Targeting the State: The impact of corruption on the ratio of state-targeted dissent

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1. Introduction

During a time where corruption levels are stagnating, and justice and the rule of law are threatened globally, it has become crucial to investigate the impact of such trends on individuals worldwide (Transparency International, 2024). Specifically, what is the impact of corruption on people-led movements? Protests worldwide have seen exponential growth, exemplified by cases such as the Arab Spring, the yellow vests movement, Fridays For Future, anti- Covid-19 measures, etc. Yet, the effect of corruption remains a largely unexplored topic in the literature on mobilisation. No research has yet examined how citizens respond to corruption and how they adapt their strategies of mobilisation to voice grievances and request change. This raises a central question: *What is the effect of corruption on the ratio of mobilisation against the state?*

This paper aims to explore this relationship by linking literature on corruption with theories of mobilisation, and makes use of the SCAD dataset, wherein a quantitative analysis of mobilisation in Africa and Latin America is conducted. Researching the impact of corruption - a multidimensional phenomenon with negative consequences for society - on mobilisation, is of high academic importance since previous literature has failed to explicitly place corruption at the forefront of mobilisation. For society, this provides the opportunity of understanding the impact of corruption on the articulation of grievances. In developing countries, corruption has found support among “greasers”, those who believe that corruption can foster development. However, this argument has now been refuted and “sanders”, those who realise that corruption is a challenge before anything else and that it impedes economic and social development, form a majority (Aidt, 2009). In developed countries, corruption corrodes existing institutions, favours exclusion instead of inclusion, and leads to a deficit of democracy (Warren, 2004). This study aims to explore how people then organize against such activity, regardless of the specific grievance that corruption has brought about at a local scale. This paper looks at the bigger picture and puts corruption at the heart of target choice during dissent, rather than other factors

such as regime or issue type. This study aims to show that the effects of corruption are not simply limited to creating salient grievances and affecting the quality of governance but extend beyond that dimension. The social relevance of this paper, therefore, lies in its ambition to show that people-led events are also affected by corruption, not solely at the level of grievances voiced, but also as it impacts strategies.

Results from the estimation models fail to reject the null hypothesis. In other words, it is impossible to confirm that corruption levels do play a role on the ratio of state targeted social unrest. Still, the expected direction of the relationship is found, except in the case of violent riots during which the relationship is negative. When including the moderator effect of GDP, however, the direction of the effect becomes inverted. Additional analysis demonstrate that the relationship is strengthened as GDP increases.

In answering the research question, this thesis will begin by reviewing the literature on mobilisation. Corruption will be defined and its expected effects on the choice of target during dissent will be discussed in order to generate this paper's hypothesis. An ordinary least squared regression will be employed to test the hypothesis in the context of Africa and Latin America; the result of which will be analysed and discussed. Finally, the last section will conclude by providing a summary of the findings, acknowledgement of the potential limitations, and direction for future research.

2. Literature review

Mobilisation lies at the heart of contentious politics; the crossroads of contention, politics, and collective action (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Mobilisation refers to a noninstitutional process in which individuals with a common interest in changing the status quo organize to publicly express their grievances (Ritter & Conrad, 2016). The terms mobilisation, dissent and protest will be used interchangeably in this paper. In practice, dissidents coordinate efforts to challenge

power holders (Goodwin & Jasper, 2009; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). To be defined as mobilisation, the latter efforts must extend beyond a single event, as one of its critical dimensions is "repeated performances", which signals commitment, unity, and worthiness (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p.11). Despite being crucial for societal and social life, mobilisation encounters a variety of challenges.

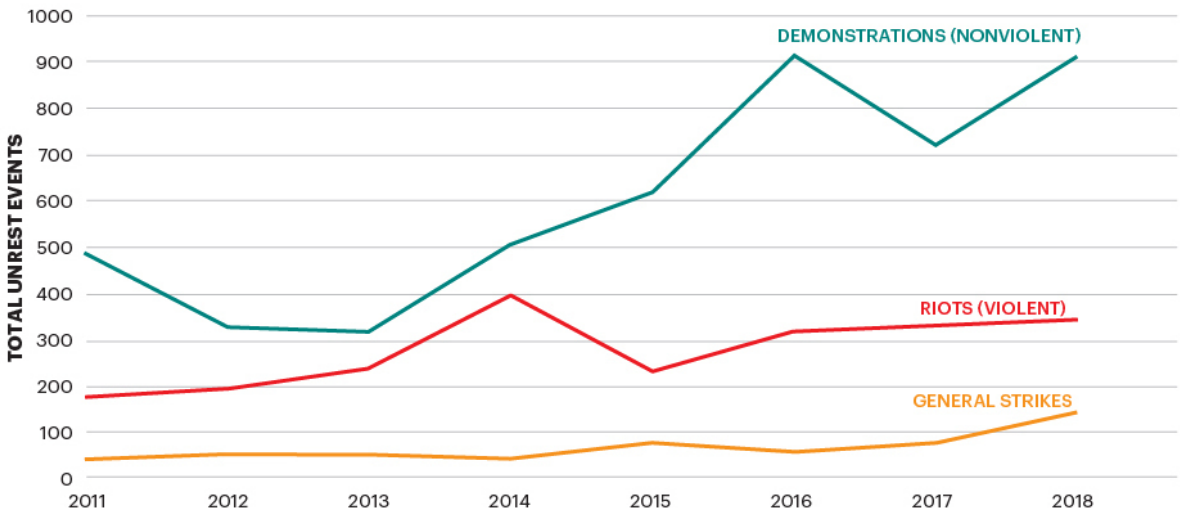
Firstly, it faces the collective action problem: when expected gains are collective, meaning they are nonexcludable and nonrival, individuals have no incentives to contribute to gaining them, as they can benefit from them once they've been acquired without bearing the private costs of acting (Kalyvas & Kocher, 2007). In other words, people can free ride on other, more motivated, individuals to mobilise and achieve the expected outcome as nonparticipation does not prevent access to the public goods acquired. Free riding is, therefore, a core problem in mobilisation. Nonparticipation can be based on concerns of time and resources, but also on fear of repression. Indeed, states can repress a protest even when they themselves are not the targets of mobilisation. Overall, free-riding and fear of repression severely impede participation, meaning that sometimes, the number of protestors required to effectively foster change is not reached. However, other phenomena can be at play when exploring the challenges to mobilisation. Recently, for example, the idea that the youth is "disconnected from politics" has gained in salience (Manning & Edwards, 2014). The argument conveys that young people are less interested in politics, making them less knowledgeable. Consequently, they disengage from politics and mobilisation. Studies, however, reveal that their nonparticipation is rooted in their feeling that the government is not responsive to their claims, and in the specific socio-economic barriers that many students face. Nonetheless, Manning and Edwards (2014) argue that the severity of the trend has been overstated. In reality, the youth favours direct forms of mobilisation such as protests and boycotting, with a focus on post-materialist issues (Pickard,

2021). This is aligned with the fact that dissent has increased in the past years, especially by young activists, such as Greta Thunberg and her call for climate action (Pickard, 2021).

Secondly, mobilisation opportunities vary based on the regime types and freedom levels. In democracies, freedoms of speech and assembly are guaranteed by the constitution or equivalent legislation. However, in autocracies, these rights are severely restricted; consequently, mobilisation usually takes the form of clandestine oppositions and brief confrontations which are quickly met by repression (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015).

Today, countries - regardless of regime types - are facing, among others, the threats of climate change, inflation, and growing inequality; which all lead to salient social divides and push people to demand change and effective response in the face of these existential threats (Barrett, 2022). This has caused mobilisation to become an increasingly crucial and prominent activity in modern civic life (Vision of Humanity, 2021). The pattern is described in Figure 1, which depicts the recent increase of mobilisation in virtually all its forms.

Figure 1. Global Trends in civil unrest, 2011-2018



Source: Cross-National Time Series (CNTS), IEP calculations

IEP

Yet, to this day, only four theories have attempted to explain the dynamics behind mobilisation, and none has produced any form of consensus among scholars (Chenoweth &

Ulfelder, 2015). These are the grievance-based approach, the resource mobilisation model, the modernization theory, and the political opportunity approach.

The grievances-based model argues that people's motivations to participate in protests are related to the grievances arising from their condition vis à vis the state. Systematic exclusion from political, social, and economic spheres as well as the existence of second-class citizens form important grievances which some citizens rally around and express through mobilisation. In particular, Kern et al. (2015) claim that economic shocks foster protests, as economic strife, poverty, inflation and high unemployment levels can generate collective grievances. This finding, however, is not aligned with the civic voluntarism model, which predicts that people need economic resources to participate through non-institutionalized channels (Kurer et al., 2019). The latter consequently expects people in worse economic situations to protest less, as mobilisation requires them to take time away from a productive activity from which they could benefit to improve their economic position. Thereby, it is clear that people mobilise to express grievances, but to whom remains an unaddressed question within the theory.

Similarly, the resource mobilisation theory highlights the role of resources in enabling or preventing the mass mobilisation required to effectively advance change. Butcher and Svensson (2014) particularly show the importance for movement entrepreneurs to acquire the human, financial and informational resources that can foster mass mobilisation. In this regard, mobilisation is limited by physical constraints, as it requires money, channels of communication and information, and the unity of all of society's members. This is so because mass mobilisation depends on collective action, which can only be achieved with participation that transcends geographical, ethnic, religious, or class barriers. However, this theory overlooks that beyond material concerns, there are personal and collective dimensions of motivation.

Economic development is also at the heart of modernisation theory. Alternatively, however, it posits that industrialisation has led to political liberalisation and democratisation

and has created a new middle class, which has built upon its power to demand greater political and civil rights (Chenoweth & Ulfelder, 2015). Therefore, it suggests that as GDP grows, the general number of mobilisations increases along. From that standpoint, mobilising is about exercising rights, with little focus on the mechanism that renders people able to organise collectively.

Finally, the political opportunity approach explains that mobilising is about expressing grievances, but that it is conditioned by a cost-benefit analysis. Likelihood of dissent is contingent on its low cost and high probability of success. This occurs in times of regime instability such as periods of elections, which are often characterized by elite divisions and decreased regime strength (Chenoweth & Ulfelder, 2015). Nevertheless, this theory omits that structural factors also play a salient role in pushing people to dissent. As such, there are serious time invariant determinants in the choice and capacity to dissent (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015).

Although these models can shed light on specific factors that make the occurrence of civil unrest larger or smaller, they often focus on issues that are contingent on individuals' personal socio-economic conditions. Nevertheless, the study of structural factors constitutes a salient share of the literature on the topic, particularly concerning rebellion repertoires and the use of violent strategies (Skocpol, 1979; Moore and Jaggers, 1990). Among others, GDP, polity and independence of regime's powers have been shown to affect mobilisation (Salehyan & Stewart, 2017; Tilly &Tarrow, 2015). Yet, if these structural factors are indeed important, they are mainly unidimensional.

As such, negative variations in GDP are likely to generate economic grievances while negative qualitative changes in polity are associated with social and political concerns. For instance, while any economic recession has social repercussions, they arise from a flaw in the economy. This pushes people to demand economic reforms before social ones (Kriesi et al,

2020). Similarly, concerns over the dependence of powers within a government are more likely to be translated in political grievances. Each of these challenges, economic strife or lack of political freedom and fairness, are, thereby, significantly more materialised on a specific issue area, rather than generating multidimensional demands. Consequently, citizens affected by these changes will target the single institutions that they see as responsible for their grievance.

However, corruption is inherently multidimensional rather than unidimensional. Corruption produces collective grievances expressed in both violent and nonviolent protests and in any type of regime or culture. Most importantly, it functions to deepen economic, political, and social problems (Barrington, Dávid-Barrett, & Hough, 2022; Wickberg, 2021). As such, efficient solutions must draw from a blend of specific political, social, and economic policy changes (Rose-Ackerman & Truex, 2012). There is no single actor from the private sector that can respond to such issue on its own. Rather, only an institution that possesses control over multidimensional aspects of civil life can bring about the required changes. For this reason, corruption qualifies as an overarching problem that requires action from the government to be tackled.

Such reasoning calls into question the range of actors that will be targeted in times of dissent. It is therefore intriguing that no study has yet explored the effect of corruption on mobilisation. This thesis aims to remedy this important gap by providing an answer to the following question: *What is the effect of corruption on the ratio of mobilisation against the state?*

3. Theoretical discussion

There is no clear consensus on what corruption precisely is. Corruption often refers to "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Transparency International, 2024). The World Bank is more precise and considers corruption as the "abuse of public office for private gains" (World

Bank, 2020). However, these definitions do not fully account for the implications and consequences of the phenomenon. Dávid-Barrett & Hough (2022) argue that abuses by the private sector can also have significant impact on people's daily life and interfere with the distribution of public goods.

Other definitions are more normative in character, corruption is "the conversion of public goods into private ones by those in charge of managing them" (Rothstein & Torsello, 2014 cited in Wickberg, 2021, p. 88). Still, all of them imply a strong negative effect for communities suffering from corruption. Specifically, corruption is an offense that breaks (inter)national laws, regulations and integrity standards, and wherein resources addressed to the public interest are diverted from their original purpose (Barrington, Dávid-Barrett, & Hough, 2022).

Corruption, thus, creates critical and pivotal grievances, and has consequences at the regional, national, and international levels. The effects include, but are by no means limited to, the exacerbation of poverty and inequality, the undermining of the rule of law and of fair public services, and the erosion of people's faith in the current system (Barrington, Dávid-Barrett, & Hough, 2022; Wickberg, 2021). Globally, corruption facilitates the emergence and spread of "existential threats such as climate change, transnational organized crime, terrorism, [and] global health challenges" (Wickberg, 2021, pp. 82-83). As such, it can be seen as the symptom of a rotten government structure, which means that all citizens regardless of economic status, ethnicity, and geographic area have motivations and incentives to mobilize against a state that prevents them from accessing optimal public goods.

Therefore, due to the number of significant grievances that emerge from corrupted practices, it seems probable that corruption could be linked to mobilisation against the state. Yet, choosing which institution within the state is the best target is not necessarily a straightforward process. Institutional targets of mobilisation include the state, but also

corporations and educational facilities, despite the general assumption that the government is the sole target of mobilisation, to the extent where government targeting was part of the definition of mobilisation (Walker et al., 2008). While it must be acknowledged that the state remains the main target of mobilisation, by 2008, around 37 percent of events targeted nonstate institutions (Walker et al., 2008, p.69). This means that targeting depends on specific factors relating to the state. What pushes people to target other institutions rather than the state? Contrarily, what motivates people to target the state rather than other institutions?

These questions are best answered using a strengths and vulnerabilities framework, as explained by Walker et al. (2008). They develop three criteria: openness to influence, vulnerability to nonparticipation and vulnerability to delegitimation.

One of democracies' main strengths is their openness to influence. Their decision-making process is significantly influenced by citizens, which allows for the pursuit of various objectives due to the large and broad nature of the constituency. However, this is not the case for businesses and educational institutions, which have narrower constituencies, thus limiting the diversity of groups and range of claims articulated within them. Even more limiting is the fact that in this latter type of institutions, issues can only be raised among those individuals that are completely included within the organisation: only employees, employers and customers can be seen as legitimate claim-makers. However, in democracies, all adult citizens can vote or protest, there is no requirement for them to be part of the government to push for change and mobilise.

Additionally, institutions can be more or less vulnerable to nonparticipation (strikes, protests, etc.), depending on their coercive power. In this case, the central government is capable of great coercion. As Weber put it, the state holds the "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force" (cited in Tribe, 2019). In the public sphere, it is, thus, easier for public forces

to repress and punish any unwanted behaviour. Moreover, people employed in the public sector face more difficulties to collectively dissent, as the institution supervising their conduct is far-stretching (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015), In practice, it means that nonparticipation in the public sector can be more controlled and restrained, and sometimes goes against the law, whereas in the private sector, nonparticipation is both more disruptive and more difficult to prevent and prohibit (Walker et al., 2008). Tarrow (1993) explains that in the workplace, workers can organise using a combination of actions such as blockades, obstructions, and strikes. This seriously hinders productivity and prohibition is difficult to maintain.

Finally, vulnerability to delegitimation is an important dimension of a potential target's strengths and vulnerabilities. Corporations and educational facilities rely on support from various branches: private investors, the government, employees, the public, and so on. This means that they are more vulnerable to changes in their perceived legitimacy than are states, whose legitimacy is not inherently undermined by insurgent groups, as it is constantly reaffirmed during democratic processes.

In democracies, therefore, mobilisation tends to be directed against the state when addressing grievances requires particular institutional capacity, such as its openness to influence and near immunity against legitimacy and nonparticipation concerns (Walker et al., 2008). This conclusion is also reached by Salehyan and Stewart (2017). They argue that when states are perceived as the dominant player, meaning they hold the principal role in shaping and controlling the economy, media, and other aspects of society, mobilisation is more likely to be against the government, instead of against firms or a rival political party. However, their study is limited to the effect of regime type on the target of political grievances. They find that in authoritarian regimes, where political competition is limited, dissidents have no choice but to target the state while in democracies, challengers are more likely to target non-state rivals.

Following these findings, the assumption is made, and later tested, that due to the multidimensional and universal grievances produced by corruption, perception of state centrality increases. The position of the state is altered and becomes one of domination, in the sense that it imposes grievances on its people. As such, high levels of corruption signal that the government plays the most important role as grievance generator even in democracies. The latter are expected to protect citizens' rights and opportunities to organize collectively and voice their interests. The inherent openness of democracies, thus, means that target choice is wide and includes not only the state, but also civic organisations, rival political parties, etc (Salehyan & Stewart, 2017).

The choice within this array of targets is motivated by the way the state and other organisations are perceived to rank on openness to influence and vulnerability to nonparticipation and delegitimation. Tilly and Tarrow (2015) specifically mention the particular importance of openness to influence, which directly affects centrality perception. In democracies, the feeling that decision-making is split among the executive, members of parliament, and citizens is key to signal that the state is not naturally the main institution responsible for generating grievances. However, corruption alters these perceptions because it erodes trust in the current system as well as the feeling of plurality and fairness within the system (Wickberg, 2021). Rather, citizens will understand that the corrupted state generates grievances that have direct economic, social and political consequences for all civil society while removing any incentives for the constituency – the wrongdoers – to protect citizen's rights.

For that reason, it is hypothesized that in both democracies and autocracies, higher levels of corruption will raise perceived state centrality, thus increasing the ratio of mobilisation against the state. As such, the hypothesis is:

Hypothesis: States with higher levels of corruption experience more state-targeted social unrest.

The following section explains the research method used to test the hypothesis. It then presents the estimation model and control variables used.

4. Research Design

An Ordinary Least Squared regression is employed to test the hypothesis and answer the research question. Since the research looks at events of in-country social conflicts per year, the unit of analysis is country-year.

To do so, the SCAD dataset will be used, as it contains exhaustive data on social conflicts and various instances of mobilisation from 1960 until 2017. The scope of the research will be restricted to Latin America and Africa, as the dataset is limited to these continents. Concerning the data on corruption, the Corruption Perceptions Index from Transparency International is used. It aggregates data on corruption from 1996 until now. Due to the different start and end times of the two datasets, the timeframe of the study will be from 1996 to 2017. Still, concern over the potential impossibility to generalise the findings is limited, as during the past twenty years, the two regions have been and still are home to a wide range of corruption levels, regime types, state centrality and grievance types. More precisely, some cases have a democracy score up to 10, which is the maximum, while for other cases, this score is around 0.5. Similarly, different levels of corruption are represented in the dataset.

The SCAD dataset contains information on a wide range of social conflicts. This means that various types of events are represented, such as demonstrations, violent riots, strikes, repression from the state, anti-government violence, and so on. (Salehyan et al., 2012). The focus of this study, however, is on the dynamics of mobilisation as a people-led process. Consequently, only organised and spontaneous demonstrations, organised and spontaneous

violent riots, and limited and general strikes are taken into account, as all other events describe actions from state officials or non-state actors holding (semi-) permanent militant wings. The latter have therefore been filtered out, leaving 973 cases to be included in the estimation model.

Two additional models are run to fully grasp the effects of corruption on forms of mobilisation by dividing the original data in two: peaceful events and violent ones. The first estimation model investigates the effect of corruption on state targeting during peaceful demonstrations, including strikes, while the second one focuses on violent riots.

4.1 Dependent variable (DV)

This research explores the factors surrounding mobilisation, with a focus on the state as target. The three dependent variables all capture the ratio of state-targeted protests. The first one, called *BothRatio*, includes cases of peaceful and violent mobilisation altogether. As its name indicates, the second one, *PeacefulRatio*, focuses on peaceful cases only. Finally, the last DV, named *ViolentRatio*, concentrates on violent riots only. The DVs are calculated by looking at mobilisation that targeted the central government, divided by the total number of mobilisations in one year per country. Since they represent ratios, data range from 0 to 1, where one means that all protests during that year and in that specific country were directed against the central government. For example, in Algeria, for the year 2003, 13 protests were recorded in the SCAD dataset. Among them, 12 were targeted against the central government. The ratio of state-targeted social unrest is, therefore, of 0.92.

4.2 Independent variables (IVs)

The primary objective of this study is to bring corruption at the forefront of the mobilisation literature by studying its impact on state centrality and the implications this entails for mobilisation. As such, the independent variable (IV) of this analysis is corruption measured using Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Despite other

barometers, the CPI is the best measure, as it does not simply focus on bribery and public integrity, but rather, it is calculated based on citizens' perception of corruption in the public sector and the availability and strength of corruption prevention mechanisms (Wickberg, 2021). The IV is continuous, and ranges from zero to ten (Transparency International, 2023). Although the original scale associates the maximum score with the most integrity, it was inverted to facilitate interpretation of the results. As a result, zero captures low corruption, whereas a score of ten depicts very high levels of corruption. It is worth noting that if some countries in the dataset have had, or still have, extremely low scores on the CPI, no case included demonstrated extremely low levels of corruption.

4.3 Control variables

As previous works have demonstrated, mobilisation is impacted by a variety of factors. The most prominent are included in this analysis, in order to avoid any potential bias. As mentioned in the brief explanation of the resource theory of mobilisation, a country's level of economic development, which can be calculated by its GDP, plays an important role on people's capacity and willingness to dissent (Salehyan and Stewart, 2017). Consequently, GDP is divided by a hundred million, then included and lagged by one year, so that this continuous variable can account for any effect of potential economic growth. Furthermore, in light of the modernisation theory, which posits that economic development has a positive effect on mobilisation, GDP is expected to have a moderator effect. In addition, Donchev and Ujhelyi (2014) claim that although corruption is a global problem, developed countries are thought to be less corrupted. The expectation is, therefore, that as GDP increases, the strength of the effect of corruption on likelihood of state mobilisation, if any, will be affected. Consequently, the interaction term *GDP x Corruption* is included in Table 2.

Other works have pointed out to the role of population size on dynamics of mobilisation (Poe, 2004; Brandon & Lewis, 2020). Similarly to GDP, lagged population is, therefore, a

continuous variable, divided by a million, then added to the model. Data on both GDP and population size are retrieved from the World Bank (2023).

In addition, one of the most studied factors in the mobilisation literature is regime type. The freedom typically associated with democracy shapes opportunities and costs. Contrarily, in authoritarian states, opportunities for mobilisation are limited and often restricted. In addition, state centrality is inherently higher in these regimes than in democracies. Consequently, *democracy score* is included as a scale variable, with scores ranging from zero to ten, the maximum and minimum both being reached by certain countries. Once again, this scale was adapted to make interpretation of coefficients easier, as the original scores range from -10 to 10. Although they originally range from minus ten to plus ten, the scale was adjusted to favour an easier interpretation of the results. Those scores have been assembled as part of the Polity V project and retrieved from Our World in Data (2023).

Another important potential bias on the results is the occurrence of civil war. Indeed, regardless of other factors, the state is more likely to hold the central role in grievance generation during a civil war. This must be controlled for. The latter is done using the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Sarkees & Wayman, 2022), which provides information on intrastate conflicts from 1818 to the present. Occurrence of civil war at the time of the event have been coded dichotomously “one”, compared to no civil war, which was given the score “zero”.

Finally, the last control variable included in the model addresses the concern for result generalisation. The latter emerges as the SCAD dataset only covers cases in Africa and Latin America- with some Northern American exceptions such as the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mexico. Although no study has empirically demonstrated a salient difference in mobilisation trends between Latin America and Africa, the potential effect is controlled by adding the binary variable *region*, coded as “one” for African countries, and “zero” for American countries.

4.4 Multicollinearity

Before any quantitative analysis is performed, the assumption of multicollinearity was tested. The collinearity statistics of VIF and tolerance were used to test for high levels of correlation between the independent variables. No violation was found, a result that is reported in the appendix.

5. Results

To test the hypothesis that states with higher levels of corruption experience more state-targeted social unrest, three estimation models were run, and the results of these are presented in Table 1 and 2. In Table 1, the first model concerns the first DV, thus including both peaceful and violent protests, while Model 2 focuses on peaceful events. Model 3 is based on the third DV, which is limited to cases of violent riots. In Table 2, Model 4 is associated with Model 1 as it also includes both types of events, Model 5 reflects Model 2's focus on peaceful events, and Model 6 that of Model 3.

5.1 Corruption and state targeting

Table 1 offers a closer and more comprehensive look at the statistical results yielded and offers no substantial support for the hypothesis that as corruption increases, so does likelihood of state targeted dissent. Model 1 depicts a positive relationship between corruption and state targeting, which is further confirmed by Model 2. Both coefficients are the same, showing effects of 0.016 for Models 1(t= 1.609, p= 0.108) and 2 for the other (t= 1.662, p= 0.097). In other words, as corruption increases, the likelihood that dissidents target the state increases. However, these results are not statistically significant. When both violent and peaceful events are simultaneously examined, the p-value indicates that there is 10,8% of chance that the observed effect is due to random chance rather than as a consequence of (increased) corruption levels.

Conversely, when violent riots are the sole focus of the analysis, different results appear, as a one-point increase in corruption is associated with a 0,015-point decrease in probability of state targeting (t= -0.881, p= 0.379). This result suggests that in violent protests, corruption does not motivate any choice of target. Rather, low corruption levels seem to increase people's perception that the state is the main source of grievances. This result is highly surprising as corruption was thought to raise centrality due to the number of serious negative consequences it imposes on society. However, this result substantially exceeds statistical significance thresholds, and therefore this intriguing result can be dismissed.

Table 1. Linear regression Analysis of ratio of mobilisation against the state

	Model 1 (both)	**Model 2 (peaceful)**	**Model 3 (violent)**
(Constant)	0,715***	0,725***	1,000***
	(0,071)	(0,070)	(0,172)
Corruption	0,016	0,016	-0,018
	(0,013)	(0,010)	(0,021)
Democracy	-0,002	-0,001	-0,014
	(0,002)	(0,002)	(0,008)
Population size	-0,002***	-0,001**	-0,003***
	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,001)
GDP	$-1{,}173 \cdot 10^{-5}$	$-2{,}375 \cdot 10^{-5}$**	$-6{,}260 \cdot 10^{-6}$
	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)
Civil War	-0,070*	-0,093**	-0,036
	(0,035)	(0,035)	(0,046)
Region	-0,010	0,001	-0,122**
	(0,022)	(0,021)	(0,081)
R^2	0,094	0,070	0,115
Adj. R^2	0,088	0,064	0,101
N	973	973	973

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

***p< 0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

Several additional effects on the ratio of mobilisation against the state are also worth noting. Especially the role of population size, which holds a slightly negative effect of -0.001, -0.001 and -0.003 for Models 1, 2 and 3 respectively (t= -5.289, p< 0.001; t= -2.714, p< 0.01; t= -3.771, p< 0.001). Previous literature has found that a growing population might increase the

ratio of repression during a mobilisation (Poe, 2004), but also that it might make these events less likely to escalate to violence. These findings suggest that population plays an additional negative effect on mobilisation by reducing the ratio of events targeting the central government.

The effect of democracy ranges between -0.001 and -0.014, but without any statistical significance. Still, the direction of the effect is in line with previous findings in the mobilisation literature. The latter argues that as a regime opens, it grows to include other stakeholders such as companies, organisations, and education facilities, there is a wider range of actors against who people can mobilise and articulate grievances (Salehyan & Stewart, 2017).

Although no work within the literature predicted a significant effect of region, Table 1 suggests otherwise. Indeed, it seems like in violent protests, mobilisation on the African continent is less likely to be targeted against the state as a result of high corruption levels. This effect is statistically significant at the 99% level ($t= -2.664$, $p< 0.01$). Why exactly that is cannot be explained by the present research, but a lead could be that cultural and/or institutional differences also shape citizens' perceptions of state centrality. More research on the topic would be needed to shed light on the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the importance of GDP in the process of target choice is not as ubiquitous as initially thought. Out of the three analyses, only one coefficient is statistically significant. All of them do, however, indicate weak and negative effect. This means that as GDP increases, likelihood of state targeted dissent decreases, and that this effect is particularly true in the case of peaceful events.

Finally, the effect of civil war on the DV is important. Two out of three coefficients display a negative and moderately strong effect. They range between -0.036 to -0.093. Concretely, it means that civil wars pull people away from directing their grievances towards the state as corruption augments. This is not in line with expectations as in civil war a key objective is to defeat the state (Salehyan & Stewart, 2017). It is worth noting that this effect is

not statistically significant in the case of violent riots, which could be due to corruption's opposite effect in that case.

5.2 GDP, corruption and state targeting

Based on the modernisation theory, a second model was added for each analysis- both types of events, solely peaceful and solely violent- which tests the mediator effect of GDP on the relationship between corruption and the ratio of state targeting during dissent. The results, displayed below in Table 2, demonstrate a positive and statistically significant effect.

Table 1. Linear regression Analysis of ratio of mobilisation against the state including the interaction term between Corruption and GDP

	Model 4 (both)	**Model 5 (peaceful)**	**Model 6 (violent)**
(Constant)	0,842***	0,881***	1,133***
	(0,077)	(0,076)	(0,195)
Corruption	-0,004	-0,007	-0,039
	(0,011)	(0,011)	(0,022)
Democracy	-0,001	-0,006	-0,012
	(0,002)	(0,005)	(0,008)
Population size	-0,003***	-0,002***	-0,001***
	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,001)
GDP	0,000***	0,000***	0,000*
	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)
Civil War	-0,072*	-0,095**	-0,038
	(0,035)	(0,034)	(0,080)
Region	0,005	0,020	-0,103*
	(0,022)	(0,021)	(0,046)
Corruption x GDP	$4{,}673 \cdot 10^{-5}$***	$5{,}433 \cdot 10^{-5}$***	$4{,}614 \cdot 10^{-5}$*
	(0,000)	(0,000)	(0,000)
R^2	0,111	0,097	0,126
Adj. R^2	0,104	0,089	0,111
N	973	973	973

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

***p< 0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

Concretely, this means that as GDP becomes higher, the relationship between corruption and state targeting is strengthened. However, when adding the moderator effect, the coefficients for the three independent variables change sign and become negative. Thereby, the interaction between GDP and corruption seems to indicate that as a country's GDP increases, its citizens

are less likely to target the state when facing heightened levels of corruption. While the moderator is statistically significant, the coefficients for the IVs are not. Although the theory predicted a significant effect for the interaction term *Corruption x GDP*, it did not expect the coefficient for the IVs to become negative. Figures 2, 3, and 4 show that GDP does reinforce the relationship between higher corruption levels and lower ratio of state-targeted social unrest. More precisely, the interaction effects plots illustrate that GDP contributes to the negative effect, as seen by the downward slope of the function.

Figure 2. Plot of interaction effects in the case of both peaceful and violent events

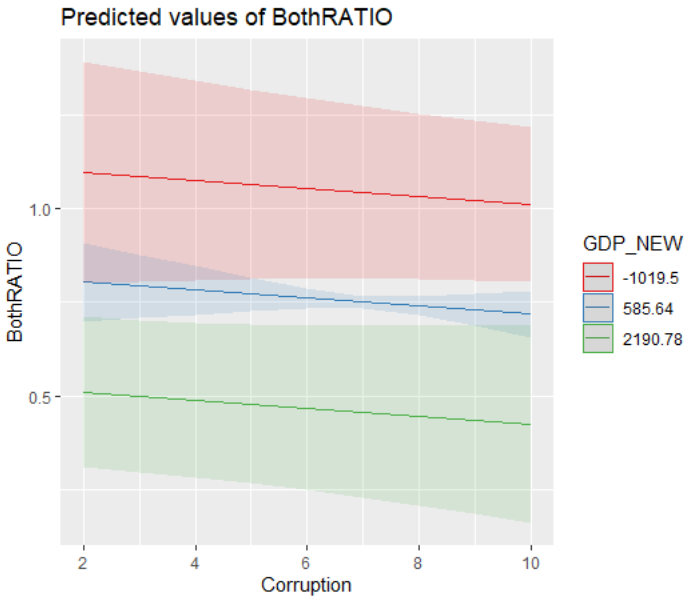
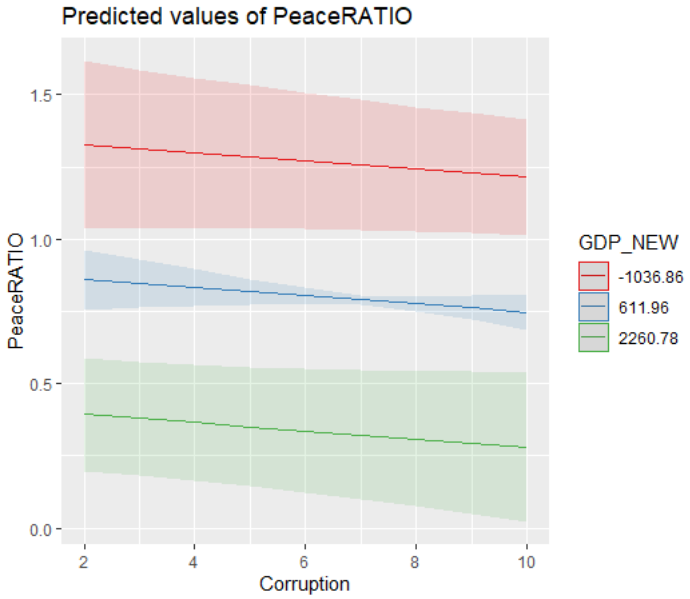
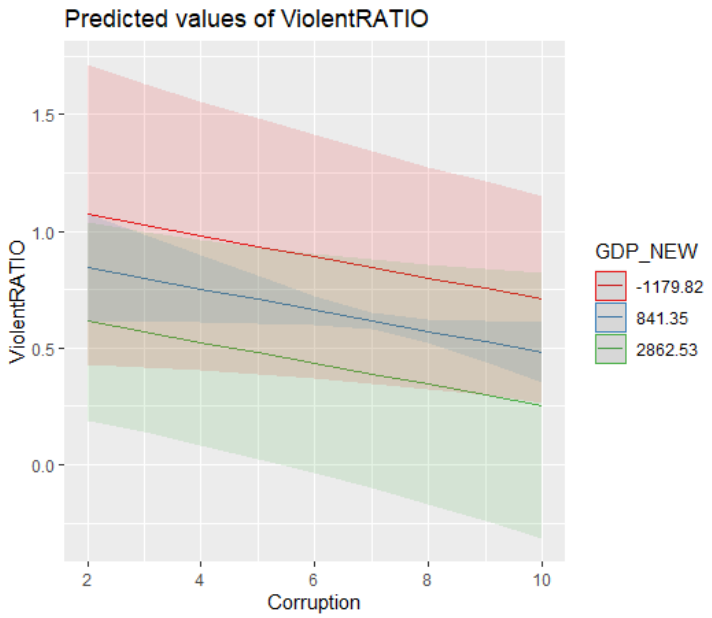


Figure 3. Plot of interaction effects in the case of peaceful protests



Simply put, the result suggests that people in more economically developed areas are less sensitive to corruption. Although there is no statistical significance attached to this result, several potential reasons for the effect are discussed in the following section.

Figure 4. Plot of interaction effects in the case of violent riots



Moreover, the effects of the control variables remain virtually very similar to those presented in Table 1. For the variable region, the coefficients are not all in the same direction than in Model 1, but that becomes the case when only statistically significant results remain. In addition, a strange pattern for GDP does emerge. Although without inclusion of the interaction term its effect was modest, it changes to zero when added, which are statistically significant results.

6. Discussion

This section explores the puzzle posed by the contradictory results that follow from the statistical analyses.

It appears that when looking at both peaceful and violent dissent together, higher levels of corruption are found to have the expected effect, which is of increasing the ratio of mobilisation against the state. This effect is also noticeable in the regression that focuses on

peaceful demonstrations but is contradicted by findings from the OLS regression on violent riots. The latter seems to suggest the existence of an association between high corruption and lower ratio of state-targeted event.

Consequently, the null hypothesis fails to be rejected. The expectation was that corruption indicates a major role of the state in generating grievances. In other words, it was expected that corruption raises centrality. As a consequence, there would be more state targeted mobilisation. Although the results indicate that corruption could potentially act as a motivation to target the state, it also suggests the opposite. It is, therefore, impossible to draw a final conclusion based on this analysis.

The theoretical argument and results from Models 1 and 2 are in contradiction with the results from Models 3, 4, 5, and 6. The negative sign associated with the coefficients not only contradicts previous results. Rather, it implies that not only does high corruption levels not lead to a higher ratio of state targeting, but on the contrary, to a lower ratio.

Quantitative analysis cannot give a full picture of the puzzle, and it remains unclear why the direction of the effect of corruption varies depending on the event type and the inclusion – or not – of GDP as a moderator. One possibility could be that motivations underlying violent protests are different and that state centrality is less at play when determining the target of choice. Another answer could be that such effect in fact does not exist at a higher scale, as demonstrated by the statistical insignificance. Nonetheless, the results do not permit one to choose one explanation over another. The data displayed in Table 2 also does not bring support to the hypothesis. Specifically, it is in contradiction with the theory, as it seems to indicate that people in economically developed areas are less sensitive to corruption. Although this relationship is not statistically significant, some potential explanations are laid out below.

To begin with, Donchev and Ujhelyi (2014) posit that corruption is thought to occur less in rich countries. For that reason, people in more economically developed regions might simply

not be concerned about corruption being a salient local problem. Rather, people tend to associate corruption with a problem occurring mainly in developing countries. In addition, to sustain economic growth, countries must have strong institutions that protect from extractive practices and protect intellectual property and investments (Grindle, 2004). This might give the general impression that these institutions are inherently fair, even if that might be a façade behind which corruption can take place without being directly perceived and challenged.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis aimed to provide an answer to the question "what is the effect of corruption on the ratio of mobilisation against the state?". In answering this, a quantitative analysis was performed, but which did not find any empirical support. On this basis, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Results of the estimation model showed that in some cases corruption was predicted to increase the ratio of state-targeted dissent, while in others, it decreased that same ratio. However, no effect of the independent variable was statistically significant. Supported by previous literature, this study did find that GDP had a moderator effect on the hypothesized relationship, although the latter is not significant.

Despite the necessary precautions taken to ensure that no bias could affect the Ordinary Least Square regression, this study acknowledges that for 7.9% of the cases, corruption scores were unavailable. This concerns mostly the first years after the launch of the Corruption Perceptions Index as rankings were unproportionally focused on Western countries, meaning that scores for both Latin America and Africa were often neglected until 2004. In addition, due to the geographical focus of the SCAD dataset, the lowest score of corruption included in the statistical models is 3,55 which means that no country with very low corruption levels was examinated. This could obscure potential different effects on mobilisation in very clean countries. Nevertheless, the range of corruption levels is still wide, with the maximum score

reaching 9,31. These two limitations can have two important consequences. First, the fact that missing values are not completely random but rather originate in time could have slightly biased the results. Second, the share of missing values reduces the sample size in a way that could have reduced the statistical power of the model.

Still, this research is valuable as it extends the knowledge on mobilisation, especially on the factors at play when explaining the choice of target during dissent. Although it presents null findings, this research has explored the relationship between corruption and probability of state targeted social unrest, a link that had been mainly left out of research until now.

Therefore, this study is particularly relevant for scholars of the mobilisation field, as they can draw from these inconclusive results to base further research. Indeed, the inconsistency of the results suggests that more work on the subject is required, especially one that can shed light on why corruption, despite its potential to raise centrality, fails to mobilise people against the corrupted state. Such process should include the employment of qualitative means to delve deeper in the subject. This could include interviews of protestors on what exactly motivates their target choice and what political, economic, and/or social phenomena alters their perception of state centrality. Further qualitative analysis should also develop a better understanding of how people perceive corruption, based not only on their country's economic development, but also on their personal economic situation. This would be an important milestone to grasp the mechanism behind the findings and how exactly corruption can trigger collective action against the government.

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9. Appendix

Multicollinearity

Estimation Model for Both Peaceful and Violent Events

	Tolerance	**VIF**
Corruption	0,849	1,177
Democracy	0,935	1,069
Population size	0,484	2,066
GDP	0,467	2,143
Civil War	0,908	1,101
Region	0,806	1,241

Estimation Model for Peaceful Demonstrations

	Tolerance	**VIF**
Corruption	0,850	1,176
Democracy	0,942	1,062
Population size	0,479	2,086
GDP	0,460	2,174
Civil War	0,913	1,095
Region	0,807	1,240

Estimation Model for Violent Riots

	Tolerance	**VIF**
Corruption	0,814	1,228
Democracy	0,732	1,366
Population size	0,428	2,337
GDP	0,399	2,504
Civil War	0,909	1,100
Region	0,675	1,482