, and repression is low enough that it does not curb participation too much. Therefore nonviolence is more effective in this region.

The small triangle in the upper left corner shows the region where second period equilibrium tactics are violent, and population members are fully mobilized. Even though outside options are low, people are more willing to mobilize for violent conflict due to expectations of facing severe repression.

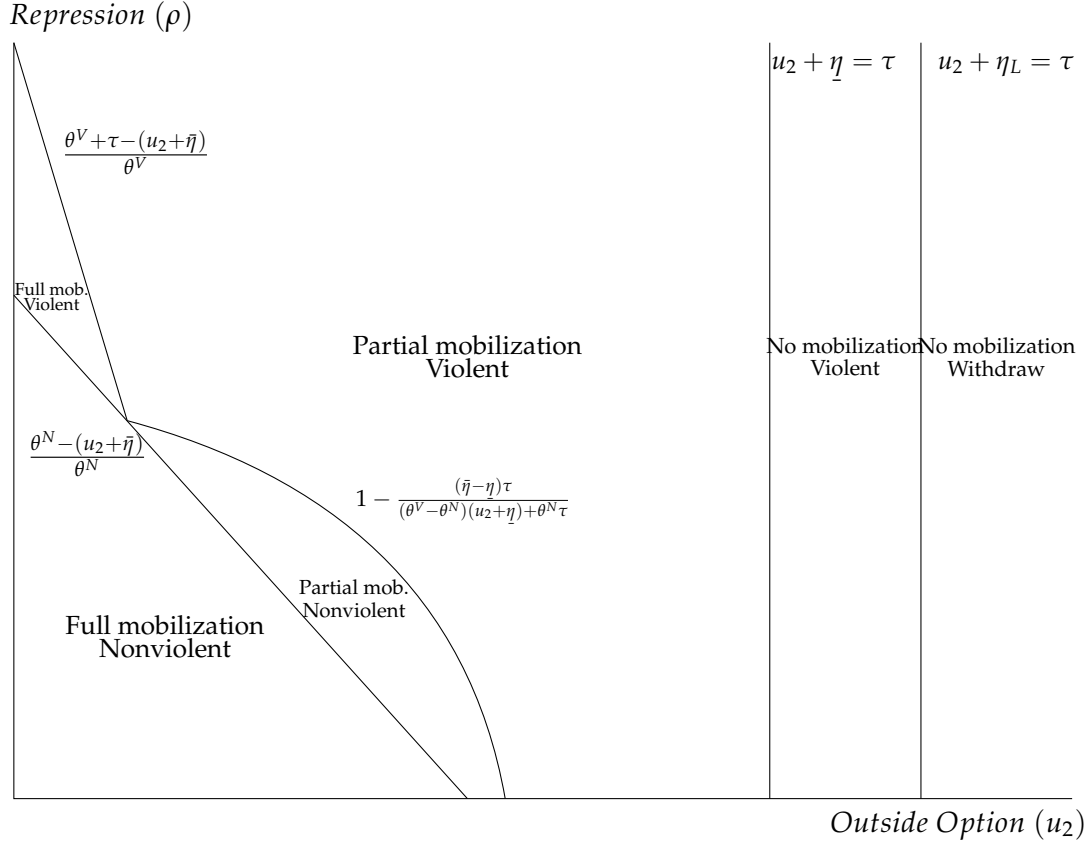


Figure 2: Second period equilibrium tactics as a function of repression and outside option ($\tau = 0.3, \theta^V = 0.3, \theta^N = 0.9, \bar{\eta} = 0.3, \underline{\eta} = -0.7$).

The dynamics of mobilization are identical in the first period as in the second period. This is because (i) every population member has measure zero, therefore an individual population member's decision does not affect the outcome, and (ii) population members' behavior is based on only payoff-relevant aspects of a history. There is one important difference in terms of tactical choice, which is described in proposition 3:

Proposition 3. *In the first period:*

- If $\lambda_1 > 0$, the leaders will use nonviolent tactics if $\lambda_1 \geq \frac{\tau}{(1-\rho)(\theta^N - \theta^V)}$ and use violent tactics if $\lambda_1 < \frac{\tau}{(1-\rho)(\theta^N - \theta^V)}$
- If $\lambda_1 = 0$, then the leaders will use violent tactics if $\tau + \delta A(u_1) \geq u_1 + \eta_L$ and withdraw if $\tau + \delta A(u_1) < u_1 + \eta_L$.

where $A(u_1) = \int_u^{\tau - \eta_L} v_L(u_1; s^2) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u} - \int_u^{\tau - \eta_L} (\tilde{u} + \eta_L) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u}$. Further, $A(u_1)$ is positive and

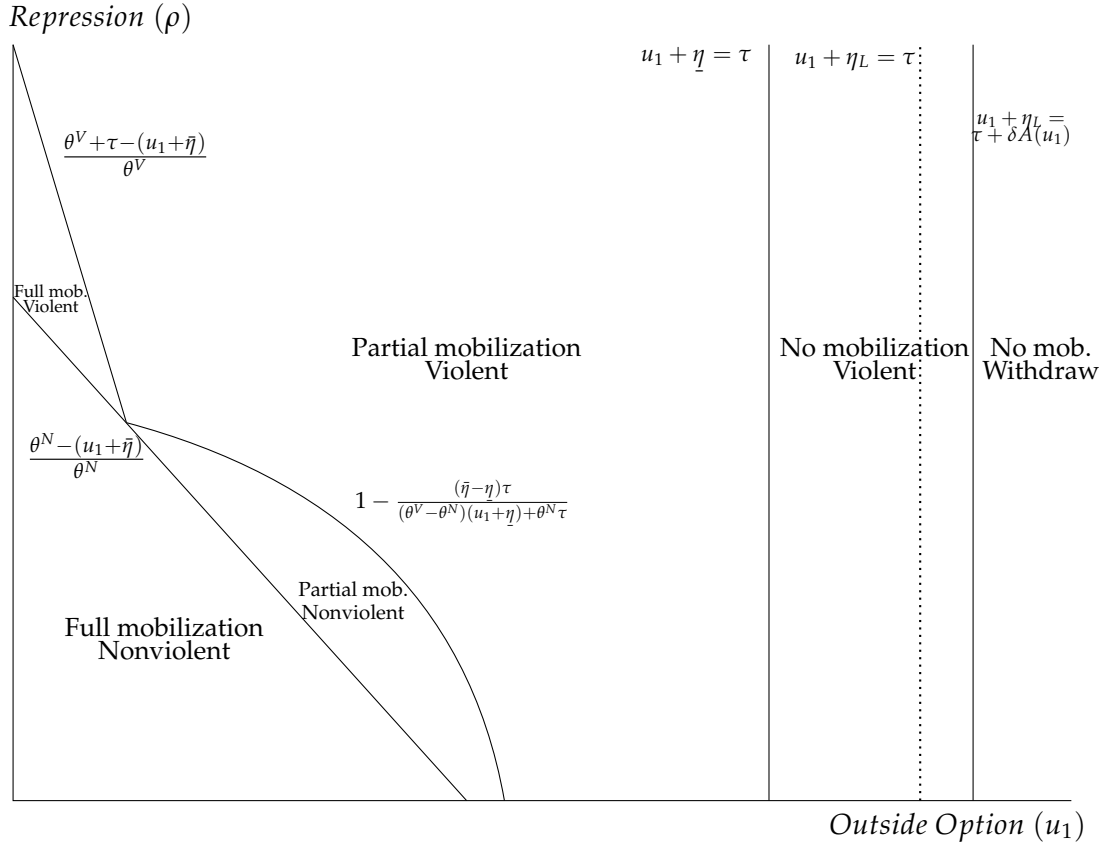


Figure 3: First period equilibrium tactics as a function of repression and outside option ($\tau = 0.3, \theta^V = 0.3, \theta^N = 0.9, \bar{\eta} = 0.3, \underline{\eta} = -0.7$).

decreasing in u_1 , and nonincreasing in ρ .

The difference between proposition 1 and 3 is the following: when no population member mobilizes in the first period, the leadership is more willing to engage in violent conflict compared to if there were zero mobilization in the second period. Here, there is some probability that the outside option will be worse in the second period, which will make violent conflict worthwhile for the leadership; thus fighting today keeps this option alive. This extra willingness for violence in the first period is represented in Figure 3 as the region to the right between the rightmost solid line and the dotted line. The dotted line is what separates withdrawal and violent conflict equilibrium outcomes in the second period.

5 Discussion

5.1 Conflict Onset

Dissident groups are more likely to wage their conflict nonviolently (i) when people have severe grievances (poor outside options) and (ii) when the amount of repression they expect to face is low. They are more likely to wage conflict violently when (i) the amount of repression they expect to face is high, or (ii) grievances are low. That said, for nonviolent conflict, there is a trade-off between repression and outside option: the worse citizens' outside option is, the more repression they are willing to endure. Therefore, while high repression is associated with violent tactics, nonviolent conflict can be observed in repressive settings provided that people's outside option is low enough.

These results suggest that failing to appreciate that conflict can be waged through nonviolent means can lead to bias in empirical findings. Studies of civil war onset tend to (i) compare violence to the absence of violence, and (ii) concentrate on civil wars, as opposed to lower intensity violent conflicts (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hegre and Sambanis 2006). A common argument in the literature is that the probability of civil war onset is increasing in grievances (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). This is consistent with the arguments presented here — if the amount of repression expected by the group is sufficiently high. Otherwise, increasing mobilization capacity due to more severe grievances could mean that the conflict would be waged via nonviolent tactics.

Similarly, if researchers ignore lower intensity conflicts, they might not realize that some of the core variables thought to increase the likelihood of conflict could actually have nonmonotonic effects. This was pointed out by Bueno de Mesquita (2013), who argues that outside opportunities have a nonmonotonic effect on the probability that rebels will engage in irregular tactics, such as terrorism, as opposed to conventional warfare. Here I extend his insight and argue that depending on the amount of repression, grievances can have a nonmonotonic effect on the likelihood that a conflict will be waged via violent means. If the severity of repression is low enough to make either tactic feasible, groups will engage in nonviolence when people have severe grievances. As the severity of grievances decreases, these groups will engage in conflict via violent means due to reducing mobilization capacity. For very low levels of grievances, there will be no conflict; because if citizens and the group leaders are sufficiently well-off, they will not find it worthwhile

to engage in conflict.

In recent years, scholars, recognizing that nonviolent conflict may emerge under different conditions than violent conflict, have started investigating nonviolent conflict onset (Butcher and Svensson 2016; Chenoweth and Ulfelder 2017; Cunningham 2013). Cunningham (2013, 300) finds that, groups seeking self-rule are more likely to engage in both violence and nonviolence, as opposed to institutional politics, when they face economic or political discrimination. Similarly, Chenoweth and Ulfelder (2017) find that measures capturing grievance and political opportunity based explanations perform well in predicting nonviolent conflict onset. They also find that settings where state repression is higher tend to observe fewer nonviolent onsets. These findings are consistent with the results of my model.

5.2 Are Nonviolent Tactics More Successful?

Since the groundbreaking work by Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), a new consensus seems to have emerged among political scientists: nonviolent movements are more successful in achieving their goals compared to violent movements. The argument rests on the observation that nonviolent tactics attract greater participation compared to violent tactics, and this advantage translates into better odds for success.

In this paper, I have argued that if the effectiveness of nonviolent tactics is more sensitive to mobilization, then dissident groups should prioritize violent and nonviolent tactics under very different circumstances. In particular, violence is relatively more likely when mobilization levels are lower either due to high repression or low grievances, whereas nonviolent tactics are relatively more likely when mobilization levels are high due to low repression and high levels of grievances.

Note that (i) the conditions under which groups tend to engage in nonviolent conflict are also the conditions under which both tactics are more effective, and (ii) the conditions under which groups engage in violent conflict are also the conditions under which both tactics are less effective. Then, we would expect a comparison of observed violent and nonviolent movements to find the nonviolence to be more successful overall, even if the true difference is zero. In other words, the aggregate finding that nonviolent tactics tend to achieve greater success does not necessarily mean that had a violent movement instead embraced nonviolent tactics they would achieve greater

success in that counterfactual world.

Chenoweth and Stephan (2011, 76-82) recognize that if nonviolent campaigns are waged in places where success is easier, this would explain their findings. However, they consider this as unlikely since nonviolent movements are observed in repressive regimes as well. Here, I provide a selection mechanism that is consistent with: (i) the arguments made by scholars of nonviolence that participation is key for the effectiveness of nonviolent tactics; (ii) the observation that nonviolent movements tend to have higher levels of participation; (iii) the observation that nonviolent movements can occur in repressive regimes (provided that outside option is low enough); and (iv) the finding that nonviolent movements tend to be more successful in achieving their aims. The mechanism I propose can satisfy all four of these points without making the case that nonviolent tactics are more effective overall. The results presented here imply that scholars should pay more attention to scope conditions when assessing which tactics are more successful.

5.3 Change in Tactics

Why do dissident groups engaged in conflict switch tactics? The model offers several implications regarding tactical change, which I group under two categories: the repression channel and the outside option channel. I discuss these in turn below.

5.3.1 Repression Channel

An exogenous increase in the amount of repression the group expects to face tomorrow suppresses people's willingness to participate in nonviolent conflict more than violent conflict. The reverse is also true: if the expected repression level is reduced, people are more willing to mobilize in general, but much more willing to mobilize for nonviolence. This means the leadership of a violent group can switch tactics to prioritize nonviolence, if expectations about the severity of repression is reduced. Similarly, a nonviolent group can switch tactics to prioritize violence, if people expect to face more severe repression tomorrow.

In both the Libyan and Syrian cases, dissident groups' initial struggle began nonviolently and turned violent after having met significant government repression. Recent research on diffusion of nonviolent movements suggest that the earlier example of the successful Tunisian uprising was

instrumental in both cases (Gleditsch and Rivera 2017). Given the inspirational role of the prior successful examples, there is reason to believe that people may have drawn rash inferences from them about their own situations (Weyland 2009, 2012). In particular, they may have underestimated the willingness of their states to counter dissent with violent repression (ρ), and overestimated the effectiveness of nonviolence against their governments (θ^N) — both leading them to overestimate the advantage of nonviolence over violence. I suggest that the reason these primarily nonviolent uprisings turned into violent conflicts is that there was a gap between the repression they expected to face and actually had to endure. In both cases, dissident groups adjusted, capitalized on changing mobilization capacities, and prioritized violence over nonviolence.

The relationship between repression and tactical change from nonviolence to violence is consistent with the repression-dissent literature, where repression is thought to predictably increase the likelihood that nonviolent dissent turns violent (Moore 2000; Shellman, Levey, and Young 2013). Lichbach (1987), for instance, argues that dissidents seek out the tactic that receives the least amount of repression, and change tactics based on that consideration. This means groups will switch to violence when nonviolent action is met with repression, and vice versa. Davenport, Armstrong, and Lichbach (2006) suggest that repression can evoke feelings of anger and injustice among citizens, hence provoking them to respond to violence with violence. This idea is echoed in the works of others as well (Trejo 2012). In fact, scholars of nonviolence often assume this mechanism exists and highlight that nonviolent movement participants should fight this temptation to preserve the integrity of their tactics (Sharp 1973; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

The link between repression and tactical change offered in this paper is different. Instead of an inflammation mechanism that rests on citizens' or participants' emotional responses, I suggest that repression can lead to tactical change because the immediate effect of repression is to depress mobilization. Changes in mobilization capacity, in turn, can give an edge to one tactic over the other, leading to a reevaluation of strategy by the leadership. Note that this explanation is not incompatible with the inflammation mechanism. If people are more willing to engage in violent as opposed to nonviolent activities following repression, because violence begets violence, this would suggest that repression has different effects on people's willingness to participate in violent and nonviolent conflict. My argument is that repression depresses participation in nonviolent conflict more than it does violent conflict, which means increasing repression makes people more

likely to join violent conflict, while at the same time making everyone less likely to participate in conflict in general.

A further implication is that exogenous shocks that render a government less dependent on its citizens could cause movements to switch tactics. Research on the effect of non-tax revenue, such as oil money or foreign aid, on institutions suggest that these make governments less accountable to their citizens (Morrison 2009). Reduced accountability causes state institutions to become less responsive to citizen demands (Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol 2008). Indeed, Conrad and DeMeritt (2013) and DeMeritt and Young (2013) find that increases in unearned revenue, such as surges in oil prices, discovery of natural resources, or increasing foreign aid flows, make governments more likely to apply repression against dissidents. My results imply that such exogenous shocks to expected repression could cause nonviolent movements to switch tactics to prioritize violence. Note that such shocks can also bring with them increases in citizens' outside option, which could counteract the effect of increased expected repression. Morrison (2009) finds that non-tax revenue can also increase social spending to placate the population. These suggest that such exogenous shocks will have the proposed effect on dissident groups' tactical choice in cases where social spending either does not increase, or the benefits of which are limited to certain groups.

5.3.2 Outside Option Channel

A violent movement can embrace nonviolent tactics in the second period if there is an exogenous shock decreasing the outside option to conflict. This is because as conditions become less palatable for citizens, they are more willing to participate in conflict in general, and this increased mobilization capacity can give nonviolence an edge over violence, since the former is more effective with broad participation. Similarly, a nonviolent movement can become violent in the second period, if an exogenous increase in the outside option suppresses mobilization capacity enough to provide violence an edge over nonviolence.

In other words, when political and economic conditions are getting better for the population, this can generate greater incentives for dissident groups to embrace violent activities. Conversely, when things are getting worse, violent groups can embrace nonviolent tactics. This is best ob-

served in settings where the amount of repression groups expect to face are lower. However, for sufficiently low levels of outside option, switching tactics from violence to nonviolence is possible even under highly repressive regimes. That is, groups in either lower or higher intensity violent conflicts can switch tactics to prioritize nonviolence.

A striking example is from the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, which claimed more than 13,000 lives between 1996-2006 (Do and Iyer 2010). After ten years of fighting against the Nepali state, Maoists turned to nonviolent action in April 2006. They joined a coalition of opposition parties in Kathmandu to organize widespread demonstrations over two and a half weeks. Maoists were the driving force behind the success of these demonstrations, which resulted in abolishing the monarchy and reopening of the Nepali parliament (Routledge 2010). Maoists seized the power first as part of the interim government following the April demonstrations, and then after securing the most votes in the 2008 general elections.

Initially, Maoists were a radical leftist group with a small base of supporters concentrated in the mountainous Rolpa and Rukum districts. In fact, the lack of a broad supporter base is a core reason why Maoist leader Prachanda opted for violent tactics in 1994, instead of engaging in nonviolence as advocated by Nirval Lama, senior leader of Communist Party of Nepal-Unity Center (Thurber 2015). Prachanda's tactical choice would later be validated as Maoists achieved remarkable success, exerting control over two-thirds of Nepal by 2006.⁵

There are a few developments that led to CPN-M's tactical change. First, Maoists diligently overhauled the economic structures disadvantaging the broader population in districts under their control. They eliminated landlords and redistributed their lands, forced landlords' allies in local governments out, and formed "people's governments" in villages (Joshi and Mason 2007). This meant that withdrawal of Maoists and restoration of central state authority represented a dismal prospect to most citizens. Second, Maoists realized the need to attract support from higher castes and urban areas. In its 2001 annual convention, CPN-M embraced a new doctrine, Prachandapath, which signaled a revisionist ideological departure from the rural, insurgency oriented Maoist orientation toward one with a stronger emphasis on urban uprisings.

The third development was arguably the most crucial, and represents the non-equilibrium exogenous shock to people's outside option. Several months after the CPN-M announced its

5. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/countries-crossroads/2006/nepal>

ideological reorientation, in 1 June 2001, ten members of the Nepali royal family, including the reigning King Birendra, were massacred in the Narayanhity Royal Palace. The perpetrator was Crown Prince Dipendra, who, under the influence of hashish and angry over a spat with his father, massacred his family before taking his own life the same night. The new king Gyanendra was crowned a few days later, who quickly signaled his intentions to resurrect royal power by sacking Prime Minister Deuba in 2002, delaying elections for an unspecified amount of time, and assuming executive powers (Kramer 2003). Between 2000 and 2001, Nepal's democracy score dropped from 6 to -6, according to the Polity IV project.

In 2005, King Gyanendra took his boldest action by suspending the constitution and assuming direct authority. By then, Maoists had already been gaining popularity among the citizens of Kathmandu, and were increasingly seen as a viable partner among other Nepali parties. Capitalizing on these conditions, Maoists entered into an alliance with seven other Nepali political parties, and organized the April 2006 wave of protests, which would succeed in abdicating King Gyanendra, returning Nepal to a parliamentary democracy, bringing Maoists to power, and ending the ten year long civil war.

Beside exogenous shocks that can change the comparative advantage of one tactic over the other, as in the example of CPN-M in Nepal, the outside option mechanism also works in another way. Recall that, by assumption, the expected value of tomorrow's outside option is decreasing as more people decide to mobilize for conflict today. This means the leadership of a dissident group engaging in conflict via violent means in the first period can observe a reduction in people's outside option in the second period. If this reduction is enough to give an edge to nonviolent tactics over violence due to higher mobilization capacity, the group could switch to prioritizing nonviolence in the second period. In other words, as conflict begets conflict, people's increasing willingness to engage in conflict over time can turn violent movements into nonviolent movements. The switch to nonviolent resistance by the African National Congress after long years of armed insurgency with limited success could serve as an example.

5.4 Group Leadership, Gambling for Resurrection, and Future Uncertainty

The model suggests that if tomorrow's outside option is expected to be worse than today's, then the leadership can engage in violent conflict even if they lack public support and prefer to withdraw based on their stage game payoffs. The leadership is willing to gamble on a worse outside option tomorrow, because then the value of continuing their struggle will be higher, and people will be more willing to mobilize for conflict – increasing the effectiveness of their tactics. Therefore, fighting today keeps the option to wage conflict tomorrow alive. There are two ingredients leading to this behavior: (i) the leadership has a lower outside option than citizens, $\eta_L < \underline{\eta}$, which means giving up their struggle is more difficult for them compared to citizens; and (ii) violent tactics could be more effectively carried out by smaller groups of people, unlike nonviolence.

This result is related to the literature on diversionary war and gambling for resurrection behavior described by Downs and Rocke (1994). There, elected officials engage in costly wars even when citizens' expected payoffs are negative, since the officials hope to secure reelection following victory in war. Here, we see similar incentives because the leadership seeks to benefit from positive future shocks, while knowing that they can always withdraw tomorrow, instead of today, to avoid future negative shocks. This result is an extension to behavior described in Bueno de Mesquita (2013), where rebels engage in irregular, as opposed to conventional, warfare to keep their struggle alive. My results takes this point a step further: while violence has option value for the leadership of a dissident organization, nonviolence does not.

These dynamics underpin PKK's decision to reinitiate its armed struggle against the Turkish government on 1 June 2004. PKK has been waging an insurgency concentrated in southeastern Turkey since 1984. PKK's appeal among the Kurdish population is rooted in homogenizing Turkish nationalism and suppression of public expressions of Kurdish identity (Yegen 1999). In the 1980s and 1990s, legal persecution and intolerance of Kurdish political demands continued amid a heavy-handed counterinsurgency operation against PKK (Tezcür 2009, 2010).

Between 1999 and 2004 Turkey went through a period of widespread reform and democratization. The main impetus was Turkey's bid for EU membership. Turkish governments undertook significant reforms addressing the grievances of the Kurdish population, such as allowing broadcasting and education in Kurdish language and substantially reducing limitations on Kurdish po-

litical entities (Tezcür 2010). Turkish state TV broadcast in Kurdish for the first time in June 2004. The following year, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan would publicly criticize past governments' assimilative policies against the Kurdish population.

PKK suffered heavy defeats against Turkish military in late 1990s, and its founding leader Abdullah Ocalan was captured in 1999. The same year, PKK declared ceasefire, laid down arms, and withdrew to camps in Northern Iraq following Ocalan's orders (Tezcür 2010). Ocalan, recognizing EU's impact on improving freedoms for Turkey's Kurdish citizens, would initially become an advocate for Turkey's accession process himself. His sentiments were shared by the broader Kurdish intelligentsia.⁶ However, these developments implied that PKK was becoming less relevant as an actor representing Kurdish population's interests, as Kurdish citizens' outside option was increasing. In March 2004 local elections, the governing AKP received the majority of the Kurdish vote in Turkey's southeastern regions, wresting control of municipalities where Kurdish nationalists have traditionally been dominant (Tezcür 2010). In July 2004, PKK reinitiated its armed struggle against the Turkish government. Here is an excerpt from the June 2014 issue of *Serxwebun*, PKK's monthly magazine, commemorating the 10th year anniversary of the decision to reinitiate the armed conflict:

...At the time of the decision, our movement had just survived a severe ideological-organizational conflict. The organization was weak, organizational discipline had faded, we had lost our cadres, we were in a process of disintegration... Why did we engage in this new wave of military conflict? Because there was a strong need to patch our wounds and extirpate the liquidationists and collaborationists [who wanted to prioritize capitalist modernization and Kurdish nationalism], so that the struggle could be reoriented in its true revolutionary path... The goal of the leadership on 1 June 2004 was to rebuild PKK and reinstate the path of resistance on revolutionary grounds, so that our struggle could achieve victory in the future.⁷

In short, PKK was substantially weakened by 2004. It was militarily defeated, and its leader was in a high-security Turkish prison. Further, its support base was rapidly eroding, responding to improving political and economic conditions accompanying the reform period in Turkey. Yet, PKK reinitiated its armed struggle against the government in July 2004. The orders came from Ocalan, who had done a complete about-face with regard to the EU process in 2004, following the developments mentioned above. PKK gambled for resurrection, and the main driver of this

6. See this open letter in the *Herald Tribune* by prominent Kurdish public figures: http://www.institutkurde.org/activites_culturelles/appels/what_do_the_kurds_want_in_turkey/what_do_the_kurds_want_in_turkey.pdf

7. Author's translation. *Serxwebun*, June 2014 issue: <http://www.serxwebun.org/index.php?sys=naverok&id=393>

behavior were the ideological extremism of the PKK leadership and Kurdish citizens' improving outside options.

6 Conclusion

In this paper I analyzed a formal model to explain how concerns over mobilization shape rebel groups' decision to embrace violent or nonviolent tactics. As starting point, I used a central argument among scholars of nonviolence — that participation is the key to success for nonviolent tactics. The model produces important insights for conflict onset, and change of tactics by dissident groups.

First, if nonviolent tactics are more sensitive to participation compared to violent tactics, nonviolence should be more effective in situations where grievance levels are high and repression is low. It is possible to observe nonviolent conflicts in repressive environments, because people are willing to tolerate more severe repression levels as their outside option decreases. To the extent that these factors also make success easier, nonviolent tactics tend to be more advantageous in situations where success is more feasible. This means nonviolent movements can appear as more successful than violent movements, even when such a difference does not exist in the counterfactual world. This is not an argument against the effectiveness of nonviolent tactics, but a cautionary note in terms of taking the selection mechanisms more seriously when comparing violent and nonviolent tactics.

Second, deteriorating economic and political conditions can lead to less violence. This is because deteriorating conditions translate into increased mobilization capacity, which increases the attractiveness of nonviolent tactics. Conversely, improving conditions can lead to more violence. The mechanism is the same: improving outside options mean people are less willing to participate in conflict, which increases the attractiveness of violent tactics. This should be of interest to scholars of civil wars, terrorism, and nonviolent movements alike. This result suggests that a deeper engagement with conflict dynamics and groups' strategic behavior would be beneficial, as similar counterintuitive relationships can be observed in the micro level that may not be captured by aggregate studies.

Third, violent tactics are a tool of survival for dissident groups. When such groups are at their

weakest, that is, when they fail to attract supporters, violent tactics provide them with the means to keep their movement alive today in the hopes of benefiting from positive shocks tomorrow. Nonviolence does not provide dissident groups with such an opportunity. There is an interesting insight here: violence can be a sign that citizens' conditions are improving. Possibility of engaging in "gambling for resurrection" type behavior via violent tactics suggest that things might get worse for governments before they get better. It also highlights a challenge faced by governments: the need to improve conditions for the citizens despite violent behavior on the part of the dissident groups.

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Appendix

Proof of Lemma 1.

The proof follows Bueno de Mesquita (2013, 348-349). First focus on nonviolent conflict. Here $\lambda_2^N = 1$ if and only if citizen $\bar{\eta}$ mobilizes at full mobilization. This means we have:

$$\theta^N - \theta^N \rho \geq u_2 + \bar{\eta} \Leftrightarrow \rho \leq \frac{\theta^N - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^N}$$

as needed. When there is no mobilization, $\lambda_2^N = 0$, two things need to be true. One, citizen $\underline{\eta}$ should not participate in nonviolent conflict at zero mobilization. Two, there should not be a sustainable positive mobilization level for nonviolence. The first condition means we have:

$$u_2 + \underline{\eta} > 0$$

as needed. The second condition requires the following to be true for all λ_2 :

$$\theta^N \lambda_2 - \theta^N \lambda_2 \rho < u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda_2)$$

Since both sides are linear in λ_2 it is enough to show that the above inequality holds at $\lambda_2 = 0$ and at $\lambda_2 = 1$. The former is guaranteed by condition one above. The latter condition requires $\rho > \frac{\theta^N - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^N}$, as needed.

If $\lambda_2^N \in (0, 1)$, substituting the expression for the marginal participant, we get:

$$\theta^N \lambda_2^N - \theta^N \lambda_2^N \rho = u_2 + \underline{\eta} + \lambda_2^N (\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta}) \Leftrightarrow \lambda_2^N = \frac{u_2 + \underline{\eta}}{\theta^N (1 - \rho) - (\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta})}$$

as needed.

The argument for violent conflict is the same. $\lambda_2^V = 1$ if and only if citizen $\bar{\eta}$ is willing to participate in violent conflict at full mobilization. That is:

$$\theta^V - \theta^V \rho + \tau \geq u_2 + \bar{\eta} \Leftrightarrow \frac{\theta^V + \tau - (u_2 + \bar{\eta})}{\theta^V}$$

$\lambda_2^V = 0$ if and only if two conditions are true. One, citizen $\underline{\eta}$ will not participate when there is

no mobilization. Two, there is no sustainable mobilization level for violent conflict. For the first condition we have $\tau < u_2 + \underline{\eta}$. For the second condition, the following inequality should hold for all λ_2 :

$$\theta^V \lambda_2 - \theta^V \lambda_2 \rho + \tau < u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda_2)$$

Since both sides of the inequality is linear in λ_2 it is enough to show that the inequality holds at $\lambda_2 = 0$, which is guaranteed by condition one, and at $\lambda_2 = 1$. For the latter, we have $\rho > \frac{\theta^V + \tau - (u_2 + \underline{\eta})}{\theta^V}$ as required.

If λ_2^V is interior, by plugging in the expression for the λ -marginal participant, the following must be true:

$$\theta^V \lambda_2^V - \theta^V \lambda_2^V \rho + \tau = u_2 + \underline{\eta} + \lambda_2^V (\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta}) \Leftrightarrow \lambda_2^V = \frac{u_2 + \underline{\eta} - \tau}{\theta^V (1 - \rho) - (\bar{\eta} - \underline{\eta})}$$

□

Proof of Proposition 2.

The proof follows Bueno de Mesquita (2013, 350). First focus on nonviolent tactics. Suppose $\lambda_2^N = 0$. Since $\tau > 0$, violence is preferred to nonviolence. Suppose $\lambda_2^N > 0$. Proposition 2 says that the leadership prefers nonviolence at λ_2^N if and only if $\lambda_2^N \geq \lambda_2^V$. Assume $\lambda_2^N = 1$. Then given the assumption $\theta^N > \theta^V + \tau$, nonviolence is preferred to violence. Now suppose mobilization for nonviolence is interior, $\lambda_2^N \in (0, 1)$. First, I will state and prove the following claim:

Claim 1: If $\lambda_2^N \in (0, 1)$, then $u_2 + \underline{\eta} < 0$.

Proof of Claim 1: Proof is by contradiction. At $\lambda = 0$, the payoff of a citizen from nonviolence, $\theta^N \lambda - \theta^N \lambda \rho$, is zero. Suppose $u_2 + \underline{\eta} \geq 0$. Either one of the following conditions should be true. One, $\theta^N \lambda - \theta^N \lambda \rho$ never crosses $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$. Here $\lambda = 0$ and thus not interior. Two, $\theta^N \lambda - \theta^N \lambda \rho$ crosses $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$ from below. In this case $\lambda_2^N = 1$, and thus not interior. The argument for violence is the same. This concludes the proof of Claim 1.

Given the claim, focus on $u_2 + \underline{\eta} < 0$. It is enough to show (1) If $\lambda_2^N \geq \lambda_2^V$, the leaders will prefer nonviolent tactics at mobilization λ_2^N , and (2) If $\lambda_2^N < \lambda_2^V$, the leaders will prefer violent tactics at mobilization λ_2^V .

The proof is by contradiction. Consider (1) and suppose $\lambda_2^N \geq \lambda_2^V$, yet we have $\theta^N \lambda_2^N -$

$\theta^N \lambda_2^N \rho < \theta^V \lambda_2^V - \theta^V \lambda_2^V \rho + \tau$. Since $\lambda_2^N \geq \lambda_2^V$, we can rewrite this inequality as $\theta^N \lambda_2^N - \theta^N \lambda_2^N \rho < \theta^V \lambda_2^N - \theta^V \lambda_2^N \rho + \tau$. From this we have the following:

$$u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda_2^N) = \theta^N \lambda_2^N - \theta^N \lambda_2^N \rho < \theta^V \lambda_2^N - \theta^V \lambda_2^N \rho + \tau$$

First, at zero mobilization, the right hand side of the inequality is greater than the left hand side (note that due to Claim 1 $u_2 + \eta^* < 0$). Second, both $\theta^V \lambda - \theta^V \lambda \rho + \tau$ and $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$ are linear in λ . This means $\theta^V \lambda - \theta^V \lambda \rho + \tau$ is greater than $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$ for all $\lambda \leq \lambda_2^N$. Then it should be that $\theta^V \lambda - \theta^V \lambda \rho + \tau$ crosses $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$ at some $\lambda > \lambda_2^N$, which implies $\lambda_2^V > \lambda_2^N$, a contradiction.

Now consider (2). Suppose $\lambda_2^N < \lambda_2^V$ yet $\theta^N \lambda_2^V - \theta^N \lambda_2^V \rho > \theta^V \lambda_2^V - \theta^V \lambda_2^V \rho + \tau = u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda_2^V)$.

First, it follows from Claim 1 that at zero mobilization, left-hand-side of the inequality is greater than $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$. Second, both $\theta^N \lambda_2^V - \theta^N \lambda_2^V \rho$ and $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$ are linear in λ . This means $\theta^N \lambda_2^V - \theta^N \lambda_2^V \rho > u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$ for all $\lambda \leq \lambda_2^V$. This means $\theta^N \lambda_2^V - \theta^N \lambda_2^V \rho$ crosses $u_2 + \eta^*(\lambda)$ at some $\lambda > \lambda_2^V$, which implies $\lambda_2^N > \lambda_2^V$, a contradiction. □

Proof of Proposition 3.

Following is the expected value of u_2 as a function of u_1 and λ_1 :

$$\hat{u}(u_1) \equiv \int_u^{\bar{u}} \tilde{u} g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u}$$

Similarly, following is the expected value of second period for the leaders as a function of u_1 and λ_1 :

$$\hat{v}_L(u_1, \lambda_1) \equiv \int_u^{\bar{u}} v_L(\tilde{u}; s^2) g_{u_1, \lambda_1}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u}$$

When $\lambda_1 > 0$, the result follows from a comparison of payoffs.

When $\lambda_1 = 0$, then the leaders will use violence as opposed to withdrawing if and only if:

$$\tau + \delta \left\{ \int_u^{\tau - \eta_L} v_L(u_1; s^2) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u} + \int_{\tau - \eta_L}^{\bar{u}} (\tilde{u} + \eta_L) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u} \right\} \geq u_1 + \eta_L (1 + \delta) + \delta \int_u^{\bar{u}} \tilde{u} g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u}$$

Subtracting $\int_{\tau-\eta_L}^{\tilde{u}} (\tilde{u} + \eta_L) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u}$ from both sides, we get:

$$\tau + \delta \int_{\underline{u}}^{\tau-\eta_L} v_L(u_1; s^2) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u} \geq u_1 + \eta_L + \delta \int_{\underline{u}}^{\tau-\eta_L} (\tilde{u} + \eta_L) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u}$$

Define $A(u_1) \equiv \int_{\underline{u}}^{\tau-\eta_L} v_L(u_1; s^2) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u} - \int_{\underline{u}}^{\tau-\eta_L} (\tilde{u} + \eta_L) g_{u_1,0}(\tilde{u}) d\tilde{u}$. There are two things to note. First, $A(u_1) > 0$ by proposition 1. Second, the conflict payoff is non-increasing in u_1 since higher outside option leads to lower mobilization, and an increase in u_1 leads to a first-order stochastic dominance (FOSD) improvement in the distribution of u_2 . Thus, the first integral in $A(u_1)$ is non-increasing in u_1 . Similarly, the second integral is increasing in u_1 due to the FOSD ordering of u_t . This means, the value of $A(u_1)$ is decreasing in u_1 . With regard to the level of repression, the first integral is non-increasing in ρ , and the second integral is constant in ρ . Therefore $A(u_1)$ is non-increasing in ρ . Rewriting the above inequality by substituting $A(u_1)$, the leaders will opt for violent conflict if and only if:

$$\tau + \delta A(u_1) \geq u_1 + \eta_L$$

as needed. □