

# Helping or Harming?

## Assessing the Impact of Pro-Opposition Diplomatic Statements on State Repression and Concession

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## Popular protests in Iran (Dec 2017 and Jan 2018)







**Donald J. Trump** ✓

@realDonaldTrump

## Following

Many reports of peaceful protests by Iranian citizens fed up with regime's corruption & its squandering of the nation's wealth to fund terrorism abroad. Iranian govt should respect their people's rights, including right to express themselves. The world is watching!

# #IranProtests

11:42 PM - 29 Dec 2017

## How Can Trump Help Iran's Protesters? Be Quiet.



A woman dodged tear gas at Tehran University on Saturday, the third day of unauthorized protests in Iran. via Associated Press

**By Philip Gordon**

Dec. 30, 2017

WASHINGTON — As anti-government rallies gather momentum across

## Research question

- Literature: can foreign interventions decrease violence/human rights violations?

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  - This study: do **public diplomatic statements** by foreign actors in support of anti-government protests change state authorities' **repression-concession** policies?

## The literature on foreign interventions

- Third-party interventions in civil wars.
  - *But*, the interventions  $\Rightarrow$  dissent-repression dynamics

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- Third-party interventions in civil wars.
  - *But*, the interventions  $\Rightarrow$  dissent-repression dynamics
  - ▶ Also, main focus: economic sanctions and military actions
  - ▶ *But*, what about public statements by foreign actors?
    - Condemning states' use of violence
    - Threatening to impose economic sanctions
    - Threatening to deploy military forces

## Contentious politics

Discontented  
citizens

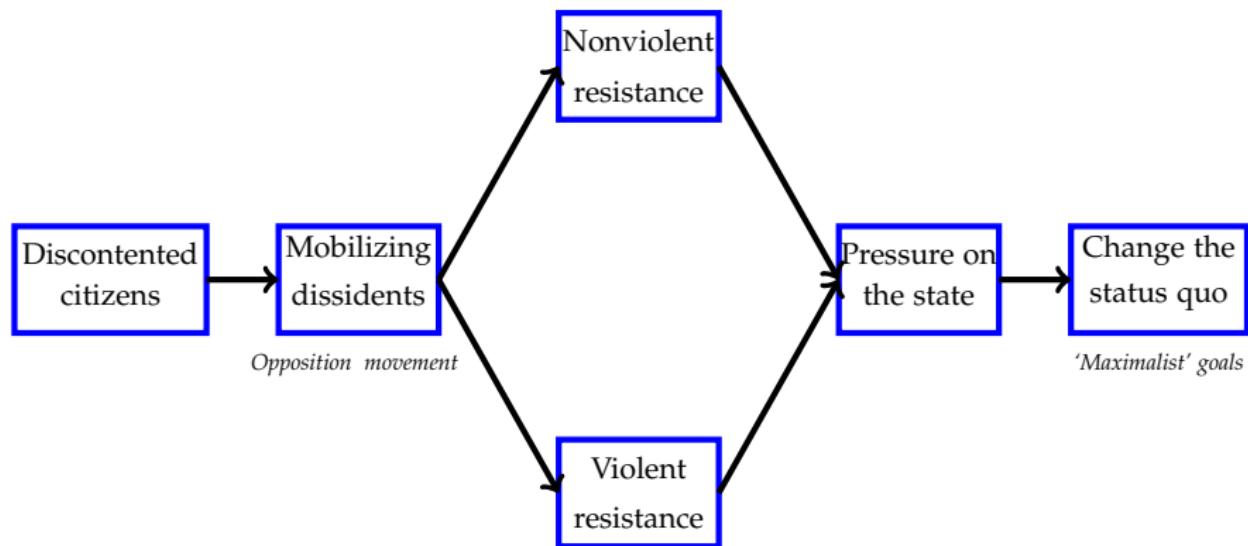
## Contentious politics

## Discontented citizens

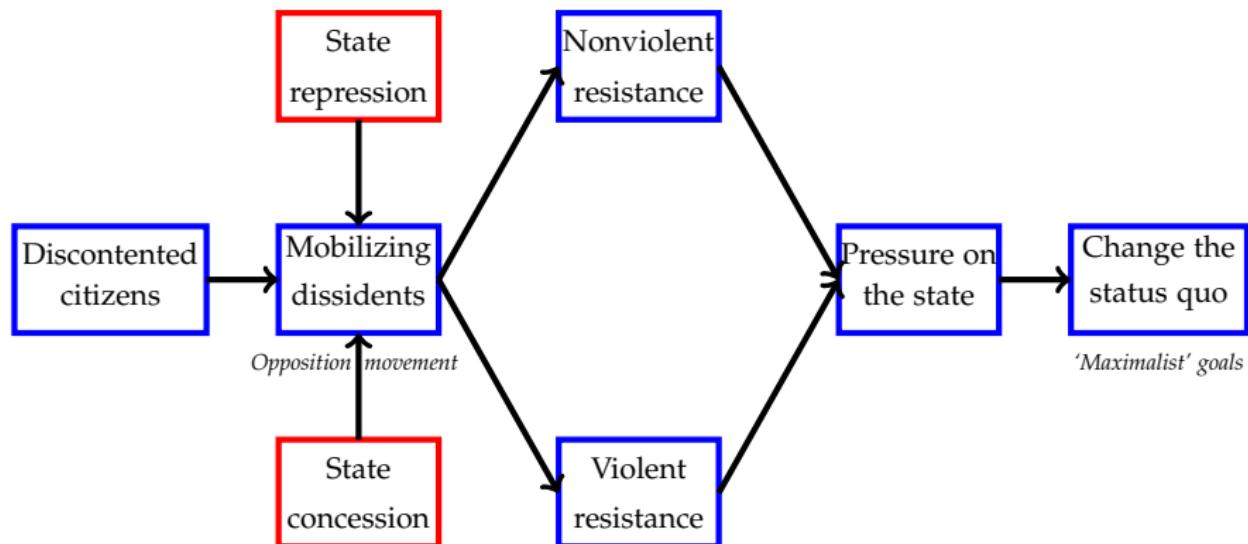
## Change the status quo

### *'Maximalist' goals*

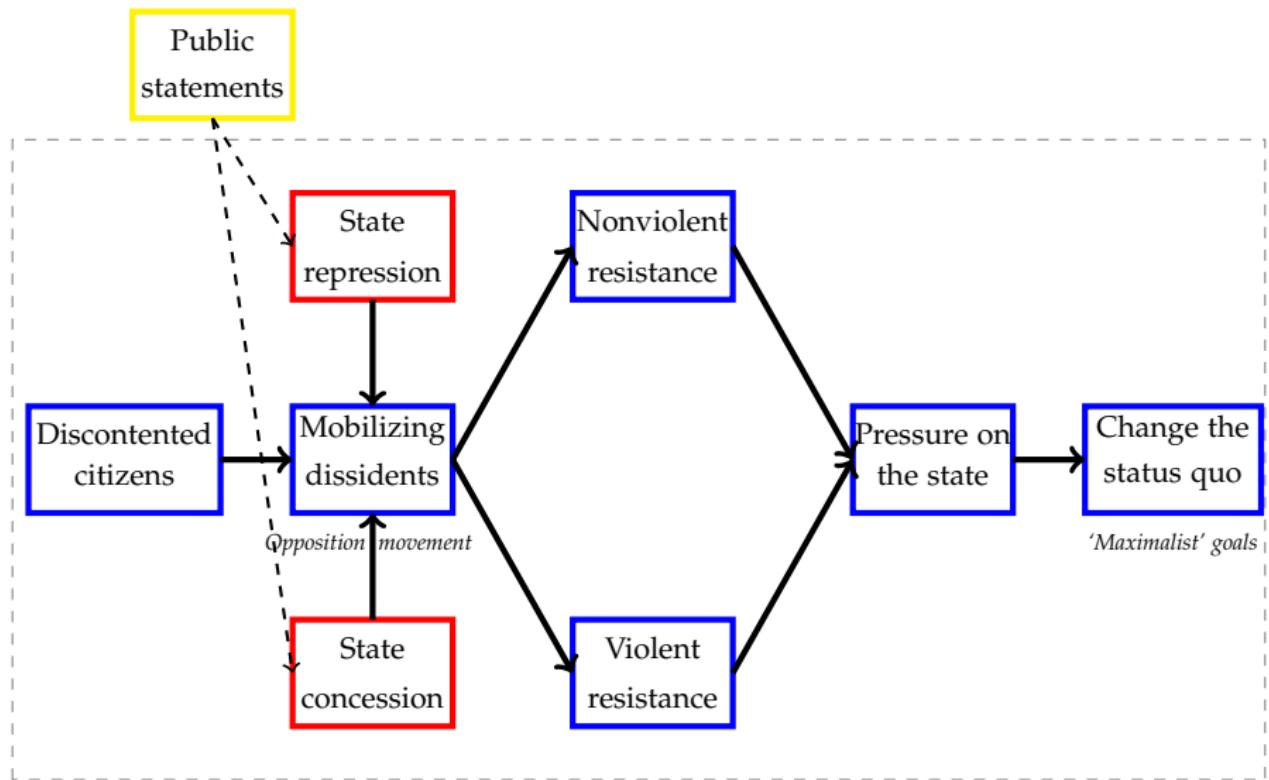
# Contentious politics



## Contentious politics



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## Helping Dissent?

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## Helping Dissent?

- Naming-and-shaming
- The threats of imposing international sanctions or requiring military intervention

Both mechanisms in support of dissent  $\Rightarrow$  the (expected) cost of using coercive force  $\uparrow \Rightarrow$  repression  $\downarrow$  & concession  $\uparrow$

# Helping Dissent hypotheses

## Hypothesis 1a

Foreign statements and threats against authorities during civil conflict *decrease* state *repression*.

## Hypothesis 2a

Foreign statements and threats against authorities during civil conflict *increase* state *concession*.

## Harming Dissent?

- Security forces' dilemma between their commitment to the regime and their responsibility to defend their fellow citizens



## Harming Dissent?

- Security forces' dilemma between their **commitment to the regime** and their **responsibility to defend their fellow citizens**
- Citizens do not support illegitimate use of coercive force (**backfire / backlash**)

## Harming Dissent? (2)

Foreign statements and threats in favor of protesters give an opportunity to the state to reframe the issue:

- Frame dissidents as **traitors**, disrupting the peace and threatening the nationalist security
- Nationalist sentiment among the citizens and security forces ↑ ⇒ support for the regime ↑ (*Rally round the flag*)

The cost of repression ↓

## Hurting Dissent hypotheses

### Hypothesis 1b

Foreign statements and threats against authorities during civil conflict *increase* state *repression*.

### Hypothesis 2b

Foreign statements and threats against authorities during civil conflict *decrease* state *concession*.

# Data

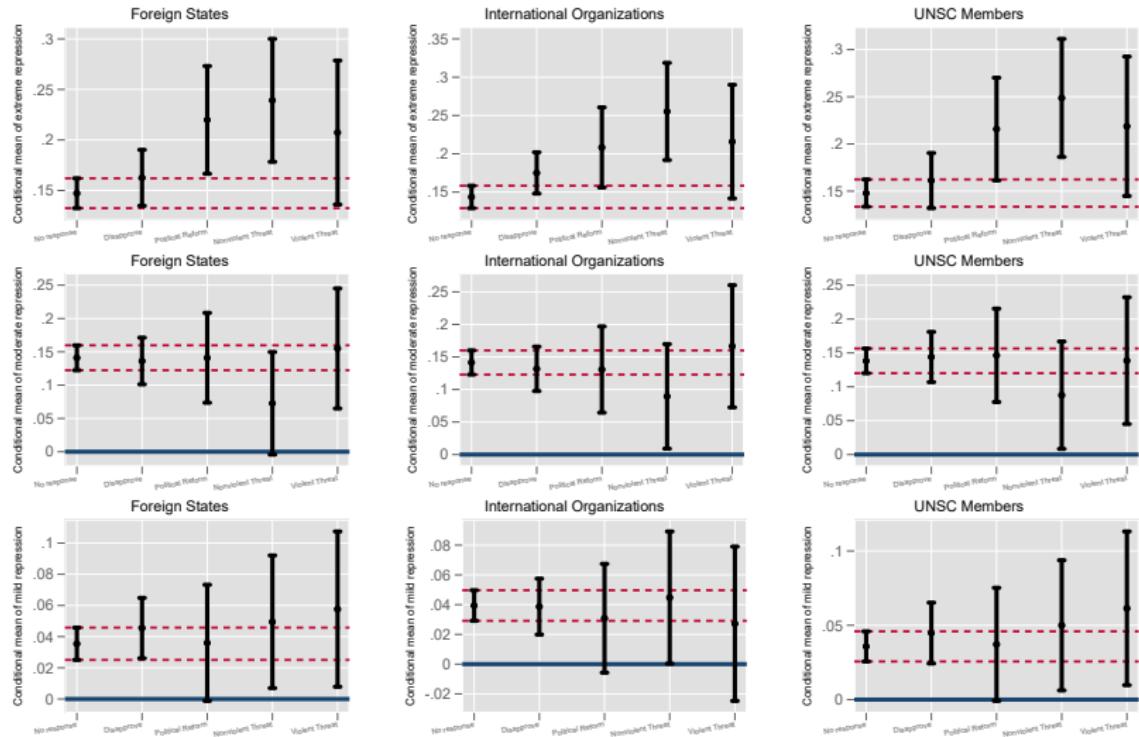
Data	NAVCO 3.0
Geographic coverage	11 MENA countries
Temporal coverage	Daily (Arab Spring) : aggregated to weekly
Dependent variable	State repression (Mean: extreme, moderate, mild) State concession (Mean: full acc., material, non-material)
Independent variable (Different types of foreign actors)	Baseline: No response Disapprove Political reform Nonviolent threat Violent threat
Control variables (all lagged)	Violent protest Armed protest GDP per capita (log) Population (log) Time span Lag of all dependent variables
Estimation methods Standard errors	FE OLS+SURE+IV Clustered and robust

## Estimation results for state repression

*t* statistics in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

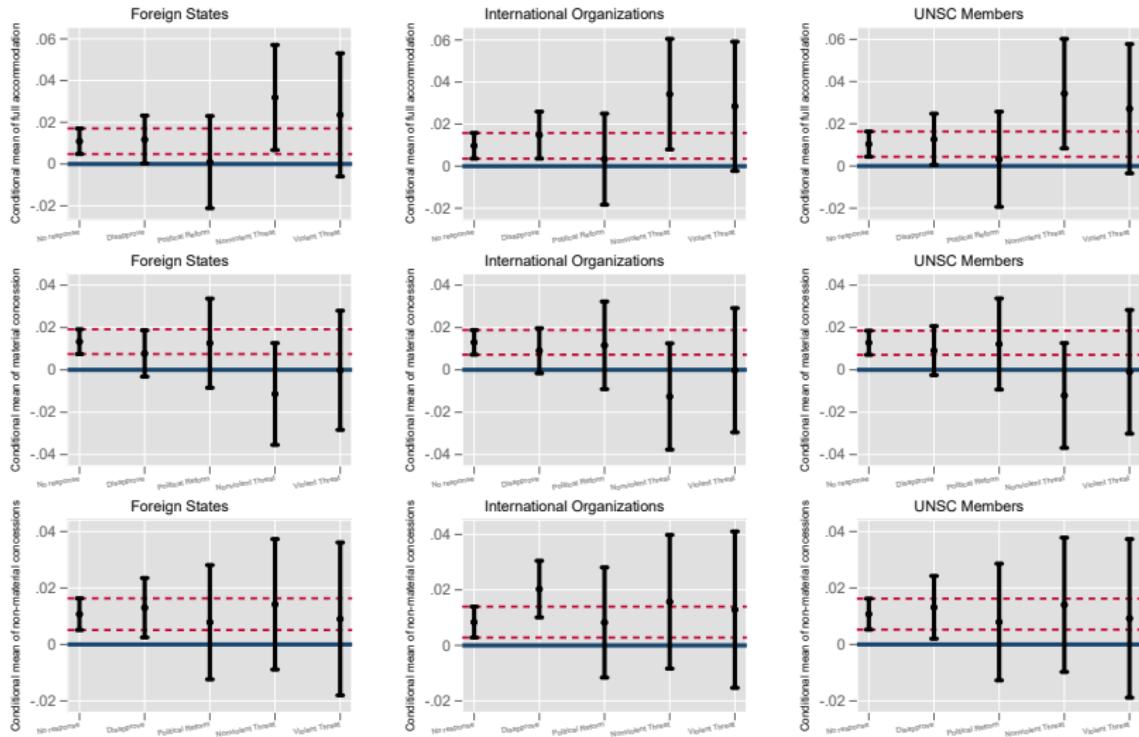
# The effects of foreign interventions on state repression

## Predictive Margins of Foreign Intervention on State Repressive Responses



## The effects of foreign interventions on state concession

Predictive Margins of Foreign Intervention on State Concessive Responses



## Conclusion & implications

- Do **public diplomatic statements** by foreign actors in support of anti-government protests change state authorities' **repression-concession** policies? How?
  - Diplomatic statements and threats: another case of wishful thinking?
    - no significant effects on state concession.
    - *but*, increase state repression.

## Conclusion & implications

- Do **public diplomatic statements** by foreign actors in support of anti-government protests change state authorities' **repression-concession** policies? How?
  - Diplomatic statements and threats: another case of wishful thinking?
    - no significant effects on state concession.
    - *but*, increase state repression.
- Important policy implications

## Future research

- What is the alternative solution? Secret diplomacy?
- Which foreign actors do make a public statement in support of popular protests, and when?
- Studying the discussed micro-level mechanisms: “*From Opposition to Alliance: Who Rallies Round the Flag?*” with *Vahid Ghafouri and Nihat Kasap*

# Social Media and Contentious Politics

## How can social media affect conflict and security scholarship?

- Studying the nexus of social media and conflict processes
  - Using social media to collect "better" data to answer new questions

## Studying rally round the flag: The case of Iran

How do foreign interventions affect the network of opposition?

- “Thoughtless” foreign interventions can push moderates and nationalists toward the state, leading to:
    - Campaign polarization ↑ ⇒ Nonviolent campaign success ↓
    - State “selective” repression ↑ ⇒ Repression effectiveness ↑

## Data

- Collected using Twitter API based on a list of Iranian Twitter influencers inside and outside of the country (1,114 Tweeps: 247 (22%) verified)
- 3,477,585 tweets
- A network of influencers:
  - Conservatives
  - Reformists
  - Transitionists
  - Overthrowers
  - Non-politicals
  - Unclear, such as journalists

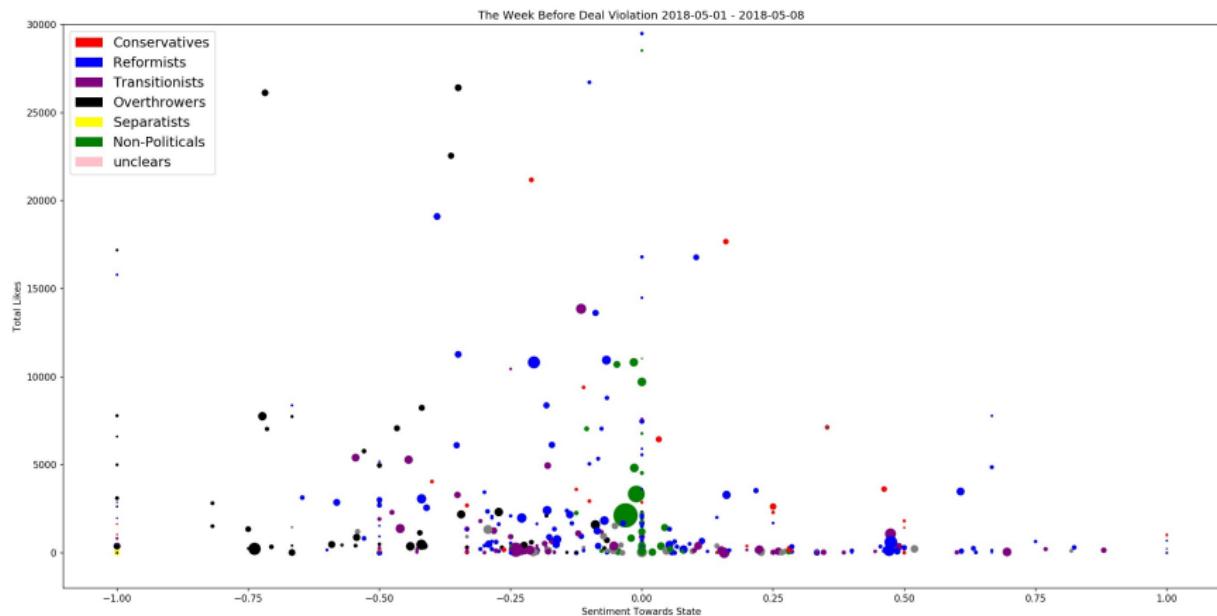
## Measuring Iranian "elites'" attitude toward the State

- Post-Trump tweets (2016-Nov-08):  $N = 1,972,404$
- A semi-random sample of 6,600 tweets are hand-coded as anti-state (-1), neutral (0), and pro-state (1)
- Several machine learning algorithms are trained to machine-code the tweets
- Best cross-validated models: Regularized Logit gives the best out-of-sample accuracy (Precision=71.5%, Recall=71.7%, F1\_Score=71.6)

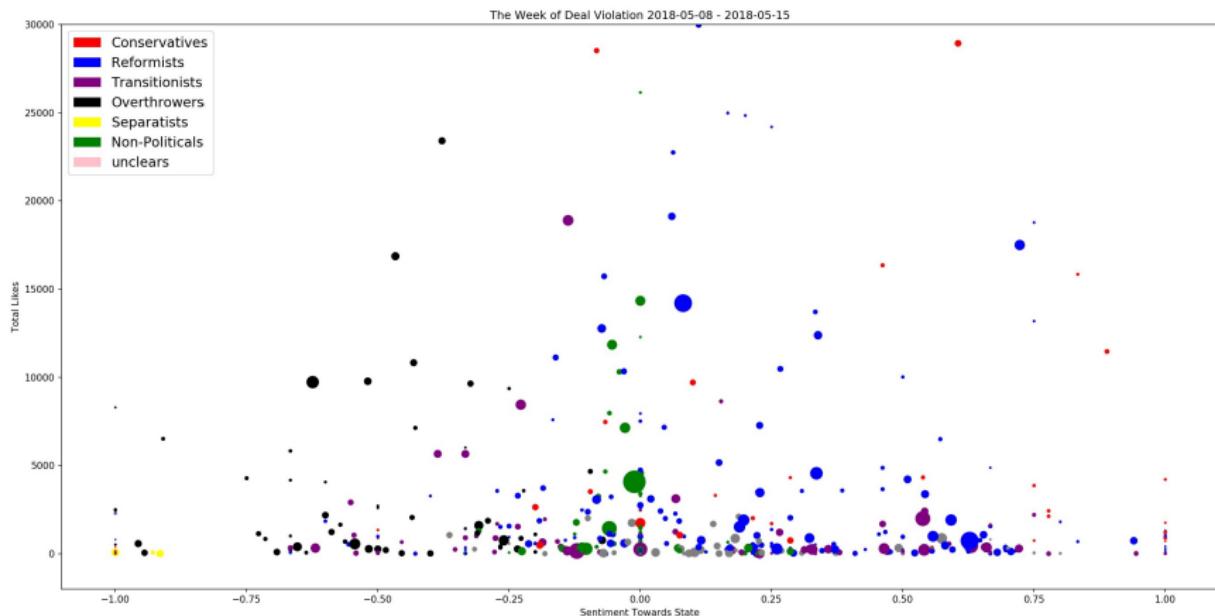
## The list of major events

- Trump pulls out of the deal
- The White House designated IRGC as a terrorist organization
- Trump's tweet about the end of Iran
- Iranian shoot-down of US drone
- UK's seizure of Iranian-flagged ship in Gibraltar
- Iran seized Stena Impero
- US has imposed sanctions on Zarif

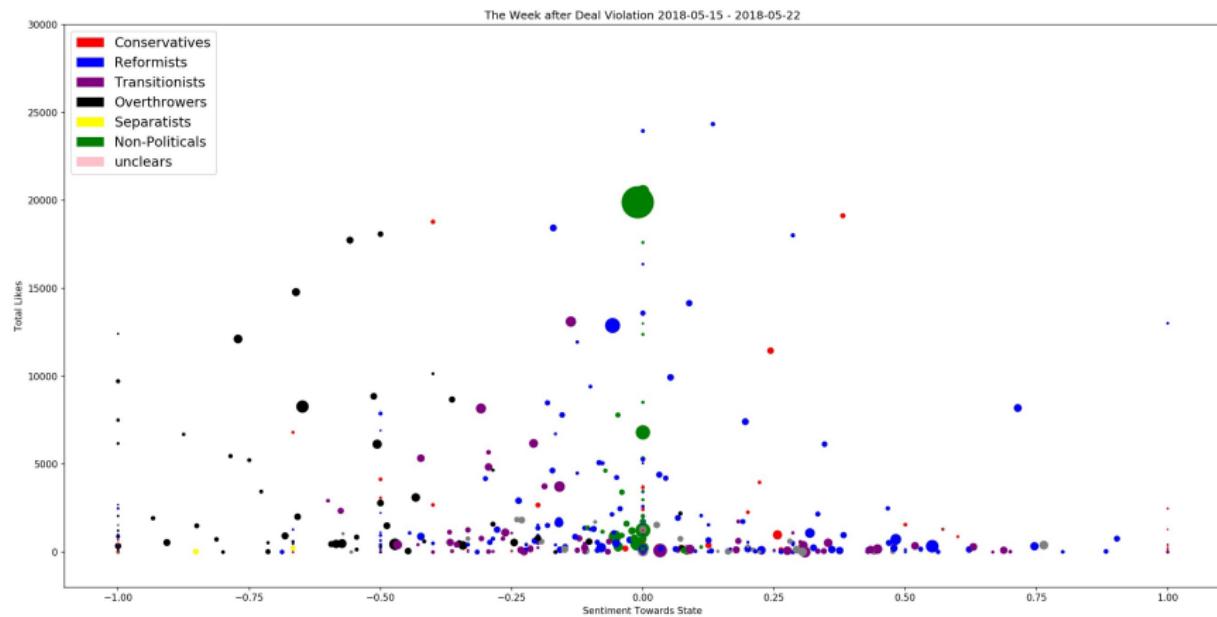
## Changes in attitudes after Trump pulls out of the deal



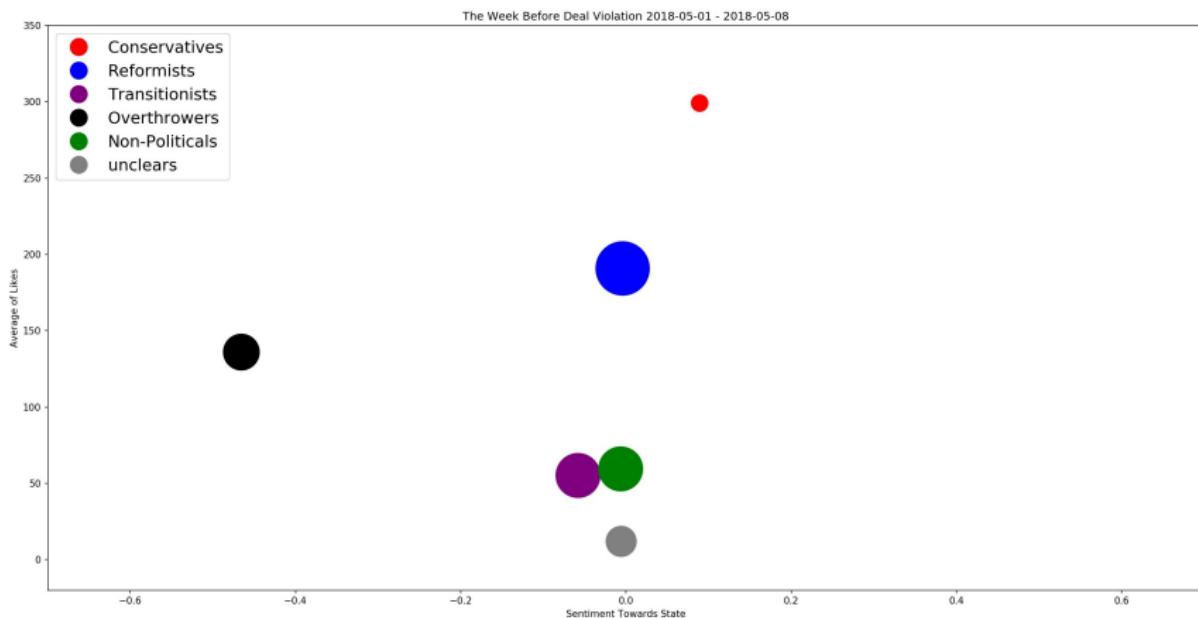
## Changes in attitudes after Trump pulls out of the deal(2)



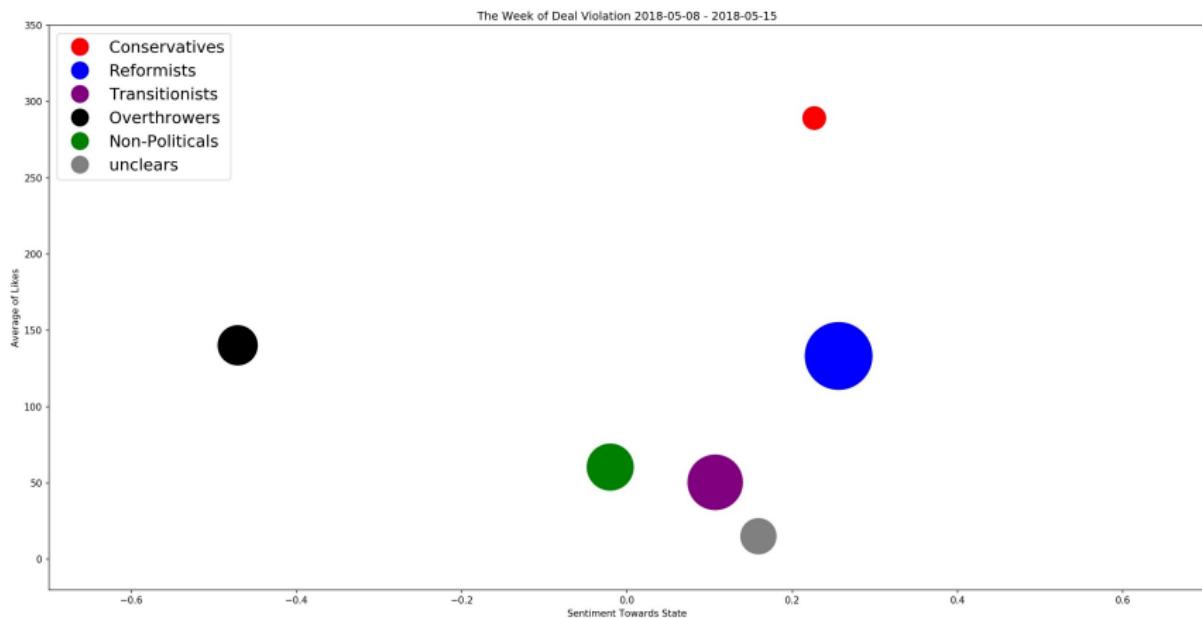
## Changes in attitudes after Trump pulls out of the deal(3)



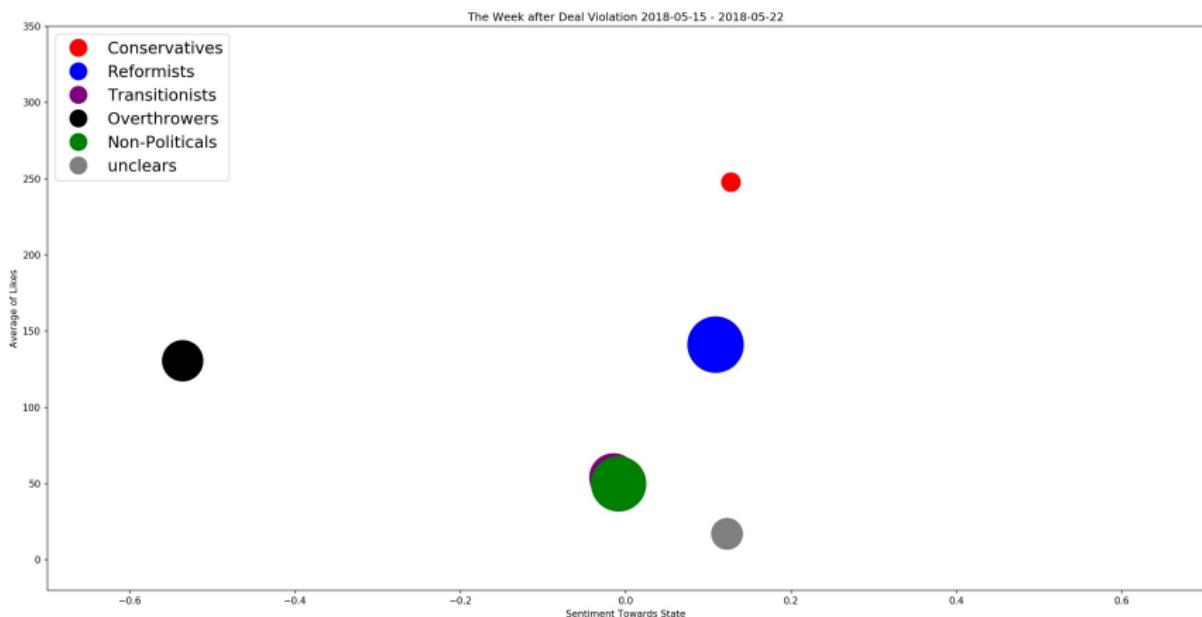
## Aggregate of changes in attitudes after Trump pulls out of the deal



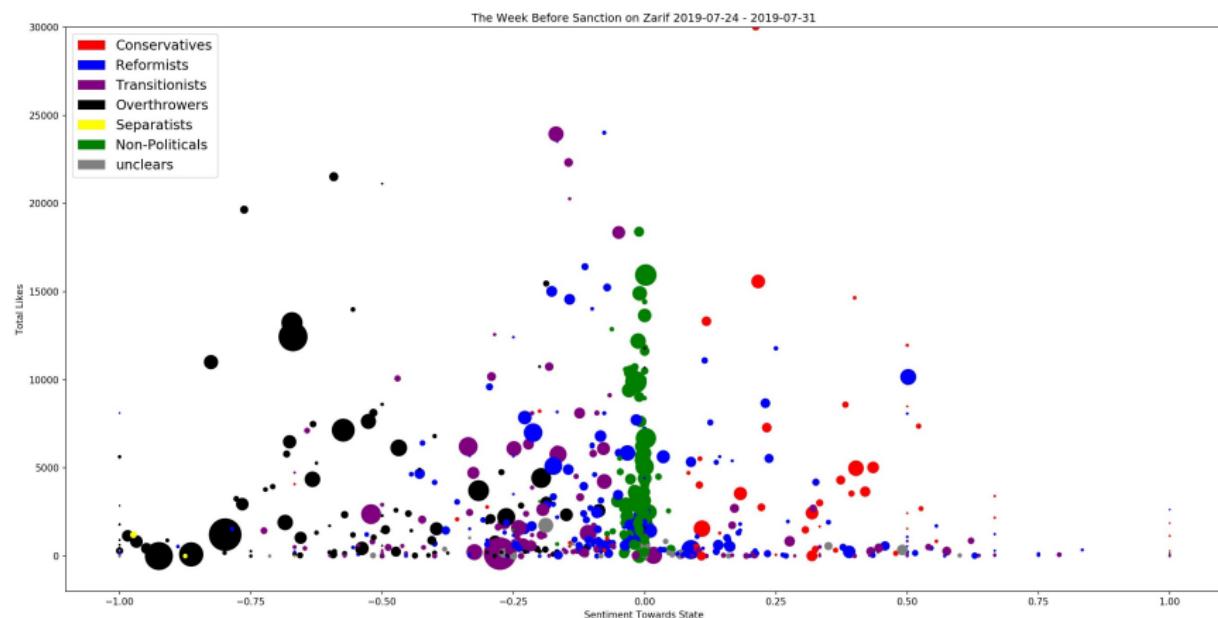
## Aggregate of changes in attitudes after Trump pulls out of the deal (2)



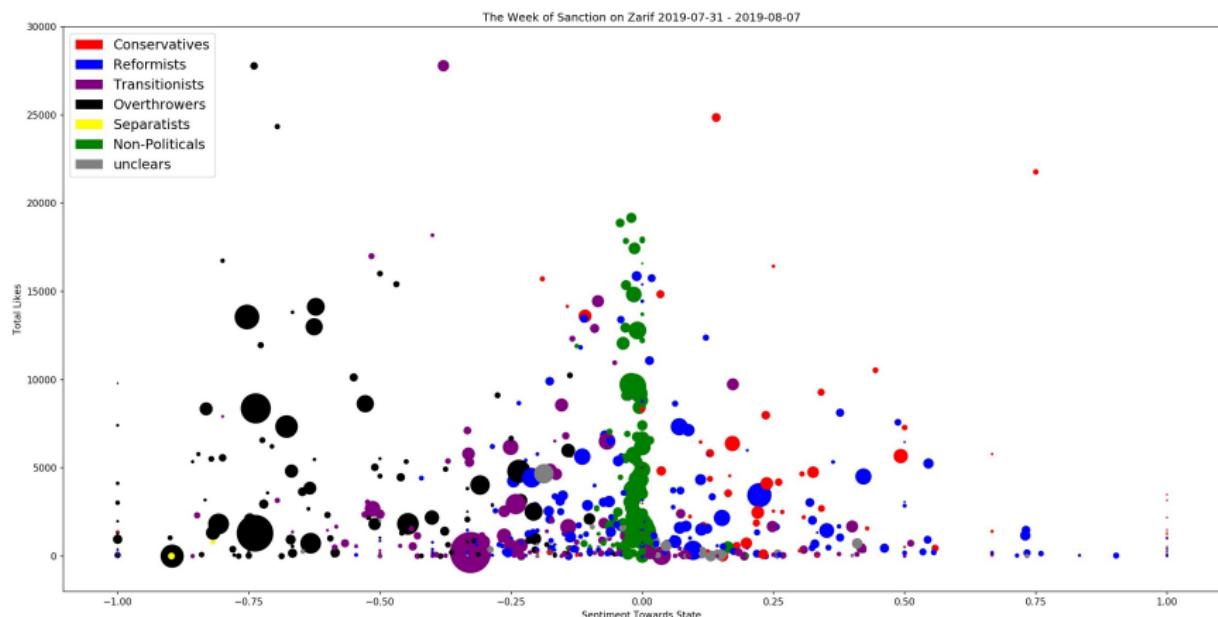
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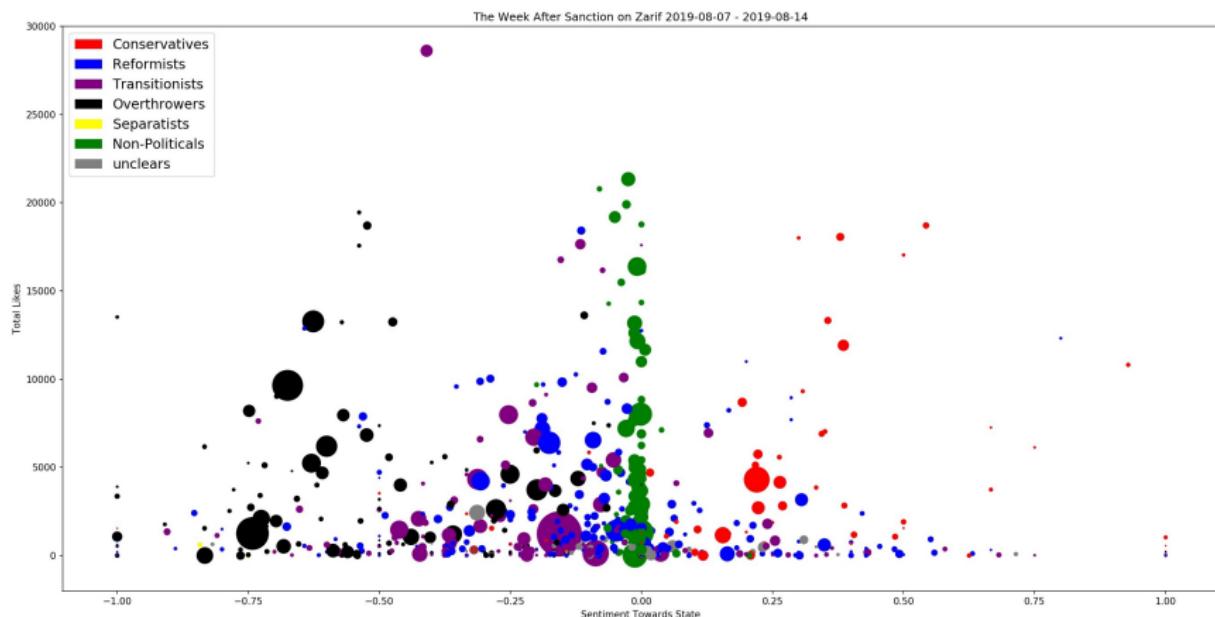
# Change in attitudes after FM Zarif Sanction



# Change in attitudes after FM Zarif Sanction (1)



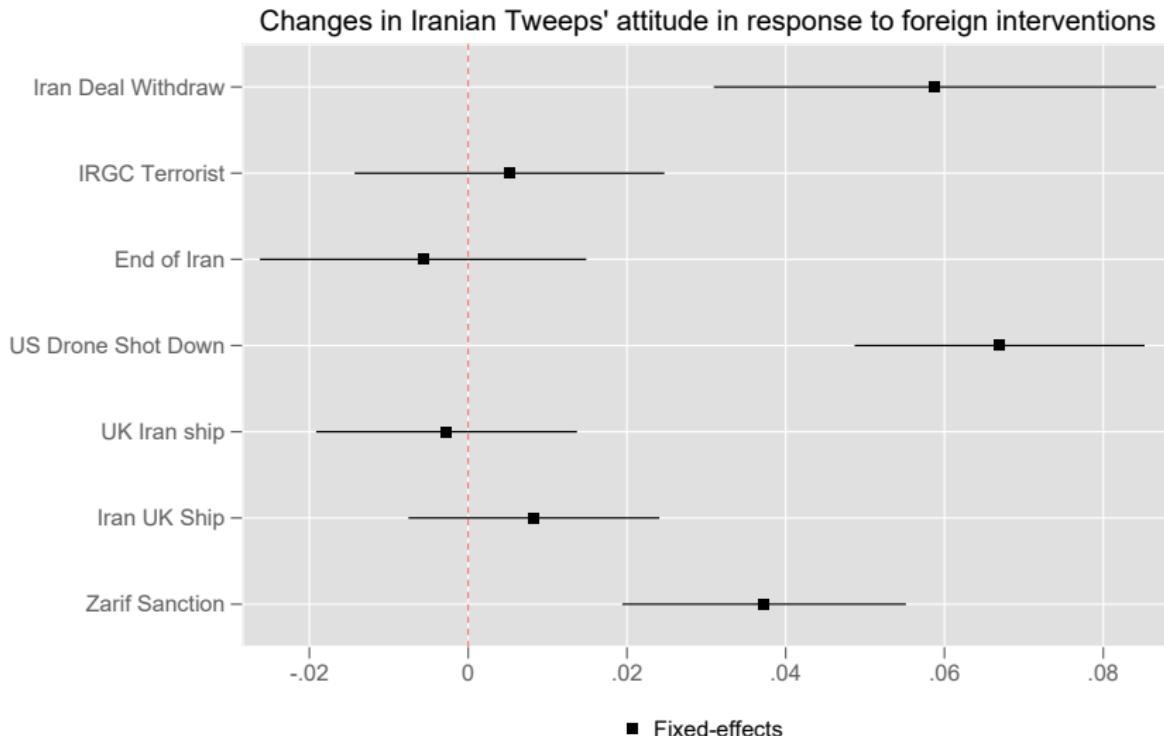
## Change in attitudes after FM Zarif Sanction (2)



## Estimation model

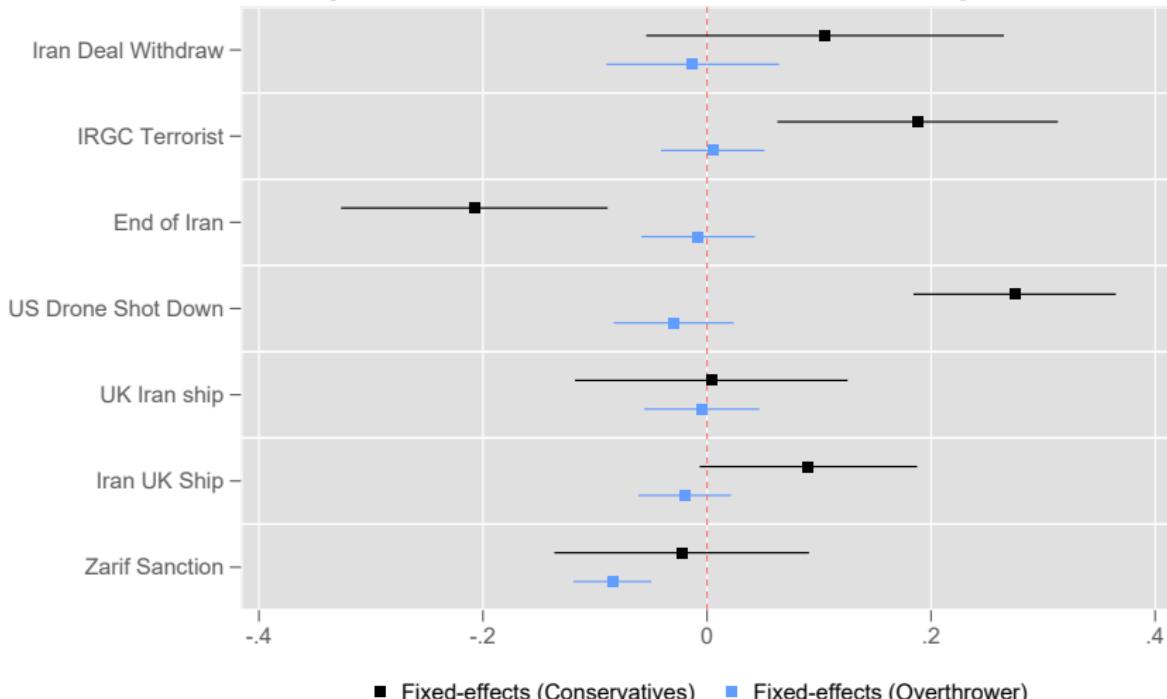
$$\Delta S_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_s S_{i,t-1} + \sum_{k=1}^K \beta_k E_{i,t} + \sum_{i=1}^I \phi_i + \sum_{w=1}^W t_w + \epsilon_{it}$$

## Regression analysis results



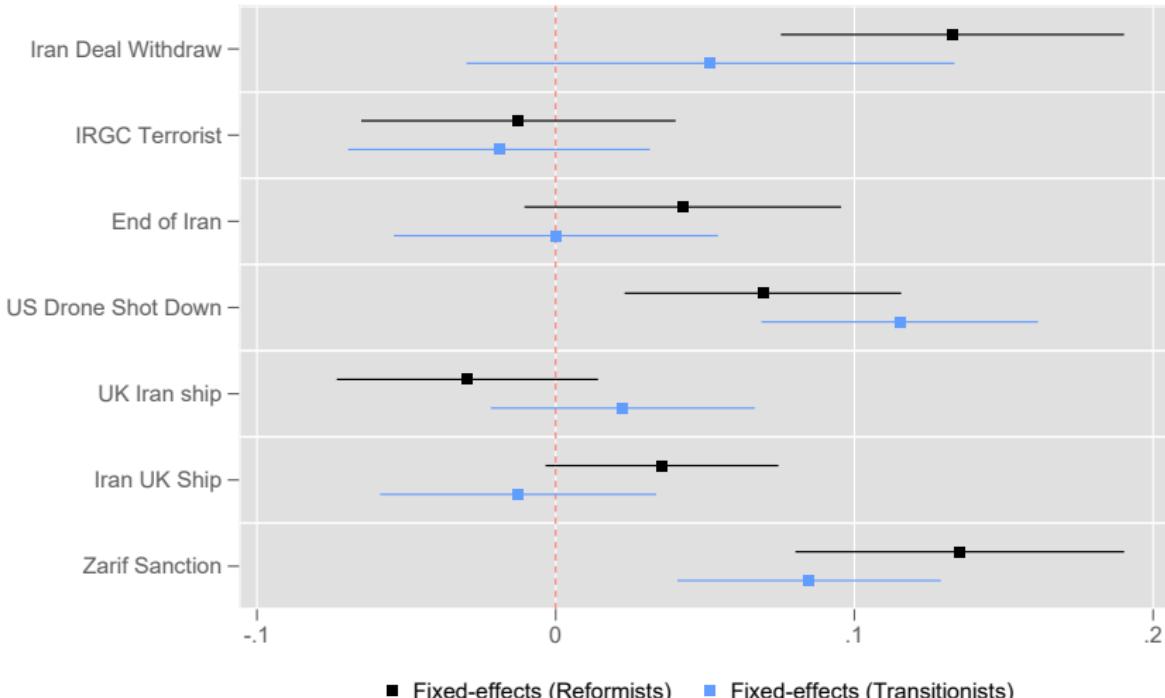
## Regression analysis results (2)

Changes in Iranian Tweeps' attitude in response to foreign interventions

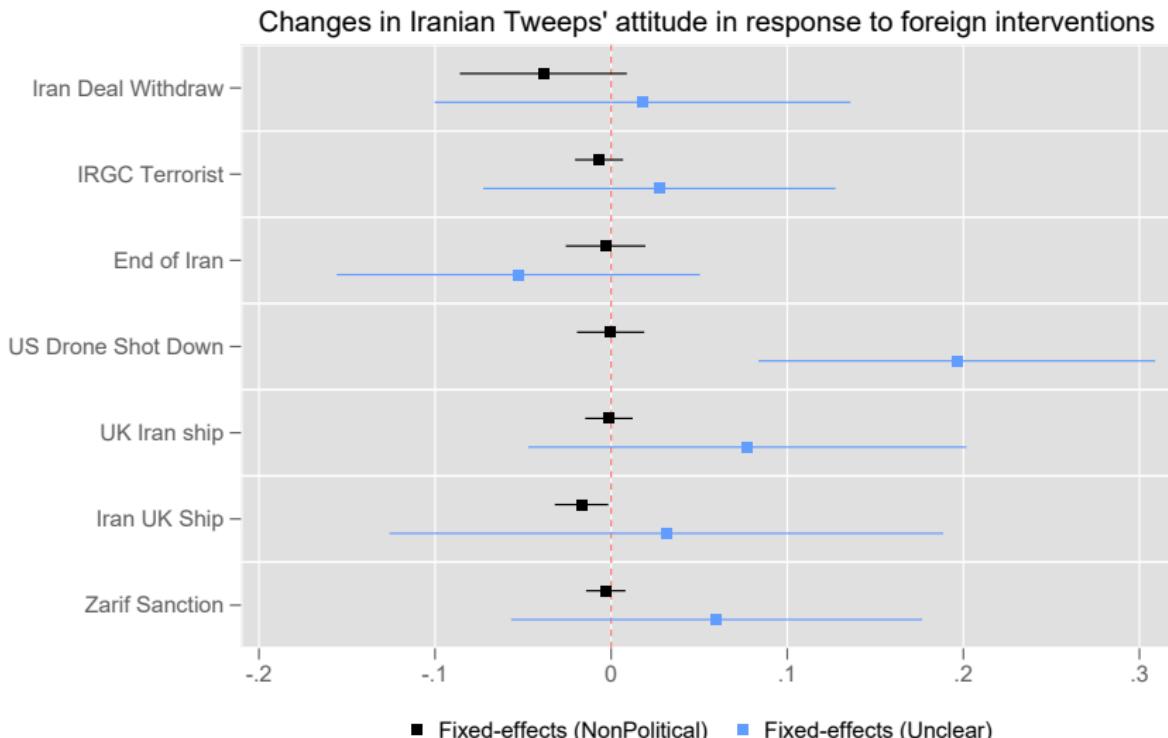


## Regression analysis results (3)

Changes in Iranian Tweeps' attitude in response to foreign interventions



## Regression analysis results (4)



## Next steps?

- Adding dissent and repression events/data to the analysis
- Estimating other operationalizations of support for state using the likes and retweets
- Developing a research design to quantify the persistence or decline of *rally round the flag*
- Improving the accuracy of machine learning algorithms

# Thank you!

# Questions?

## Conditional effect of dependency on global economy

- Imposing sanctions and carrying military attacks: laborious tasks

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- The expected cost of repression via realized foreign threats:

Probability of sanctions and/or military actions  $\times$  their cost

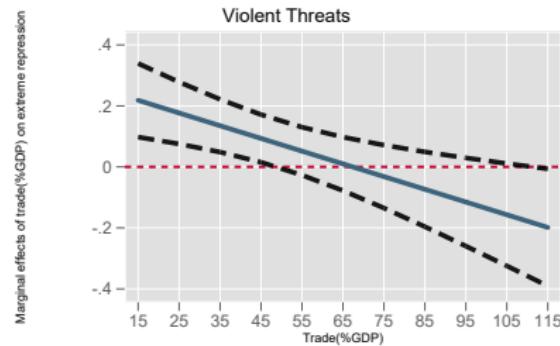
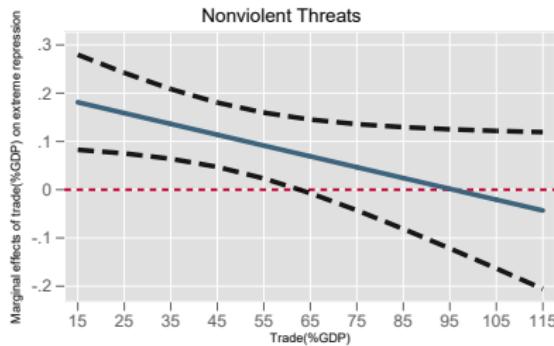
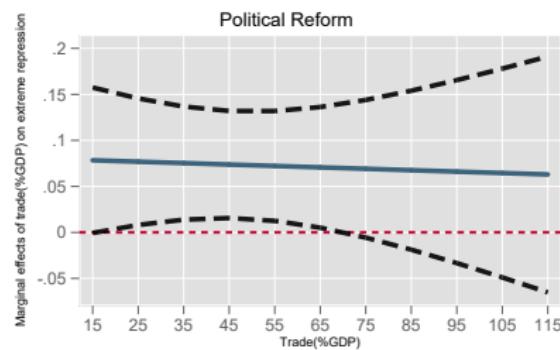
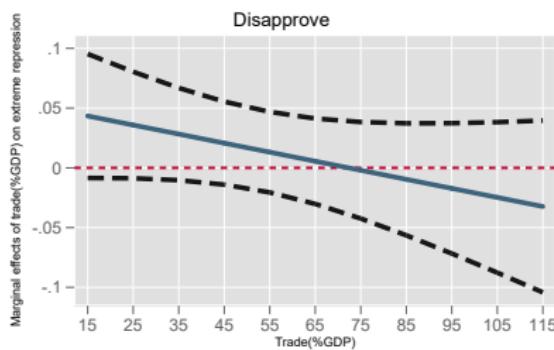
## Conditional effect of dependency on global economy

- Imposing sanctions and carrying military attacks: laborious tasks
- The expected cost of repression via realized foreign threats:  
Probability of sanctions and/or military actions  $\times$  their cost
- Dependence on the global economy  $\uparrow \Rightarrow$  the cost of sanction and militarized conflict  $\uparrow$

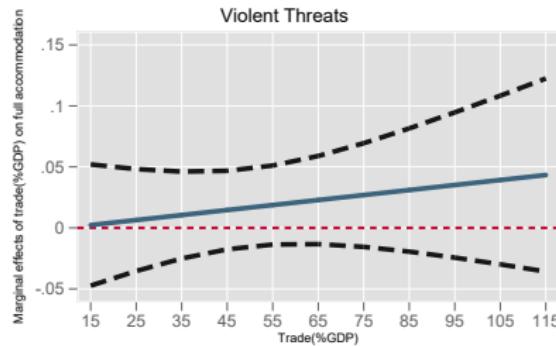
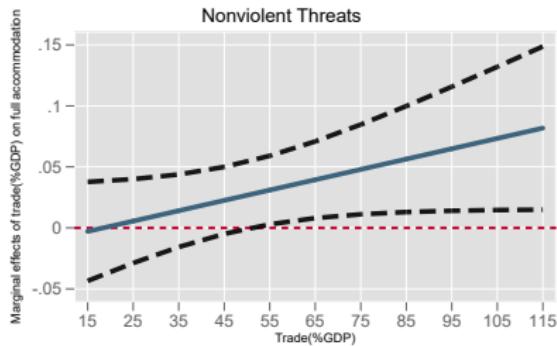
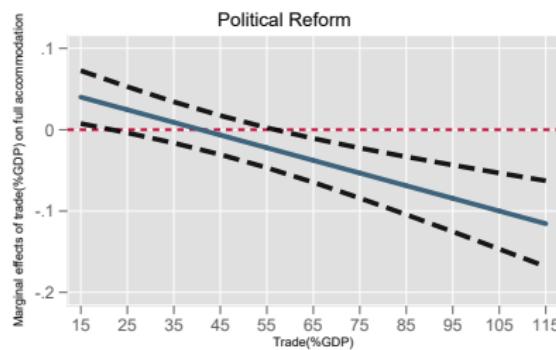
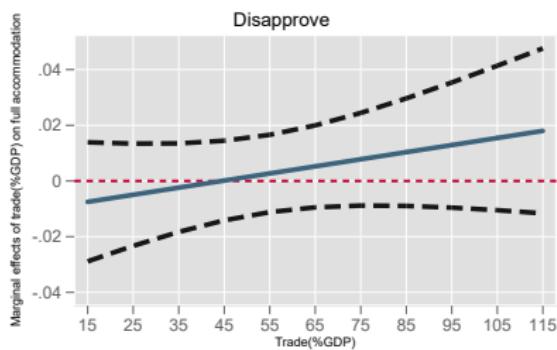
### Hypothesis 3

Foreign statements and threats against state authorities  
**decrease** state **repression** and **increase** state **concession** if the regime is dependent on the international economy.

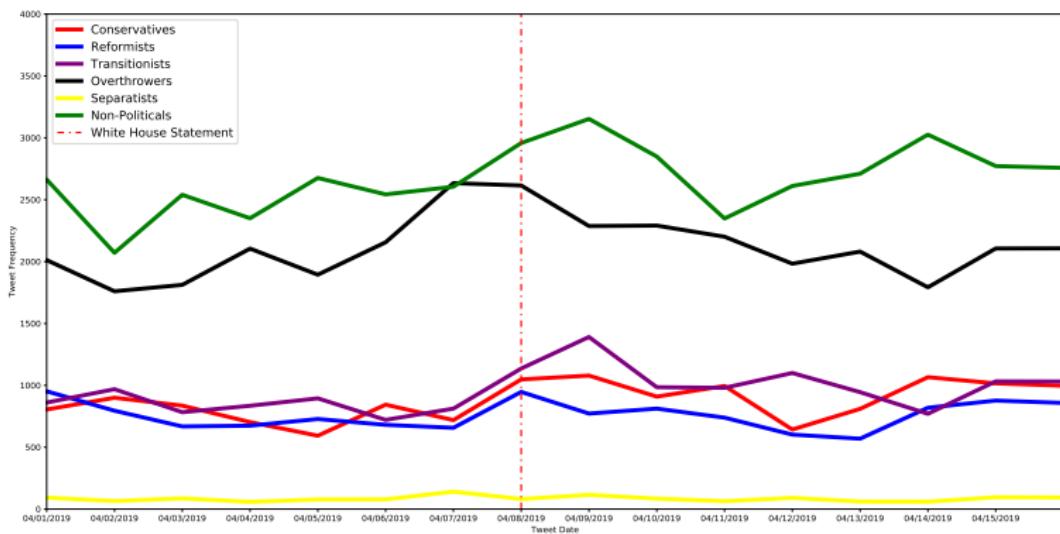
# The marginal effects of UNSC on extreme state repression conditional on trade(%GDP)



# The marginal effects of UNSC on state full accommodation conditional on trade(%GDP)



## The US designated IRGC as a terrorist group



## Conservatives

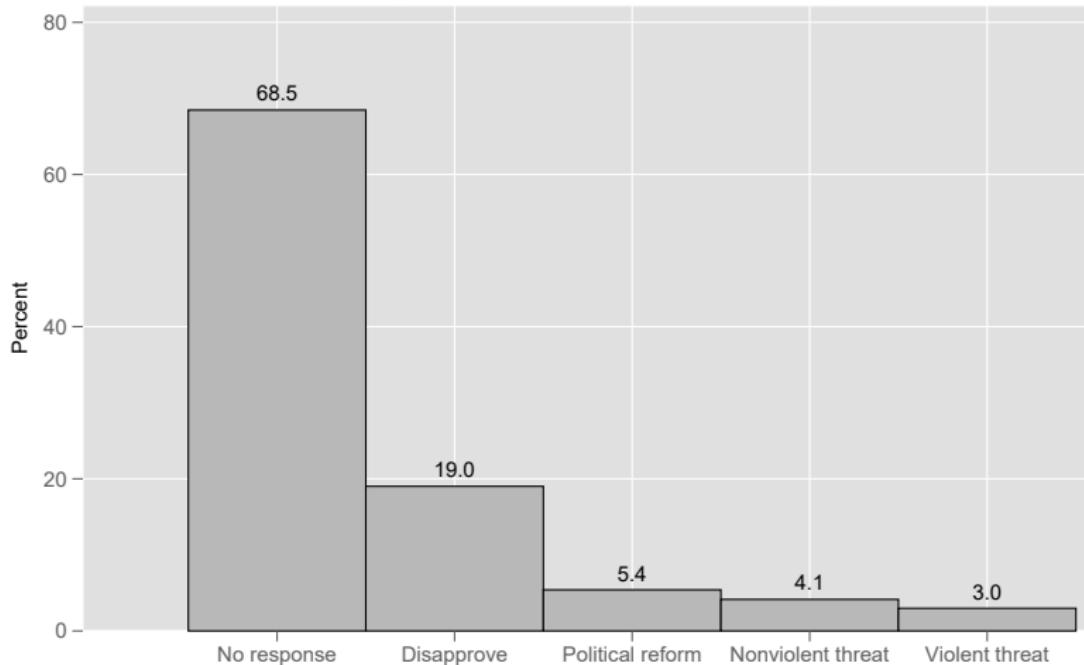
A circular collage of Persian words and names in various colors and fonts, centered around the word "ایران" (Iran). The words include: ایرانی (Iranian), زندگی (Life), کار (Work), باشه (Be), میشنه (Mishne), مننشر (Publisher), پول (Money), میمه (Meme), کن (Can), دار (Owner), توبیت (Charity), انتخاب (Voting), دنبال (Following), آدم (Adam), جمهور آمریکا (United States), دلیل (Reason), روحانی (Religious Leader), قرار (Agreement), نسبت (Proportion), تلاش (Search), الله سیستانی (Ayatollah Sistani), میکن (Do), اینقلاب دیدار (Revolutionary Meeting), نسیبت (Relationship), رهبری (Leadership), خبر (News), تهران (Tehran), شرکت (Company), حرف (Letter), کنه (Nose), دست (Hand), نظر (Opinion), حمایت (Support), دوست (Friend), اسلامی ایران (Islamic Republic of Iran), کشیش (Priest), فیلم (Film), وقت (Time), اسرائیل بچه (Israeli Baby), نداره (Don't have), and زیستگی فوری (Emergency Life).

# Reformists

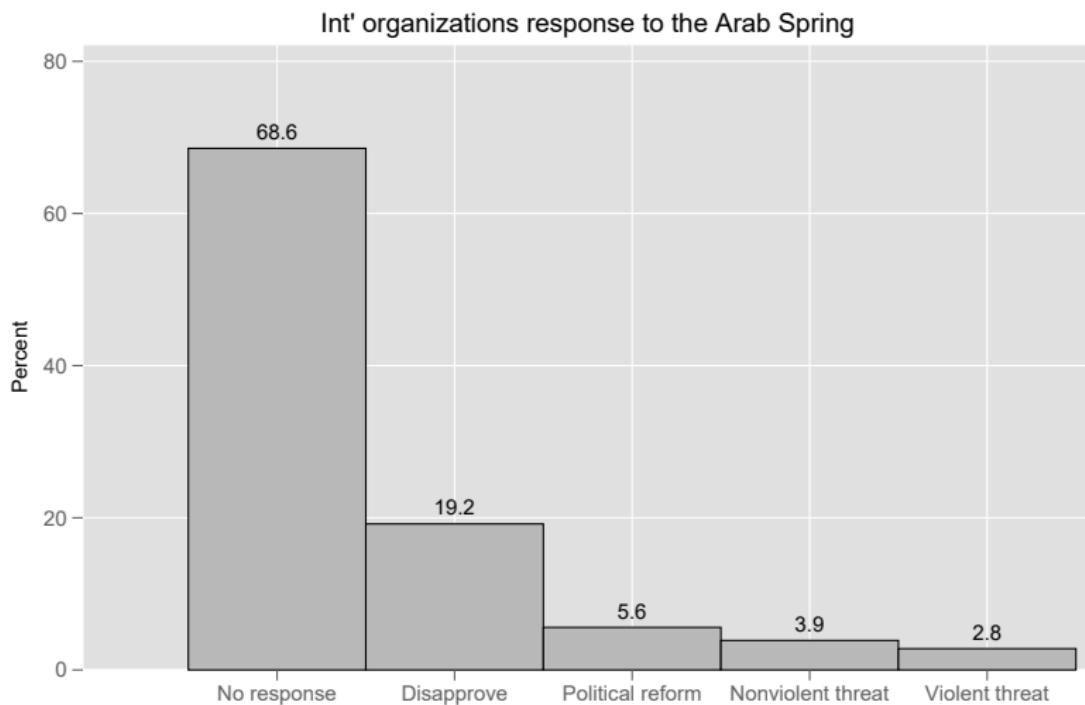
مادرم مادره داره عکس تلاش نظر ممنوعیشنها در اینجا  
 قرار حرف now تهران حکومت اسم  
 خاطر خاطر must rise mount noshaq حفاظت محیط کن  
 بازی حمایت بشه بیمارستان منتقل خدا هستن و وسائل  
 پشتیبانی اهتمام ایرانی همون ایرانی گی خانمه one smear campaign دست رو جانی و آنده  
 time المغطي بالدين دست 3 هستن در دبیل و وسائل  
 solidarity avec کشور کاری said iran'a 3  
 که today trump وقت میشه میکنه via 3  
 فرهنگی بازنیسته میگه  
 نداره زندگی کار 3  
 جان زن خبر robust plan فارسی صدای نوشته عراق ترک

## Foreign interventions

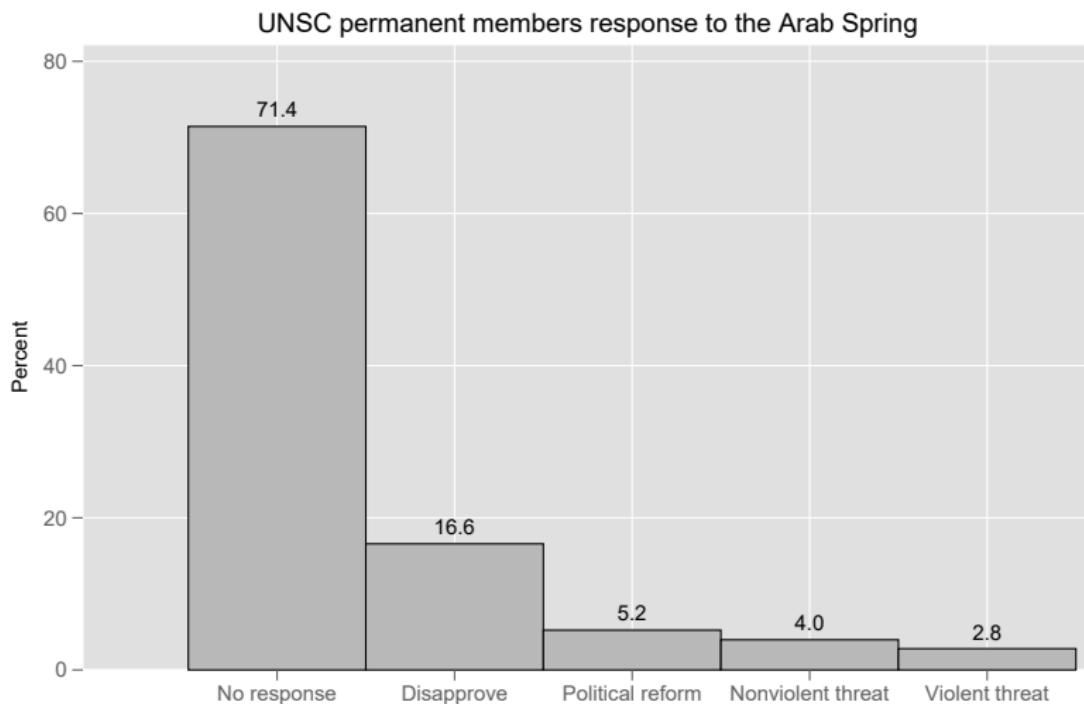
Foreign States response to the Arab Spring



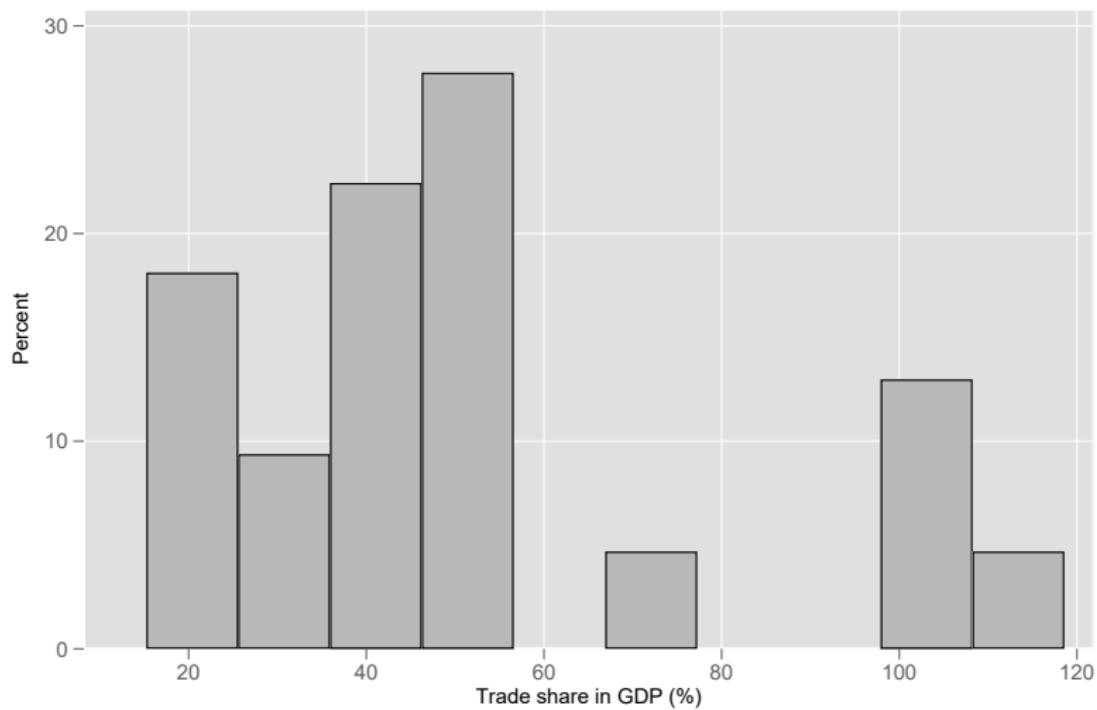
## Foreign interventions(2)



## Foreign interventions(3)



## The distribution of trade share in GDP



## Summary statistics

VARIABLES	(1) N	(2) mean	(3) sd	(4) min	(5) max
Full Accommodation	1,110	0.01	0.10	0	1
Material Concessions	1,110	0.01	0.09	0	1
Non-material Concessions	1,110	0.01	0.09	0	1
Extreme Repression	1,110	0.04	0.17	0	1
Moderate Repression	1,110	0.14	0.31	0	1
Mild Repression	1,110	0.16	0.33	0	1
Democracy	1,110	0.25	0.10	0.07	0.48
Population(log)	1,110	7.23	0.48	6.09	7.93
Foreign States	1,110	0.54	0.98	0	4
International Organizations	1,110	0.53	0.96	0	4
UNSC members	1,110	0.50	0.96	0	4
Violent Protest	1,110	0.05	0.18	0	1
Armed Protest	1,110	0.22	0.37	0	1
GDPper capita (log)	1,110	3.94	0.28	3.54	4.62
Trade (%GDP)	1,110	51.06	28.97	15.25	118.6

# Estimation results for state concession

	Full Accommodation												Material Concessions			Non-material Concessions			
	Foreign States				IOs				UNSC				Foreign States			IOs			
	Disapprove <sub>t-1</sub>	0.001	-0.017	0.005	0.006	0.002	-0.011	-0.006	0.002	-0.004	0.006	-0.004	(-0.53)	0.002	0.024*	0.012	0.028*	0.002	0.024*
Political reform <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.010	0.062**	-0.006	0.074***	-0.007	0.065***	-0.001	0.014	-0.001	0.014	-0.001	0.016	(-0.71)	(0.11)	(0.43)	(-0.46)	(0.30)	(1.66)	(1.95)
Nonviolent Threats <sub>t-1</sub>	0.021	-0.016	0.025	-0.008	0.024	-0.016	-0.025	-0.027	-0.026	-0.023	-0.025	-0.025	(1.29)	(-0.53)	(0.61)	(-0.11)	(0.68)	(-0.04)	(0.71)
Violent Threats <sub>t-1</sub>	0.013	-0.006	0.019	0.014	0.017	-0.004	-0.014	-0.023	-0.013	-0.020	-0.014	-0.022	(0.67)	(-0.16)	(0.59)	(-0.50)	(-0.84)	(-0.22)	(-0.26)
Trade(%GDP) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	(1.45)	(1.34)	(1.42)	(1.52)	(1.47)	(0.21)	(0.29)
Extreme Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.024*	-0.028**	-0.025*	-0.025*	-0.025*	-0.030**	-0.024*	-0.024*	-0.025*	-0.026*	-0.024*	-0.025*	(-1.77)	(-2.08)	(-1.81)	(-2.16)	(-1.83)	(-2.18)	(-1.86)
Moderate Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.009	-0.013	-0.003	-0.010	-0.009	-0.009	-0.009	-0.008	-0.008	-0.009	-0.009	-0.009	(-0.84)	(-0.89)	(-0.85)	(-0.90)	(-0.86)	(-0.88)	(-0.82)
Mild Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.028	-0.027	-0.029	-0.029	-0.028	-0.028	-0.017	-0.017	-0.017	-0.018	-0.017	-0.017	(1.53)	(-1.50)	(-1.58)	(-1.63)	(-1.56)	(-1.52)	(-0.99)
Full Accommodation <sub>t-1</sub>	0.013	-0.005	0.012	-0.006	0.012	-0.006	0.085***	0.083***	0.086***	0.084***	0.086***	0.084***	(0.43)	(-0.18)	(0.38)	(-0.20)	(0.39)	(-0.18)	(0.21)
Material Concessions <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.008	-0.009	-0.008	-0.007	-0.008	-0.009	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.027	0.025	0.026	(-0.25)	(-0.28)	(-0.25)	(-0.27)	(-0.84)	(-0.84)	(-0.84)
Non-material Concessions <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.024	-0.022	-0.025	-0.022	-0.024	-0.022	0.044	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	(-0.70)	(-0.63)	(-0.71)	(-0.64)	(-0.70)	(-0.65)	(-0.73)
Violent Protest <sub>t-1</sub>	0.030	0.030	0.029	0.030	0.030	0.029	-0.003	-0.002	-0.003	-0.003	-0.002	-0.002	(1.62)	(1.61)	(1.58)	(1.62)	(1.58)	(1.62)	(1.56)
Armed Protest <sub>t-1</sub>	0.019	0.021*	0.018	0.020*	0.018	0.020*	-0.013	-0.012	-0.013	-0.012	-0.013	-0.012	(1.59)	(1.77)	(1.53)	(1.72)	(1.57)	(1.73)	(1.44)
Population (logged) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.012	0.152	0.014	0.122	0.007	0.158	1.448*	1.452*	1.453*	1.456*	1.448*	1.454*	(0.02)	(0.20)	(0.02)	(0.16)	(0.01)	(0.18)	(-0.14)
GDPpc(log) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.144**	0.173***	0.141**	0.183***	0.144**	0.166***	-0.091	-0.082	-0.090	-0.077	-0.092	-0.081	(-2.35)	(2.70)	(2.29)	(2.86)	(2.33)	(2.61)	(1.35)
Democracy <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.579**	-0.669***	-0.585**	-0.586**	-0.577**	-0.643**	-0.015	0.012	-0.017	0.007	-0.021	0.008	(-2.36)	(-2.66)	(-2.37)	(-2.39)	(-2.35)	(-2.58)	(-1.55)
Time span	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	(-0.55)	(-0.70)	(-0.51)	(-0.75)	(-0.52)	(-0.68)	(-1.07)
Disapprove <sub>t-1</sub> × Trade(%GDP) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.000	-0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	(1.28)	(-0.06)	(0.99)	(-0.56)	(-0.82)	(-0.64)	(-1.09)
Political Reform <sub>t-1</sub> × Trade(%GDP) <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.002***	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	(-3.80)	(-4.12)	(-3.70)	(-0.79)	(-0.91)	(-0.90)	(-1.77)
Nonviolent Threats <sub>t-1</sub> × Trade(%GDP) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	(1.42)	(1.27)	(1.53)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.04)	(0.23)
Violent Threats <sub>t-1</sub> × Trade(%GDP) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	(0.53)	(0.53)	(0.14)	(0.61)	(0.31)	(0.22)	(0.07)
Intercept	-0.526	-1.623	-0.525	-1.483	-0.480	-1.504	-10.090*	-10.160*	-10.128*	-10.207*	-10.085*	-10.180*	(-0.09)	(-0.29)	(-0.09)	(-0.26)	(-0.09)	(-0.27)	(-1.07)
N	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed-effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Log-likelihood	1048.320	1059.864	1048.584	1059.603	1048.441	1059.240	1100.218	1100.791	1100.102	1100.858	1100.101	1100.783	1143.619	1145.471	1144.950	1146.073	1143.611	1145.319	

t statistics in parentheses; \* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

## IV estimations: State repression

	Extreme Repression	Moderate Repression	Mild Repression
Disapprove	0.071 (0.46)	0.539** (2.56)	0.152* (1.76)
Political reform	0.151 (0.25)	-0.568 (-0.60)	0.172 (0.43)
Nonviolent threat	1.642** (2.43)	0.418 (0.43)	0.636 (1.35)
Violent threat	0.501 (0.46)	-0.909 (-0.83)	-0.917 (-1.35)
Trade(%GDP) <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.001 (-0.54)	0.002 (0.58)	-0.000 (-0.06)
Extreme Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	0.186 (1.41)	0.084 (0.56)	-0.041 (-0.56)
Moderate Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.025 (-0.63)	0.111* (1.92)	-0.017 (-0.55)
Mild Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.022 (-0.24)	-0.008 (-0.07)	0.010 (0.16)
Full Accommodation <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.116 (-0.71)	0.215 (1.21)	0.062 (0.50)
Material Concessions <sub>t-1</sub>	0.088 (0.90)	0.098 (0.51)	-0.039 (-0.68)
Non-material Concessions <sub>t-1</sub>	0.005 (0.07)	0.316** (2.05)	0.052 (0.75)
Population (logged) <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.184 (-1.60)	-0.031 (-0.23)	0.062 (0.84)
GDP per capita (log) <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.257*** (-3.56)	0.004 (0.05)	0.082 (1.49)
Democracy <sub>t-1</sub>	0.208 (1.10)	-0.641** (-2.42)	-0.210 (-1.48)
Time span	0.001* (1.95)	-0.000 (-0.14)	0.001** (2.32)
Intercept	2.338*** (2.88)	0.367 (0.36)	-0.740 (-1.49)
N	1002	1002	1002
Log-likelihood	-325.243	-529.354	-26.766

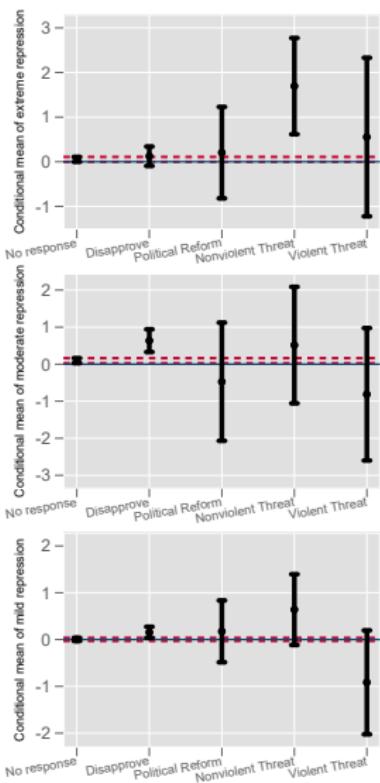
t statistics in parentheses; \* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

## IV estimations: State concession

	Full Accommodation	Material Concession	Non-material Concessions
Disapprove	0.013 (0.28)	-0.014 (-0.36)	-0.041 (-1.05)
Political reform	0.298 (1.51)	0.195 (1.02)	0.153 (0.66)
Nonviolent threat	-0.413 (-1.51)	0.212 (1.30)	-0.141 (-0.56)
Violent threat	0.126 (0.27)	-0.354 (-1.17)	-0.301 (-1.14)
Trade (%GDP) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.001 (0.76)	0.000 (0.49)	0.001 (0.72)
Extreme Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	0.004 (0.09)	-0.034 (-0.96)	0.048 (1.15)
Moderate Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.010 (-0.71)	-0.019 (-1.44)	0.007 (0.49)
Mild Repression <sub>t-1</sub>	0.018 (0.55)	-0.028 (-1.32)	0.033 (1.04)
Full Accommodation <sub>t-1</sub>	0.072 (0.84)	0.171 (1.10)	0.001 (0.04)
Material Concessions <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.042 (-0.95)	0.039 (0.65)	0.151 (1.18)
Non-material Concessions <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.033 (-0.95)	0.037 (0.52)	0.120 (0.91)
Population (logged) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.048 (1.22)	0.012 (0.43)	0.051 (1.45)
GDP per capita (log) <sub>t-1</sub>	0.016 (0.56)	-0.016 (-0.64)	0.029 (1.46)
Democracy <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.131* (-1.65)	-0.002 (-0.03)	-0.090 (-1.22)
Time span	-0.000 (-0.28)	0.000 (0.89)	-0.000 (-0.62)
Intercept	-0.396 (-1.42)	-0.040 (-0.19)	-0.468* (-1.71)
N	1002	1002	1002
Fixed-effects			
Log-likelihood	656.775	695.280	800.520

t statistics in parentheses; \* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

# The effects of UNSC members interventions on state repression using IV method



# The effects of UNSC members interventions on state concession using IV method

