Conflict and Democratic Preferences*

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Abstract

This paper examines how exposure to conflict events influences individuals' democratic preferences, focusing on support for democracy in general and perceptions of governance within one's own country. We examine how ethnic affiliation–whether an individual belongs to an ethnic group that has access to state power–shapes democratic attitudes, reflecting differences in social standing and expectations about democratization. Using a rich data set that spans 20 years and more than 30 African countries, we exploit the timing of conflict events relative to survey interviews to identify causal effects. Our findings show that conflict exposure increases support for democracy on average, but its effects vary by ethnicity and regime type. In autocracies, conflict leads to rally-around-the-flag effects: While support for democracy increases, perceptions of the state also improve. Violence also increases trust in ruling institutions in autocratic regimes, an effect that is absent in more democratic settings.

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1 Introduction

Conflict, whether violent or non-violent, challenges governance and social cohesion while shaping political attitudes. How do individuals adjust their democratic preferences when exposed to conflict? And how does ethnicity influence these responses? These questions are important given global trends of political polarization and democratic backsliding, and particularly relevant in Africa, a continent experiencing democratic recession, persistent conflict, and rapid demographic change. Our paper contributes to a better understanding of the formation of democratic preferences, particularly in ethnically diverse and polarized societies.

This paper examines how exposure to conflict affects individuals' democratic preferences—support for democracy in general, and perceptions of governance within their country. It also investigates how ethnicity and representation in the government influence these effects. We provide new causal evidence of how exposure to conflict events impacts individuals' democratic views, conditional on whether an individual's ethnic group has access to state power. Previous research on conflict, ethnicity, and political behavior presents mixed findings (e.g., Blattman 2009; Rozenas et al. 2017; Bautista et al. 2023). Our study provides new insights into how external events influence individuals' democratic views.

We use a rich dataset on conflict events, individuals' democratic preferences, and ethnicity for more than 30 African countries and spanning over 20 years. The focus on Africa is important for several reasons: Commitment to democracy varies between countries and within countries over time (M'Cormack-Hale and Zupork Dome 2022; Mattes and Bratton 2016), and the continent is currently part of a global democratic recession (Diamond 2015; Boese et al. 2022). Simultaneously, the past two decades have been marked by increasing levels of conflict (Carter and Straus 2019; Cilliers 2016). These trends raise concerns about the democratic process and the overall health and sustainability of democratic systems in the region. Many countries in Africa have some of the fastest growing and youngest populations (Stanley 2023) and are among the fastest growing economies in the world (Carnegie 2024). Understanding the formation of democratic preferences in the region is crucial.

To overcome the endogeneity of conflict occurrence and local characteristics, we take advantage of the timing of survey fieldwork with respect to the timing of conflict events. The timing of an individual's interview is considered conditionally exogenous to the timing of a conflict event in the individual's region. We compare individuals who were interviewed shortly before a conflict event in the region to individuals in the same region interviewed shortly after the event. We examine the impact of conflict on individuals' democratic preferences in general—preference for democracy above other forms of governance—and views on their own country's governance—perception of how democratic their country is. We examine the impacts of violent events and demonstration events separately. Furthermore, we consider the effect of conflict on democratic views conditional on a person's ethnic in-group or out-group status, as well as on the regime type.

Conceptually, we consider exposure to a conflict event as a shock to individuals' views of government. Occurrence of conflict is considered as a signal of the quality of government, related for

instance to the government's ability to provide safety. Conflict is likely to have different impacts depending on a person's position in society. A person who is part of the in-group—an ethnic group that has access to state power—may have easier access to benefits such as material and non-material goods and better social standing (Horowitz 1993; Miguel and Gugerty 2005). Individuals among the in-group and out-group are likely to have different expectations on what a more democratic governance might mean for them, and whether a more democratic government would be better at providing safety. Crises and conflicts may therefore influence these groups differently.

Our findings show that exposure to conflict events has on average a positive impact on support for democracy, with exposure to violent events and demonstration events causing similar effects. Second, we find no average affects on perceptions of governance within one's country. However, our results suggest that impact of conflict exposure depends on an individual's in-group status—exposure to violence seems to increases support for democracy among out-group members, while having no effect among in-group members.

To explore the mechanisms behind democratic support and perceptions of the government, we examine how conflict exposure influences individuals' trust in institutions. On average, violence tends to increase trust in ruling political institutions, especially in the president and the ruling party, as well as in the army. In contrast, exposure to protests decreases trust in institutions across the board. This finding is consistent with protest exposure increasing the salience of societal grievances and institutional shortcomings, and thereby eroding trust. Our findings are broadly consistent with the rally-around-the-flag phenomenon, where external threats increase support for the current government.

Furthermore, we investigate the effects of conflict exposure by regime type, splitting our sample into autocratic and democratic countries. Our findings reveal substantial variation depending on the type of regime: The positive effects of violence mainly stem form autocracies. In more autocratic settings, exposure to violent events increases both support for democracy and the perceived extent of democracy. In contrast, in more democratic settings, we find no such effects: Exposure to violence does not significantly affect democratic views. Furthermore, we find that the positive impact of conflict on trust in ruling political institutions is driven by autocratic regimes. These findings are consistent with rally-around-the-flag effects playing an important role in autocratic countries.

Although the average level of democratic support is high, and our findings indicate that democratic support is persistent, our results also show that conflict exposure can simultaneously improve perceptions of the current regime. While democratic support is a necessary condition for democratization, our findings show that crises—such as exposure to violent conflict—may not spur democratization due to the intervening rally effects. Our results offer one explanation for the persistence of autocratic regimes despite persistent conflict.

This paper contributes to research on democratic preferences, conflict, and ethnicity. First, existing research that studies how conflict influences political behavior and preferences documents conflicting results. While fear of violence or experiences of it have been shown to deter political participation and lead to political disengagement (Rozenas and Zhukov 2019; García-Ponce

et al. 2021), there is also evidence that exposure to violence can foster resistance and fuel a desire for change. Consequently, violence can also increase political participation and the demand for democracy (Blattman 2009; Rozenas et al. 2017; Bautista et al. 2023). Another strand of the literature examines how terrorism and other major crime events influence political views (Davis and Silver 2004; Rehman and Vanin 2017; Garcia-Montoya et al. 2022; Giavazzi et al. 2024). A recent meta-analysis of the literature shows that while the effects of terrorism vary substantially, on average such events are associated with increased support and trust in the government, i.e., rally effects, support for national security and conservative politics, as well as increased hostility towards out-groups, such as immigrants and refugees (Godefroidt 2023).

We contribute to this body of research by providing broad, cross-national causal evidence on the effects of exposure to violent conflict and protests. We study effects across contexts, focusing on individuals' views on democracy, both in general and within their own country. We provide causal evidence regarding the sign and size of the effects of both violent and nonviolent events. We show that conflict affects preferences, on average increasing support for democracy, but that the effects vary by social group and differ substantially between more democratic and autocratic settings.

We also contribute to the literature examining the influence of ethnic divisions on political attitudes and development (see, e.g., Horowitz 1993; Collier 1998; Easterly 2001; Blimes 2006; Desmet et al. 2020; Mueller et al. 2022; Laurent-Lucchetti et al. 2024). When ethnicity and conflict are studied together, it is typically through the lens of ethnic violence and its influence on political participation and preferences for ethnic parties (e.g., Bezemer and Jong-A-Pin 2013; Lupu and Peisakhin 2017; Hadzic et al. 2020). Related literature also examines how ethnic polarization influences conflict (see, e.g., Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005; Esteban et al. 2012). In this study, we consider ethnicity as a moderating factor in shaping individuals' views on the current government and their democratic preferences. Our results show that a person's identity and position is society is of crucial importance.

Lastly, we contribute to the literature on ethnicity and individuals' political attitudes. We build upon studies examining how grievances and ethnic polarization are affected by conflict and changing political landscape (discussed in, e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003). We also relate to the literature on in-group bias and political participation (Horowitz 1993; Robalo et al. 2017). By accounting for the role of ethnic diversity in societies and the influence of one's ethnicity, we take into account a key determinant of political instability, conflict, and the unequal distribution of resources. We provide new evidence of the implications that these dynamics have for democratic preferences and institutional trust.

The rest paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the data. Section 3 describes the empirical strategy. Sections 4 presents our findings. Section 5 concludes.

2 Data

2.1 Afrobarometer

We measure democratic preferences—individuals' subjective views on governance both in one's country and in general—using data from the Afrobarometer. By using multiple rounds of Afrobarometer data, we explore citizens' attitudes towards democracy across the continent over a long period of time.[1] The Afrobarometer data is based on personal interviews with randomly selected and nationally representative samples. We use data from rounds 2–8, which covers up to 38 countries and years 2002–2021, with varying country-year coverage.[2] The surveys in each country are conducted with a national (non-state) partner responsible for data collection. Field work period in one country lasts about four weeks, while one round is conducted in 12 to 24 months. The sample sizes range from 1200 to 2400 respondents per country.

To be included in Afrobarometer, a country must be sufficiently open so that individuals can respond freely, and the security situation must be such that all sampling areas can be reached. The most closed and authoritarian regimes are therefore excluded. Since sample locations are randomly selected and interviews are conducted face-to-face, significant effort is invested in planning the field work to ensure reaching very remote locations. Each country team develops a field work deployment plan, which includes scheduling and planning the route for sampling areas in advance (Afrobarometer 2022).[3]

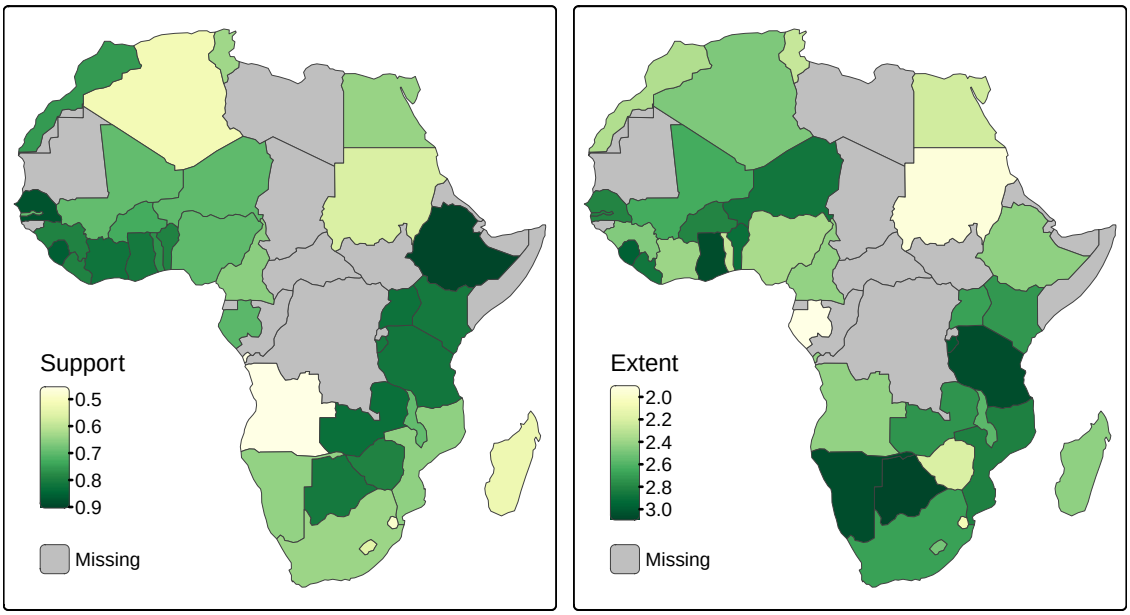
Our main outcomes are based on the following questions:

- Support for democracy: "Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?"
  (1) Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government
  (2) In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable
  (3) For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have
- Extent of democracy: "In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [your country] today"
  (1) Not a democracy
  (2) A democracy, with major problems
  (3) A democracy, but with minor problems
  (4) A full democracy

Since the response categories in the first question have ambiguous ordering, we use a binary variable that takes value one if the response is that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government, and zero otherwise. Support for democracy captures individuals' views on governance in general,

1. While there are studies on support for democracy, most rely on the World Values Survey, which has limitations highlighted by Panel (2019). Related studies using Afrobarometer data often utilize only one or two rounds of data (e.g., Rohner et al. 2013; Sangnier and Zylberberg 2017) or focus on a single country, limiting their ability to observe broad patterns over time and across countries.
2. The country coverage has grown from 12 countries in Round one to 34 countries in Round eight. We exclude Round 1 as the variables and response scales differ significantly from later rounds.
3. This plan also includes matching interviewers' language skills to languages spoken in specific sampling areas, organizing transport, accommodation, and meals.

Figure 1: Support for democracy and perceived extent of democracy



Notes: The figure shows the average value of support for democracy (left), which is a binary variable, and perceived extent of democracy (right), which takes values 1–4, in Afrobarometer Rounds 2–8. Data source: Afrobarometer.

while extent of democracy captures individuals' views on governance within their own country. Figure 1 shows the average values of support for democracy and extent of democracy by country across survey rounds.

Detailed information and descriptive statistics for these and further survey questions used to examine democratic preferences are provided in Appendix A. Figure A.1 shows the share of respondents indicating each response category in the two questions on democracy. While a persistent majority believes that democracy is preferable to other forms of government, an increasing share of people perceive their country as either not a democracy or a democracy with problems. Figure A.2 shows responses to statements about authoritarian forms of government. Consistent with high support for democracy, majority of respondents disapprove of authoritarian forms of government.

2.2 Ethnic Power Relations (EPR)

We use the data on Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) (Vogt et al. 2015) to determine an individuals' membership in a specific ethnic power group. We link the classification of ethnic power groups to the ethnicity reported in the Afrobarometer. The EPR data identifies ethnic groups that are politically relevant in a country, irrespective of the size of the group.[4] The groups are categorized based on their level of access to central state power through representatives of the ethnic group. There

4. A group is politically relevant if "at least one significant political actor claims to represent the interests of that group in the national political arena or if group members are systematically and intentionally discriminated against in the domain of public politics" (Vogt et al. 2015).

are four categories: monopoly rule and dominance (when the group rules alone), being a senior or junior partner (when the group shares power), or being discriminated against, self-excluded, or otherwise powerless. The remaining category, "other", includes groups that have become irrelevant after previously holding power or are in a situation of state collapse, where no authority is recognized and there is a total disintegration of institutions.

There are in total 27 countries with overlap between the ethnicities recorded by the Afrobarometer and the EPR. Therefore, the sample used when considering ethnicity is smaller than the full sample used in other parts of the analysis. To analyze the effects of conflict exposure depending on an ethnic group's access to power, we create a binary variable that is equal to one if the group is represented in government (rules alone or shares power) and zero if the group is not represented (powerless or irrelevant). This binary variable captures individuals' membership in an ethnic in-group or out-group. Since the powerless group (the out-group) is relatively small compared to the in-group, we also analyze differences between the groups with access to power; the dominant group (dominant or senior partner) and the junior partner (see Appendix C). Summary statistics on the different groups are shown in Table A.2.

2.3 Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

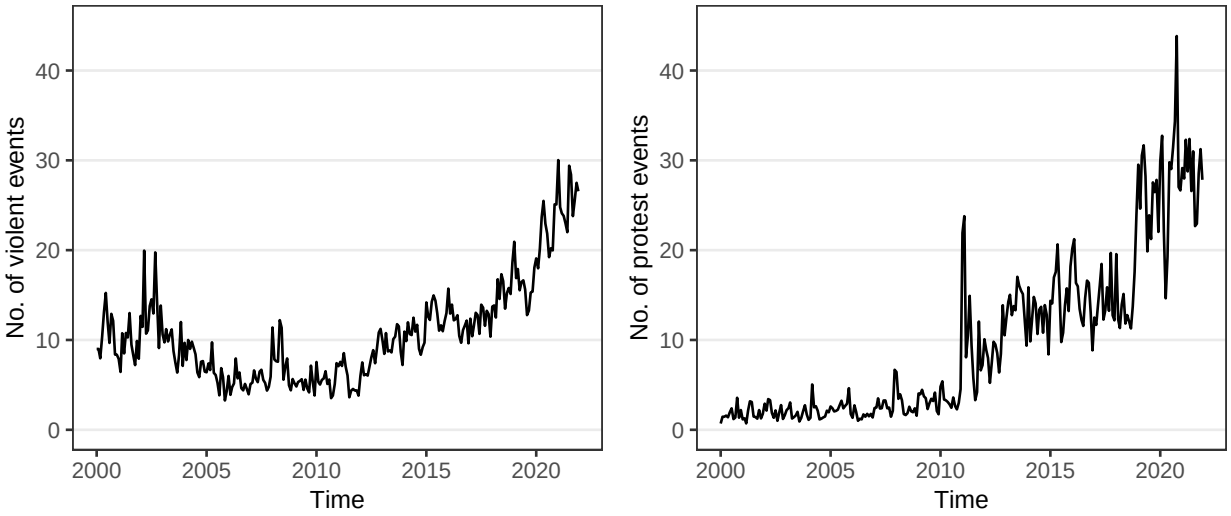
We use conflict data from ACLED (Raleigh et al. 2010).[5] It is a large event-based dataset that provides precise descriptions, locations and the timing of both violent and non-violent events.[6] We match respondents from the Afrobarometer by region with conflict events. In our heterogeneity analysis, we consider both different event types and whether the state was involved in the conflict event.

The events in ACLED are categorized as violent events, which include battles, explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians, and demonstrations (hereafter referred to as demonstration or protest events), which include protests and riots.[7] The data is mostly based on media sources and supplemented with reports from NGOs, international organizations, selected social media accounts and through partnerships with local conflict observatories. Data are collected manually (ACLED 2019). Figure 2 shows the average yearly number of conflict events in our sample countries. In addition, Figure A.3 shows the average number of different types of conflict events. The graphs show a clear increasing trend in the number of conflict events on the continent.

Figure A.4 maps the average population-weighted number of conflict events in our sample countries during 2002–2021. The graph shows that although conflict is common across the continent, it is heavily concentrated in certain countries. In our sample, violent conflict is most common in

5. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); https://acleddata.com
6. We abstract from focusing on ethnic violence as well as electoral violence (considered in, e.g., Laakso 2007; Collier and Vicente 2014; Shenga and Pereira 2019; Bekoe and Burchard 2017). As shown by Canetti (2016), any type of conflict may influence political attitudes and behavior. We examine a broad range of conflict types, including non-violent conflict events such as protests. In particular, our results show stark differences in the effects of exposure to violent or non-violent events, highlighting the importance of considering both types of conflict.
7. Riots include violent demonstrations and mob violence. Although riots may involve violence, we follow the general classification of ACLED and treat them as demonstration events.

Figure 2: Average monthly number of violent events (left) and protest events (right) across countries. Data source: ACLED



Notes: The figure shows the monthly average number of events across all countries included in the Afrobarometer Rounds 2–8. Violent events: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians. Protest events: protests, riots.

Nigeria and Sudan. Demonstration events occur most frequently in South Africa, Algeria, Tunisia, and Nigeria.

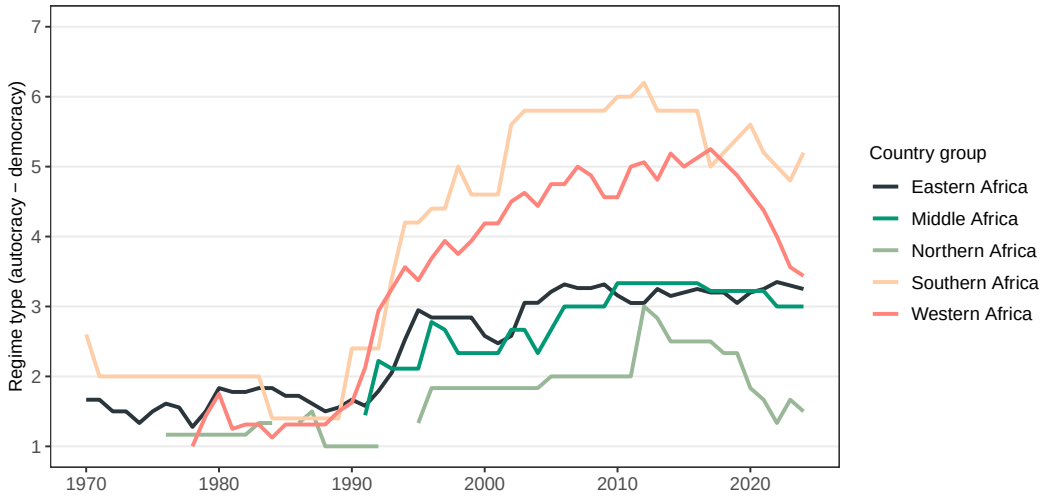
2.4 Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)

Data on regime types comes from V-Dem (Coppedge et al. 2024). V-Dem provides measures on the extent of democracy in countries based on expert reports. The project provides information on five aggregated measures: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian democracy. It also classifies countries into democracies and autocracies based on the Regimes of the World (RoW) measure (Lührmann et al. 2018). The basic regime types are closed autocracy, electoral autocracy, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy. The RoW measure with ambiguous cases also identifies countries close to thresholds and ranges from 0: closed autocracy to 9: liberal democracy. Despite holding elections, most African countries are considered to be either (electoral) autocracies or electoral democracies with limited civil liberties or lacking constraints on the executive.

As show in Figure 3, Africa is currently experiencing a democratic recession. There are now fewer democracies in Africa than there were 20 years ago. While the 1990s saw a wave of democratization, in which many countries moved from being closed autocracies towards electoral autocracies (scores 2–4) and electoral democracies (scores 5–7), the last decade has seen a reversal. Figure A.5 in the appendix illustrates the average values of the regime score during our study period 2002–2021.

A summary of the variables used in this study can be found in Table A.1 in the appendix.

Figure 3: Average yearly regime scores across country groups during 1970–2024



Notes: Average values of the Regimes of the World (RoW) measure (Lührmann et al. 2018) over time by country group. 0=Closed autocracy,..., 9=Liberal democracy. Data source: V-Dem.

3 Empirical strategy

We estimate how exposure to conflict events influences individuals' democratic preferences. To establish the direction of causality, we take advantage of the timing of survey collection and the occurrences of conflict events (for a similar approach, see e.g., Clark et al. 2020; Giani and Méon 2021). Although the occurrence of conflict is not random, the timing of when an individual is interviewed is considered conditionally exogenous to the timing of a conflict event in the individual's region. We compare individuals who were interviewed shortly before a conflict event in their region, to individuals in the same region interviewed shortly after the event. Given that we have the exact timing of when the survey was conducted, as well as when an event took place, we can estimate the effect of being exposed to conflict on individuals' attitudes towards democracy.

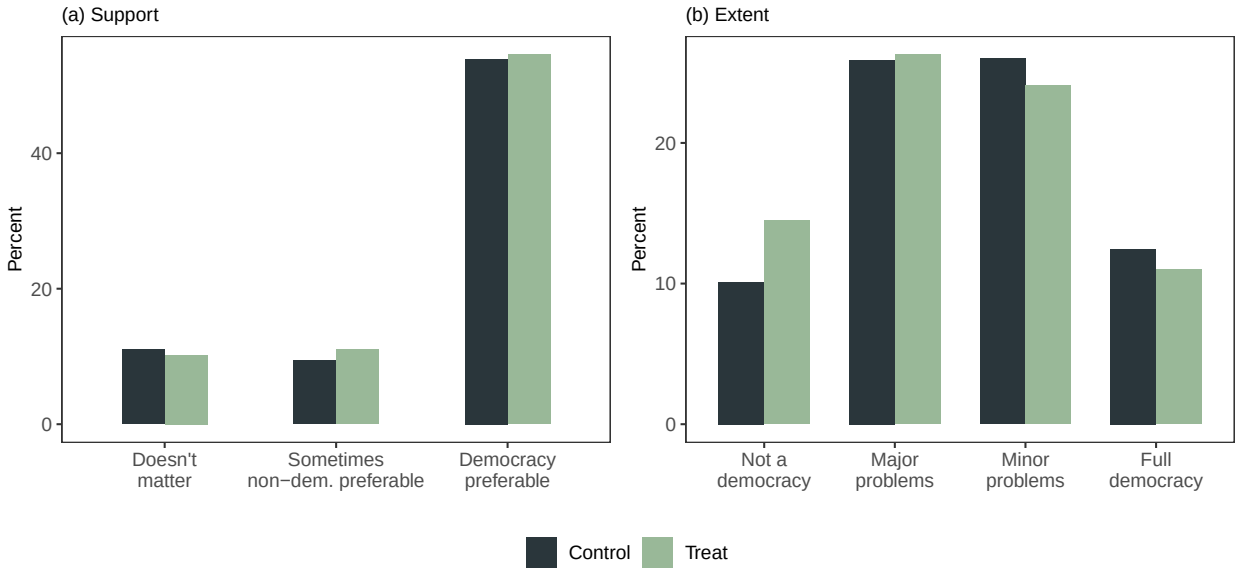
We estimate the following regression model

$$y_{irt} = \beta T_{irt} + \mathbf{x}_i'\boldsymbol{\delta} + \alpha_{r,y(t)} + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{irt} \tag{1}$$

where y_{it} is individual i's stated support for democracy in region r and time t, T_{irt} is the treatment variable, $\mathbf{x}_i$ is a set of individual level controls, $\alpha_{r,y(t)}$ are region×survey-round fixed effects, and λ_t are month-year fixed effects. The inclusion of fixed effects means that we are comparing individuals conditional on treatment status within the same region and survey round. We also extend the regression model to include an interaction effect with a dummy that captures whether an individual is a member of the ethnic in-group or out-group.

In our baseline analysis, we define the treatment as $T_{irt} = 1$ if individual i was exposed to conflict in region r within seven days before being surveyed, and zero if the individual was interviewed within

Figure 4: Conflict exposure and democratic views



Notes: The figure presents share of respondents indicating a specific response category by conflict exposure. (a) Support for democracy: "Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?"; (b) Extent of democracy: "In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [your country] today". Adjusted with the multi-country weighting factor. Treat takes value one if an individual was interviewed within 7 days after an event of violent conflict in their region, and zero if an individual was interviewed within 7 days before such an event.

seven days before a conflict event. We also explore different treatment definitions with respect to the time window around exposure to conflict in one's region (see Section B). We consider violent events and demonstration events separately. Standard errors are clustered at country level to allow for within country spatial correlation of conflict.

Figure 4 presents distributions of our main outcome variables, support for democracy and perceived extent of democracy, in the treatment and control groups. Treatment is defined based on exposure to an event of violent conflict or protest within a seven-day period. The graph shows that support for democracy, i.e., individuals views on governance in general, is on average very similar in the treated group than in the control group. The perceived extent of democracy is on average lower among individuals exposed to conflict.

3.1 Validity

The identifying assumption is that within a region and within a relatively short period of time, timing of the interview is as-good-as-random with respect to the timing of conflict events. The main threat to identification is that conflict influences the survey collection and the timing of who is interviewed when. The Afrobarometer country teams make detailed fieldwork deployment plans that include a route plan, planning for transportation and hiring vehicles, booking rest houses, and so on. A key motivation for detailed plans is to match the language skills of the interviewees with

the languages spoken in the areas to be visited (Afrobarometer 2017).

Table D.1 presents the balance of pre-treatment covariates and pre-treatment conflict events, with respect to exposure to violent events. Table D.2 shows the balance with respect to protest exposure. Each variable is regressed on the treatment dummy, as well as region×survey-round and month-year fixed effects. Note that the resulting sample is considerably smaller than the full Afrobarometer data. There are somewhat more treated than control observations, which is due to conflict events being relatively frequent. Figure A.6 shows the number of treated and control observations in each round. In general, the individuals interviewed shortly before or after a conflict event in their region are very similar to each other. There are some differences when considering protest exposure, with demonstration events being more likely in urban areas, where people are slightly more educated and where protest events are more likely to reoccur. In the following analysis, we include controls for individual characteristics, gender, age, education, employment, and for urban areas. Importantly, either the number of unsuccessful calls, or the number of calls made to the home where the interview took place, do not differ between those interviewed before or after a conflict event, suggesting that individuals were not less likely to participate after conflict exposure.

4 Results

4.1 Effects of Conflict Exposure

We examine the impact of conflict exposure on individuals' democratic views, both in general and regarding governance within their country. We compare individuals who were interviewed shortly after a conflict event in their region to those interviewed shortly before it. Table 1 presents the regression results. The outcome in columns (1)-(2) is support for democracy in general, and in columns (3)-(4) perceived extent of democracy within one's country. All specifications include controls for individual characteristics: gender, age, age squared, education, employment status, and urban location. All specifications also control for region-round fixed effects and month-year fixed effects. We define exposure based on time to an event taking place in one's region: An individual is treated if a conflict event occurred in her region within seven days before she was interviewed. We examine the impacts of violent events (first row) and demonstration events (second row) separately.[8]

The estimates show that exposure to conflict has a positive impact on support for democracy. The point estimates indicate that on average, a conflict event in one's region increases the probability of support for democracy above other forms of governance by 2 percentage points. Exposure to violent events and exposure to protests have very similar impacts. In contrast, individuals' perceptions of governance in their own country are not significantly affected by conflict exposure.

Appendix Table D.3 shows results regarding approval of authoritarian forms of governance; one-party rule, military rule, and one-man rule. We do not find that conflict exposure has a systematic effect on approval of authoritarian governance. However, exposure to protests has a significant

8. As demonstration events are more common than violent events, the resulting sample when using protest exposure as treatment is larger.

Table 1: Effect of conflict exposure on democratic views

	Support for democracy		Extent of democracy	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Violence	0.022**		0.043	
	(0.010)		(0.030)	
Protest		0.023**		-0.001
		(0.010)		(0.019)
N	24883	42694	24467	42248
R^2	0.11	0.11	0.20	0.19
Mean(Y)	0.73	0.72	2.49	2.52
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(2) is a dummy that takes value one if the interviewee indicated that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. The dependent variable in columns (3)-(4) is perceived extent of democracy, which takes values 1–4. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

negative effect on support for military rule. The point estimates are also suggestive of violence exposure having a positive effect on the approval of military rule.

4.2 Effects of Conflict Exposure by Ethnic In-Group Status

We consider ethnicity as a moderating factor in shaping individuals' views on the current government and their democratic preferences and examine how an individuals ethnic in-group status—belonging to an ethnic group whose representatives have meaningful access to state power—conditions the effect of conflict exposure. As in-group status influences individuals' social standing and access to benefits and other resources (Horowitz 1993), exposure to conflict may shape democratic views differently among in-group and out-group members. We define in-group status based on EPR measures of power access (Vogt et al. 2015). Individuals belonging to ethnic groups that either rule alone or share power are defined as the in-group, while individuals belonging to ethnic groups without access to state power are defined as the out-group. Due to limited overlap of ethnicities listed per country in the Afrobarometer and the EPR, this analysis is conducted using a subsample of the data.

The results are presented in Table 2. The first two columns show the estimates on support for democracy. The coefficients on Violence and Protest represent estimates of conflict exposure for the ethnic out-group, and the interaction terms test for differences in the effects between in-group and out-group. The point estimates are imprecisely estimated, but suggest that exposure to violence

Table 2: Effect of conflict exposure on democratic views by in-group status

	Support for democracy		Extent of democracy	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Violence	0.036		0.122**	
	(0.026)		(0.050)	
Violence×In-group	-0.032		-0.018	
	(0.022)		(0.083)	
Protest		0.027		-0.053
		(0.032)		(0.086)
Protest×In-group		0.001		0.048
		(0.032)		(0.081)
In-group	0.071*	0.069**	0.155***	0.100
	(0.034)	(0.028)	(0.047)	(0.076)
N	8004	12979	7874	12883
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.20	0.21
Mean(Y)	0.72	0.75	2.52	2.56
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X

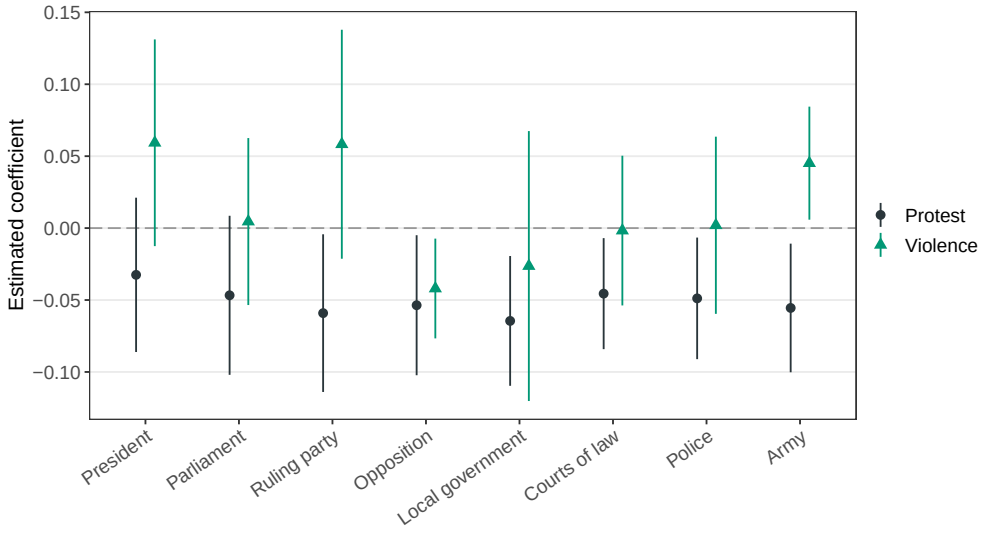
$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(2) is a dummy that takes value one if the interviewee indicated that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. The dependent variable in columns (3)-(4) is perceived extent of democracy, which takes values 1–4. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

increases support for democracy among out-group members, while the point estimate of similar magnitude and opposite sign suggests no effect among in-group members.

Columns (3) and (4) show estimates on the perceived extent of democracy. Estimates suggest that, in this smaller sample, exposure to violence has a significant positive impact on individuals' perceptions of governance in their own country. A potential explanation for this finding is the 'rally round the flag' phenomenon: In times of crises, people turn to the government to provide stability and safety and tend to perceive the state in a more positive light (Chatagnier 2012). The coefficients on protest exposure suggest opposing effects among out-group and in-group, but lack statistical significance. It should be noted that the baseline level of support for democracy as well as the perceived extent of democracy is higher among the in-group than among the out-group.

To further examine effects in different ethnic power groups, we also estimate the model using a categorical ethnicity variable with three categories: Senior partners, junior partners, and powerless. These results are presented in Appendix C. The analysis shows a striking difference in baseline levels of support for democracy and the extent of democracy based on ethnic groups' access to state

Figure 5: Effects of conflict exposure on trust in institutions



Notes: The figure presents estimates for the effect of conflict exposure on trust in institutions. Each dot represents an estimate from a separate regression. Individual controls, region-round FEs and month-year FEs included. Vertical bars represent 95 % confidence intervals. Light green triangles represent estimates of violence exposure, and dark green dots represent estimates of protest exposure.

power. The powerless group has significantly more negative views on both democracy as a form of governance and the extent of democracy in their own country, with both potentially explained by the groups' lack of political representation.

4.3 Trust in Institutions

To better understand the mechanisms behind our findings, we examine how conflict exposure influences individuals' trust in institutions[9]. Figure 5 presents the results. While most of the estimates remain imprecise, there is a clear pattern of differences between exposure to violence and exposure to protests: Protest exposure decreases trust across the board, whereas violence tends to increase trust in ruling political institutions (president and ruling party) and the army, and decrease trust in the opposition (see also Appendix Table D.5). The negative effects of protest exposure are intuitive. Protests are a form of uprising or discontent in society, often directed at institutions in power. Exposure to protests can therefore increase the salience of such discontent, leading to lower levels of trust in institutions.

We also examine the impacts on trust conditional on in-group status. Table 3 presents the estimates, showing that the effects of conflict exposure vary significantly depending on individuals' in-group status. First, there is a clear average effect of violence increasing trust in institutions among the out-group, while the effect on the in-group is significantly smaller or even negative.

9. See Appendix A for details of the survey questions.

Table 3: Effect of conflict exposure on trust in institutions by in-group status

	Trust in...							
	President	Parliament	Ruling party	Opposition	Local government	Courts of law	Police	Army
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Violence								
Violence	0.214**	0.066	0.223*	0.005	0.040	0.106	0.179***	0.181***
	(0.100)	(0.155)	(0.113)	(0.184)	(0.072)	(0.071)	(0.061)	(0.051)
Violence×In-group	-0.035	-0.020	-0.117	-0.039	0.003	-0.103	-0.205**	-0.129*
	(0.103)	(0.114)	(0.096)	(0.176)	(0.048)	(0.083)	(0.093)	(0.064)
In-group	0.146	0.067*	0.300***	-0.078	0.053	0.056	0.148	0.153**
	(0.112)	(0.036)	(0.062)	(0.130)	(0.090)	(0.100)	(0.107)	(0.069)
N	8309	8143	8262	8083	8181	8198	8403	7575
R^2	0.22	0.18	0.18	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.24	0.23
Mean(Y)	1.59	1.37	1.39	1.17	1.37	1.55	1.32	1.86
Panel B: Protest								
Protest	0.072	0.058	0.024	-0.127***	-0.111	-0.135**	-0.043	-0.092***
	(0.101)	(0.121)	(0.076)	(0.030)	(0.088)	(0.059)	(0.042)	(0.032)
Protest×In-group	-0.140	-0.155	-0.128	0.048	-0.013	0.042	-0.107**	-0.020
	(0.113)	(0.134)	(0.080)	(0.041)	(0.099)	(0.071)	(0.051)	(0.045)
In-group	0.278**	0.131	0.267**	-0.151**	0.060	-0.085	0.164*	0.057
	(0.114)	(0.179)	(0.122)	(0.060)	(0.167)	(0.074)	(0.079)	(0.034)
N	13480	13291	13284	13119	13128	13243	13573	12681
R^2	0.24	0.16	0.22	0.10	0.13	0.18	0.24	0.27
Mean(Y)	1.59	1.27	1.33	1.08	1.18	1.51	1.21	1.71
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable is trust in (1) president, (2) parliament, (3) ruling party, (4) opposition, (5) local government, (6) courts of law, (7) police, (8) army. The outcomes take values 0=Not at all, 1=A little bit, 2=A lot, 3=A very great deal. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. In-group is a dummy for belonging to an ethnic in-group. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

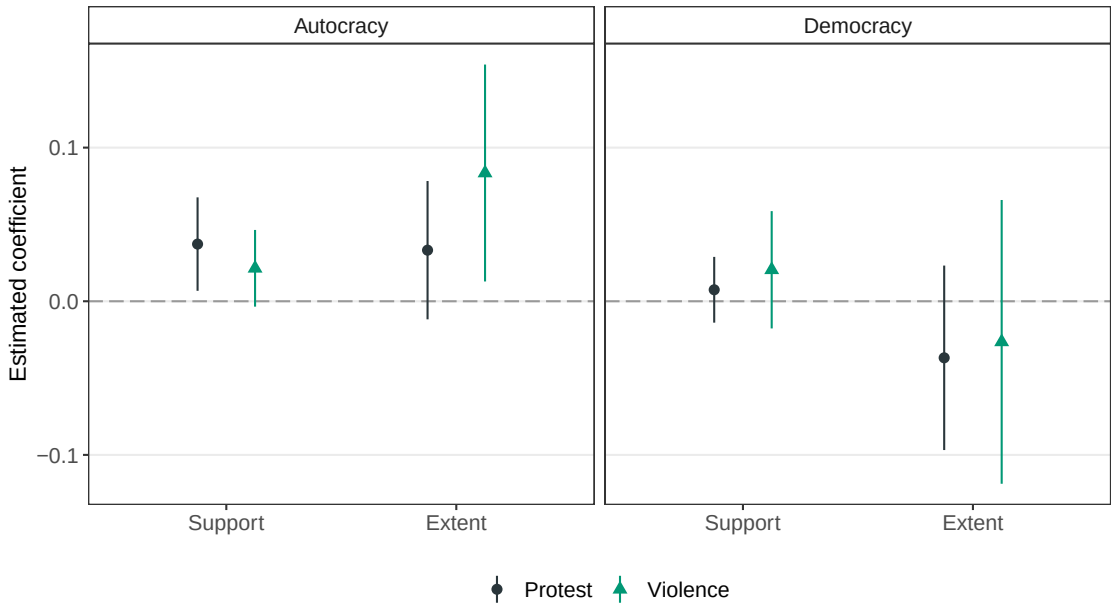
More specifically, exposure to violent events significantly increases trust in president and ruling party, as well as in the police and army—but significantly less for the in-group than for the out-group. These findings are consistent with the rally-around-the-flag effect being more pronounced among the out-group, who tend have lower baseline level of trust than the in-group.

Second, protest exposure significantly decreases the trust in various institutions—opposition, local government, courts of law, police, and army, although the effect on trust in local government and police are not statistically significant. For the most part, these effects do not significantly differ between the in-group and out-group, except for trust in the police, which decreases more among in-group members.

4.4 Effects by Regime Type

We examine how the direction and intensity of the effects of conflict exposure vary depending on the regime type. The current regime type may influence individuals' expectations about democracy,

Figure 6: Effects of conflict exposure on democratic preferences by regime type



Notes: The figure presents estimates for the effect of conflict exposure on democratic preferences, separately in autocracies (left panel) and democracies (right panel). Each dot represents an estimate from a separate regression. Individual controls, region-round FEs and month-year FEs included. Vertical bars represent 95 % confidence intervals. Light green triangles represent estimates of violence exposure, and dark green dots represent estimates of protest exposure.

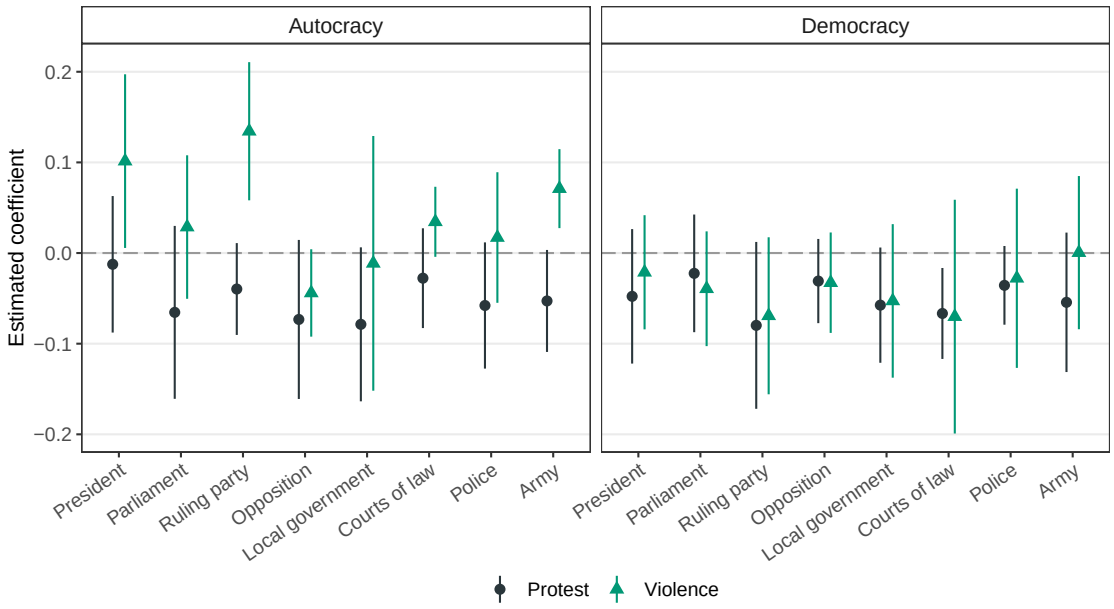
especially whether a more democratic government would be better at providing safety or lowering societal cleavages.

Using the regime variable from V-Dem, we split the sample into autocratic and democratic countries. However, many countries classified as democratic exhibit non-democratic features, such as limited civil liberties. Similarly, countries designated as autocracies often display some democratic elements, such as holding elections, even if they offer little real chance of changing the government. Even among autocratic countries, there is substantial variation in our outcome measures. It is worth noting that very few countries in our sample are classified as closed autocracies.[10] As Figure 6 shows, the average effects of conflict exposure differ substantially between more autocratic and more democratic countries. In autocracies, exposure to either violence or protests increases both support for democracy and the perceived extent of democracy. Conversely, in democratic countries, conflict exposure does not have a significant impact on democratic preferences, although the point estimates suggest that the perceived extent of democracy is negatively affected.

The effects on trust also diverge between autocratic and democratic countries (Figure 7). In autocracies, exposure to violence generally increases trust in key political institutions, particularly in president and ruling party, as well as in the army. Trust in parliament, opposition, local government,

10. Only three countries, Egypt, Eswatini and Sudan, are classified as closed autocracies at any point while included in our sample.

Figure 7: Effects of conflict exposure on trust in institutions by regime type



Notes: The figure presents estimates for the effect of conflict exposure on trust in institutions, separately in autocracies (left panel) and democracies (right panel). Each dot represents an estimate from a separate regression. Individual controls, region-round FEs and month-year FEs included. Vertical bars represent 95 % confidence intervals. Light green triangles represent estimates of violence exposure, and dark green dots represent estimates of protest exposure.

and courts of law is not significantly affected, although the estimates suggest a negative effect on trust in opposition. This pattern suggests that violence may increase support for those in power, consistent with a rally-around-the-flag effect. Exposure to protests appears to reduce trust across the board, although the estimates are imprecise. In democracies, the effects of conflict exposure on trust are less pronounced. Although not statistically significant, the estimates point towards both violence and protests having negative effects on trust.

Taken together, our findings underscore the marked differences in the effects of conflict exposure across regime types. In autocracies, violence often strengthens pro-government attitudes, with suggestive evidence that out-groups perceiving the state more favorably. Whereas in more democratic settings, violence does not have a significant influence on democratic views. In democratic settings, however, conflict exposure may highlight institutional shortcomings, decreasing trust in institutions.

4.5 Heterogeneity and Robustness

We further examine heterogeneity by severity of the conflict event and the actors involved in the conflict. In addition, we extend our baseline estimation by varying the time window to the event as a robustness test. We report and discuss these analyses in more detail in Appendix B.

First, we consider the severity of the event by focusing on events with fatalities (Table B.1).

Estimates show that the positive effect of exposure to conflict on support for democracy only remains when treatment is defined as larger violent events (five fatalities or more). The impact on democratic support does not differ significantly between in-group and out-group members, but point estimates suggest that the effect is smaller among in-group members. Similarly, major violent events decrease perceived extent of democracy.

Second, we explore heterogeneity by actors involved in the conflict events. Specifically, we distinguish whether an event involves the state or not, and whether it involves civilian victims. As shown in Figure B.1, exposure to conflict increases democratic support when state forces are involved, whereas conflict events without state involvement increase the perceived extent of democracy.

Finally, since the choice of time window used to define the treatment and control group is somewhat ad hoc, we test the treatment effects using longer time windows of 14, 21, and 28 days. Figure B.2 shows the effects of exposure to conflict on democratic views and Figure B.3 presents the effects on trust. The results suggest that the impact of exposure to violence on support for democracy is short-term. Coefficients are positive and statistically significant when using 7- and 14-day windows, but become negligible with longer time windows. In contrast, the point estimates suggest that the effect of violence on the perceived extent of democracy is more persistent, although estimates are imprecise. Protest exposure has a persistent effect on support for democracy but does not affect perceived extent of democracy. Regarding trust, both violence and protest exposure have a fairly persistent effects.

5 Conclusions

This paper examines how exposure to conflict events influences individuals' democratic preferences—democratic support in general, and perceived extent of democracy in one's country. In particular, we focus on how an individual's in-group or out-group status, determined by their ethnicity, influences preferences when exposed to conflict. By doing so, this paper contributes to a better understanding of the development of democratic views and democratic institutions in hybrid regimes, specifically those with ethnically diverse populations. Given the crucial role that institutions play in economic growth (e.g., Tavares and Wacziarg 2001; Acemoglu et al. 2005), understanding democratic support and its persistence, a necessary condition for democratization, is of key importance.

Using rich data for a large sample of African countries over a long period of time, we examine the causal effects of conflict exposure, taking advantage of the timing of survey fieldwork with respect to the timing of conflict events. Our findings show that exposure to conflict events on average has a positive impact on support for democracy, while the perceived extent of democracy is not significantly affected. We also show that conflict exposure affects trust in institutions, with significant heterogeneity between in-group and out-group members. Furthermore, in autocratic regimes, exposure to violence enhances democratic support and can paradoxically improve perceptions of democracy and trust in ruling institutions. In democratic regimes, exposure to violence does not have significant effects on democratic views.

Our findings underscore the importance of understanding how conflict shapes political attitudes within diverse social and institutional contexts. Our results point to the potential for conflict to mobilize both pro-democratic sentiments and increase support for the state. Although our findings indicate that support for democracy is remarkably persistent, they also show that conflict exposure can increase perceived extent of democracy. This suggests that conflict exposure makes people more supportive of the current government–consistent with the rally around the flag effect.

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Conflict and Democratic Preferences

Online Appendix

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June, 2025

Appendix A Data and Summary Statistics

Subsection A.1 Afrobarometer

Figure A.1 shows the share of respondents indicating a specific response category in our two outcome variables.

In addition to our main outcomes of interest, we examine further questions measuring attitudes to authoritarian forms of governance. Specifically we use the following set of statements: "There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives:" [*Strongly disapprove; Disapprove; Neither approve nor disapprove; Approve; Strongly approve*]

- One-party rule: "Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?"
- Military rule: "The army comes in to govern the country?"
- One-man rule: "Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything?"

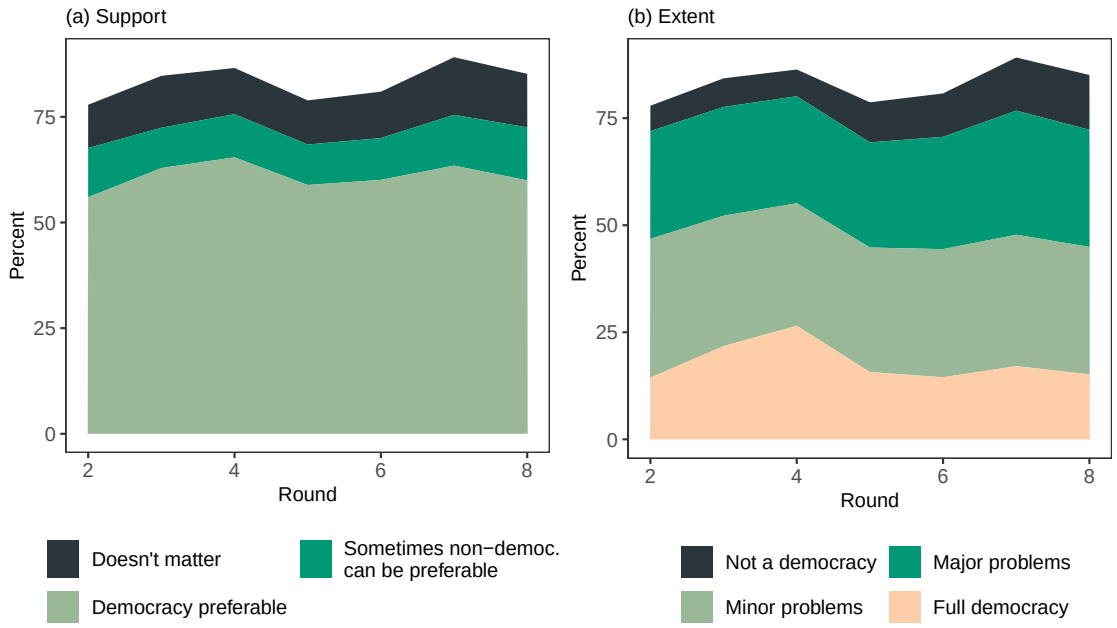
Figure A.2 show the share of respondents indicating a specific response category in these variables. See also summary statistics in Table A.1.

We also examine trust in institutions to explore the mechanisms behind our results. The survey question we use is: "How much do you trust each of the following:" [*Not at all; Just a little; Somewhat; A lot*]

- President/Prime minister (asked about the key leadership figure)
- Parliament/National assembly
- Ruling party
- Opposition political parties
- Elected local government council: Metropolitan, municipal or district assembly
- Courts of law
- Police
- Army[1]

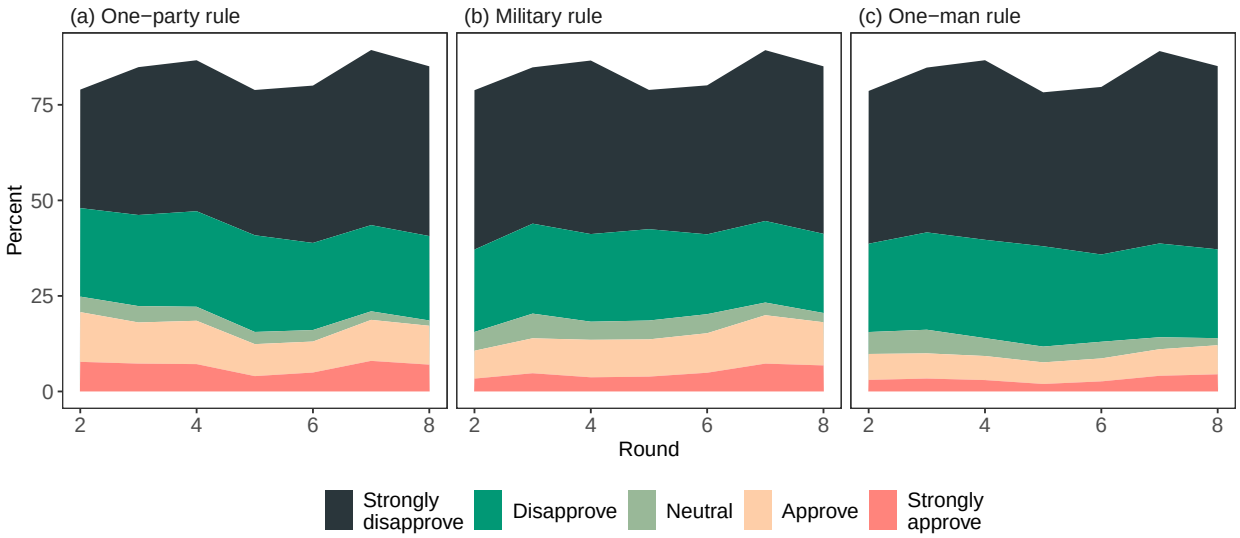
1 Not included in Round 4.

Figure A.1: Afrobarometer: attitudes towards democracy



Notes: The charts present share of respondents indicating a specific response category by survey wave. (a) Support for democracy: "Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?"; (b) Extent of democracy: "In your opinion, how much of a democracy is [country] today". Missing, Refused to answer, and Don't know are treated as missing. Adjusted with the multi-country weighting factor.

Figure A.2: Afrobarometer: attitudes towards alternative forms of government



Notes: The charts present share of respondents indicating a specific response category by survey wave. The questions are the following: There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives: (a) One-party rule: "Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?" (b) Military rule: "The army comes in to govern the country?" (c) One-man rule: "Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything?" Missing, Refused to answer, and Don't know are treated as missing. Adjusted with the multi-country weighting factor.

Subsection A.2 Summary Statistics

Table A.1: Respondent summary statistics

	Mean	Std.Dev.	N
Support for democracy (dummy)	0.73	0.44	249391
Extent of democracy	2.66	0.92	245209
Approval of one-party rule	2.02	1.30	262127
Approval of military rule	1.98	1.26	260743
Approval of one-man rule	1.77	1.08	254679
Treat: Violence	0.60	0.49	27541
Treat: Protest	0.68	0.47	47406
Number of violent events (7 days)	2.45	20.60	269645
Number of demonstration events (7 days)	3.77	16.38	269645
Ethnic in-group	0.86	0.35	81261
Age	36.91	14.70	267605
Female	0.50	0.50	269645
Education	3.25	2.09	264247
Employment	1.21	1.17	268480
Urban	0.40	0.49	269645
Regime type	1.59	0.70	269645
Regime: democracy	0.52	0.50	269645

The treatment dummies take value one if a conflict event was recorded in the individuals region within seven days before being surveyed, and zero if the respondent was interviewed within seven days after an event. Treat: Violence is a dummy for a violent event, and Treat: Protest is a dummy for demonstration event. Number of violent events and demonstration events refers to number of events in individual's region within seven days before being surveyed. Ethnic in-group takes value one when an individual belongs to an ethnic group whose representatives have meaningful access to state power. Employment is employment status in a job that pays cash income. Regime type takes values from 0=closed autocracy to 3=liberal democracy.

Table A.2: Summary statistics on ethnic power groups

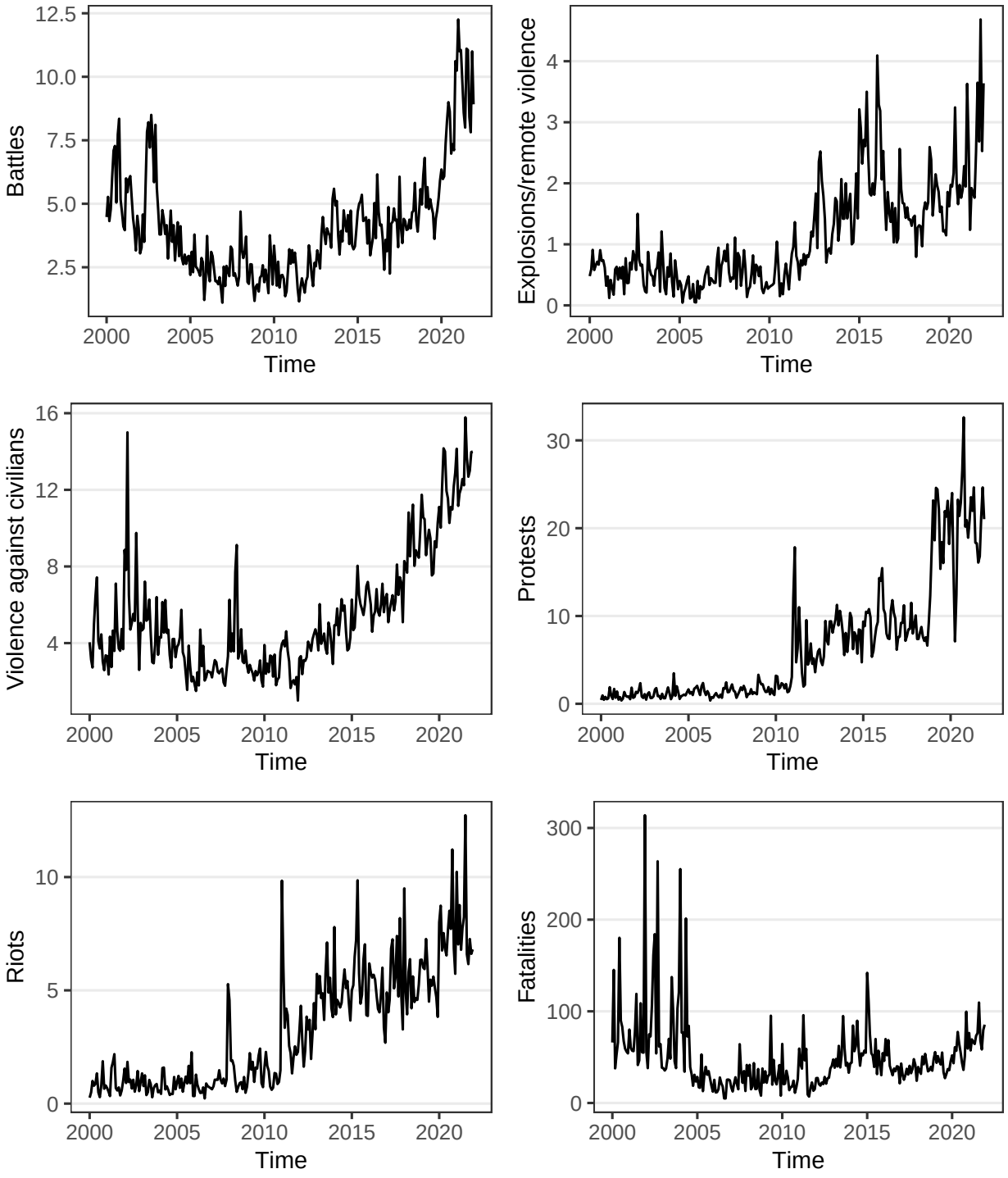
	Powerless			Junior			Senior			Powerless-Junior		Junior-Senior	
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Diff.	SE	Diff.	SE
Support (dummy)	10403	0.71	0.45	31982	0.75	0.43	32698	0.75	0.44	-0.04	0.008***	0.01	0.009
Extent	10288	2.65	0.89	31594	2.57	0.90	32106	2.75	0.90	0.08	0.035	-0.17	0.018**
One-party rule	11006	2.05	1.30	33416	1.94	1.24	34392	2.06	1.31	0.11	0.027	-0.11	0.027
Military rule	10851	1.98	1.24	33117	1.95	1.23	34168	1.97	1.26	0.04	0.036	-0.02	0.019
Dictatorship	10657	1.83	1.12	32785	1.77	1.07	33571	1.86	1.16	0.07	0.017	-0.10	0.01***
Female	11532	0.50	0.50	34284	0.50	0.50	35445	0.50	0.50	0.01	0.011**	-0.01	0.006***
Urban	11532	0.37	0.48	34284	0.44	0.50	35445	0.38	0.48	-0.07	0.03*	0.06	0.016
Age	11345	36.06	14.79	33847	35.64	14.08	35005	36.25	14.38	0.42	0.465	-0.61	0.414
Education	11362	3.03	2.01	33759	3.32	2.15	35109	2.96	2.10	-0.29	0.084**	0.36	0.072
Employment	11415	1.20	1.13	34123	1.22	1.15	35291	1.05	1.13	-0.02	0.047*	0.17	0.022

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. Differences are within country-round. Weighted with the multi-country weighting factor. Powerless includes discriminated, irrelevant, and powerless groups. Junior includes junior partners, and Senior includes senior partners and dominant groups.

Subsection A.3 Additional Figures

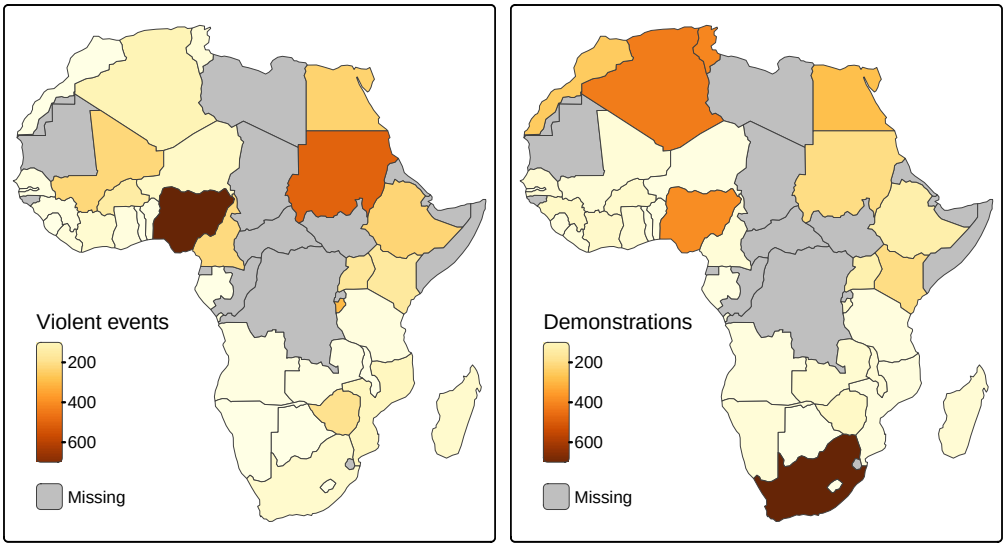
This Appendix presents additional figures describing our data. Figure A.3 shows time series of monthly average numbers of events across countries in different event categories, and Figure A.4 show average number of conflict regime scores during our study period. Figure A.5 show average regime scores during our study period. Figure A.6 shows the sample sizes in treatment and control group for each Afrobarometer round, based on exposure to violent events (panel (a)) or Demonstration events (panel (b)).

Figure A.3: Average monthly number of different types of conflict events and fatalities across countries in 2000-2021. Data source: ACLED



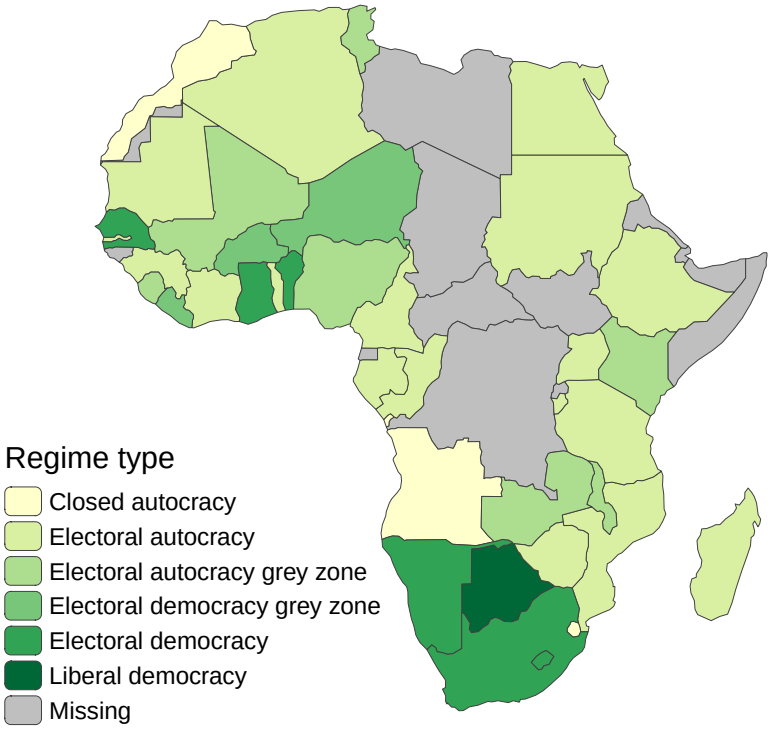
Notes: The figure shows the monthly average number of events across all countries included in the Afrobarometer Rounds 2–8.

Figure A.4: Average number of violent events (left) and demonstration events (right) in 2002–2021. Data source: ACLED



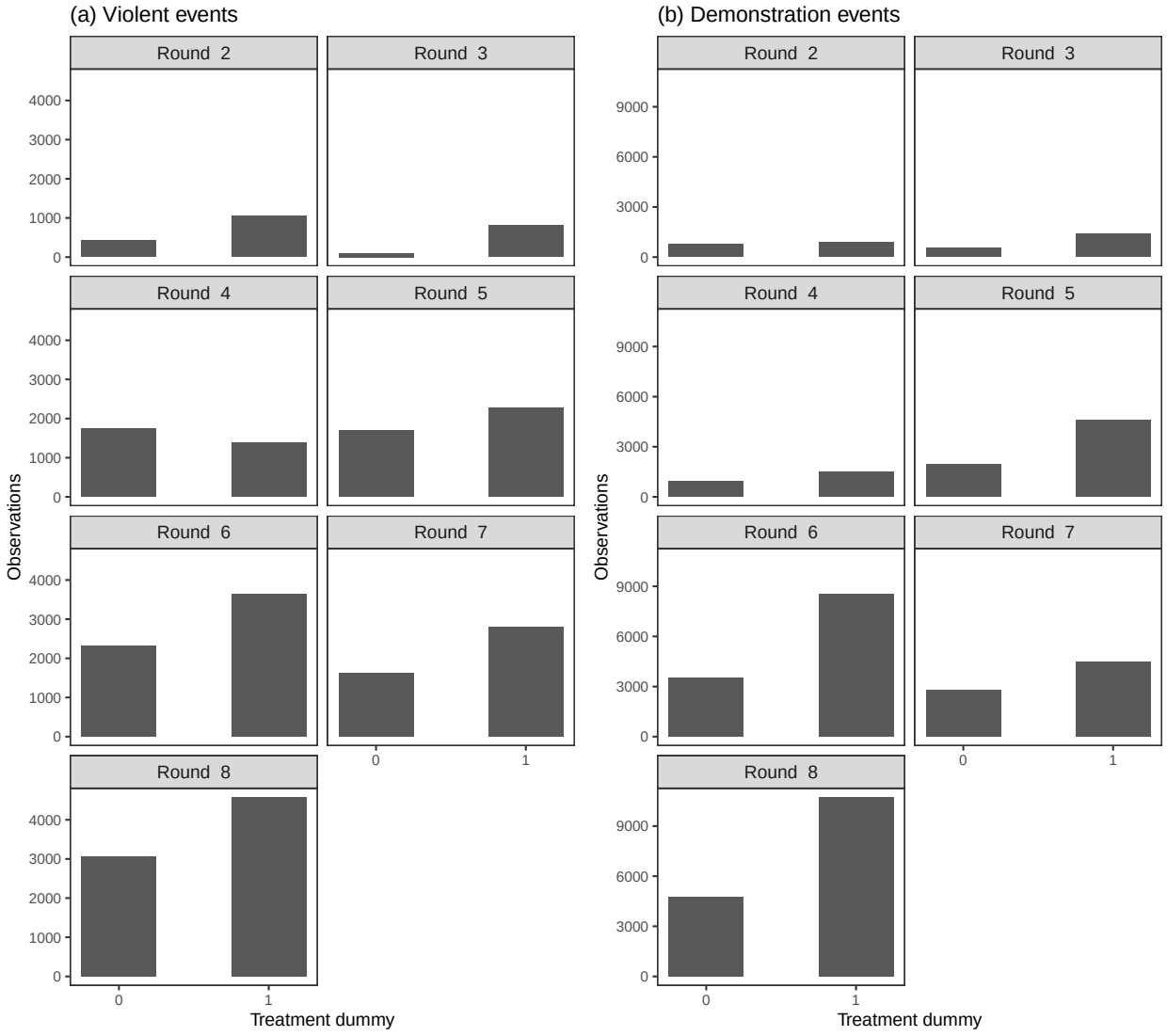
Notes: The figure shows the average yearly number of conflict events per 1000 inhabitants in our sample period (2002–2021) in countries included in the Afrobarometer. Violent events: battles, explosions/remote violence, violence against civilians. Demonstration events: protests, riots.

Figure A.5: Regime type



Notes: The figure shows the average values of the Regimes of the World (RoW) measure (Lührmann et al. 2018) in 2002–2021 across all countries included in the Afrobarometer Rounds 2–8. Data source: V-Dem.

Figure A.6: Treatment and control group sizes by round



Notes: The figure shows the number of observations in treatment and control group by Afrobarometer round. In the left panel the treatment is based on exposure to violent events within a week, and in the right panel on demonstration events within a week.

Appendix B Heterogeneity and Robustness

Subsection B.1 Event Severity

To examine what role event severity plays, we next define the treatment based on the number of fatalities involved in the most severe event within the seven-day window. Specifically, we consider whether there was an event in the individual's region that involved any fatalities, or an event that involved at least five fatalities. Table B.1 presents the estimates. Columns (1)-(2) and (5)-(6) present average estimates for the sample, and columns (3)-(4) and (7)-(8) present effects conditional on in-group status. First, the estimates for the average effects indicate that the positive effect of conflict exposure on support for democracy disappears when treatment is defined solely based on events with fatalities. The point estimates remain positive but not statistically significant. The effect becomes significant in the smaller subsample when we condition on in-group status. As in the baseline model in Table **??**, the coefficient on the interaction term suggests smaller or no impact among the in-group. Second, there is no average effect on the perceived extent of democracy. However, the estimates in the last column show that the perceived extent decreases in the subsample with ethnicity—similar to the baseline results. Again, the point estimate for the interaction term suggests that this effect is smaller for the in-group.

Table B.1: Effect of conflict exposure on democratic views by event severity

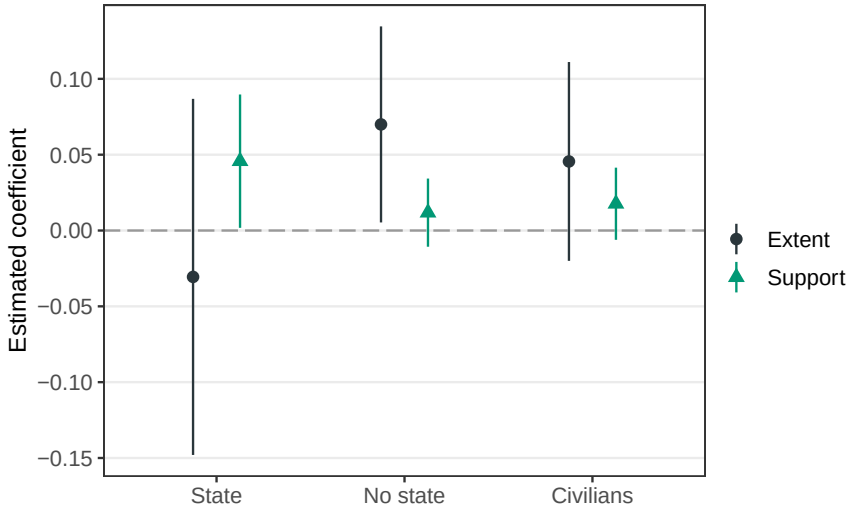
	Support of democracy				Extent of democracy			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Fatalities> 0	0.009		0.052		-0.021		0.134	
	(0.016)		(0.044)		(0.024)		(0.149)	
Fatalities> 0×In-group			-0.041				-0.184	
			(0.041)				(0.132)	
Fatalities≥ 5		0.017		0.059***		-0.021		-0.096**
		(0.016)		(0.016)		(0.098)		(0.034)
Fatalities≥ 5×In-group				-0.053				-0.033
				(0.046)				(0.186)
In-group			0.068	-0.072			0.210**	0.168**
			(0.061)	(0.072)			(0.092)	(0.067)
N	21249	5797	6687	1683	20981	5689	6641	1657
R^2	0.12	0.13	0.10	0.10	0.21	0.23	0.22	0.20
Mean(Y)	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.75	2.49	2.31	2.57	2.41
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(4) is a dummy that takes value one if the interviewee indicated that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. The dependent variable in columns (5)-(8) is perceived extent of democracy, which takes values 1–4. *Fatalities*> 0 is a dummy that takes value one if a conflict event with at least one fatality occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. *Fatalities*≥ 5 is a dummy for an event with at least five fatalities. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

Subsection B.2 Actors Involved in Conflict

We also explore heterogeneity by actors involved in the conflict events. We examine exposure to violent events, and distinguish whether an event involves the state or not, and whether it involves civilian victims.[2] Figure B.1 presents the results.[3] Conflict exposure increases support for democracy when state forces are involved, whereas absence of state forces increases the perceived level of democracy.

Figure B.1: Effects of conflict exposure by perpetrator on trust in institutions



Notes: The figure presents estimates for the effect of conflict exposure on democratic views. Each dot represents an estimate from a separate regression. *State* is a dummy that takes value one if a conflict event involving state forces occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. *No state* is a dummy for an event without state involvement, and *Civilians* is a dummy for an event with civilian victims. Individual controls, region-round FEs and month-year FEs included. Vertical bars represent 95 % confidence intervals. Light green triangles represent estimates of violence exposure, and dark green dots represent estimates of protest exposure.

Conditional on in-group status, we find that conflict with no state involvement increases democratic support among the out-group, while the effect is significantly smaller among the in-group (Table B.2). Involvement of civilian victims also has a slight positive effect, and the point estimate on the interaction term suggest smaller effect among in-group. Regarding extent of democracy, we do not find that state involvement matters for perceptions. However, conflict with civilian victims has a positive effect on the perceived extent of democracy.

Subsection B.3 Effects by Time to Event

Finally, we examine treatment effects when we increase the time window for treatment from seven days to 14, 21, and 28 days. Figure B.2 presents estimates for the effects of conflict exposure on democratic views, and Figure B.3 presents estimates on trust in institutions.

2 Violent events include battles, violence against civilians, and explosions/remote violence. *State* refers to state forces, i.e., police forces, government, or military (ACLED 2019).
3 see also Appendix Table D.7.

Table B.2: Effect of conflict exposure on democratic views by actor type

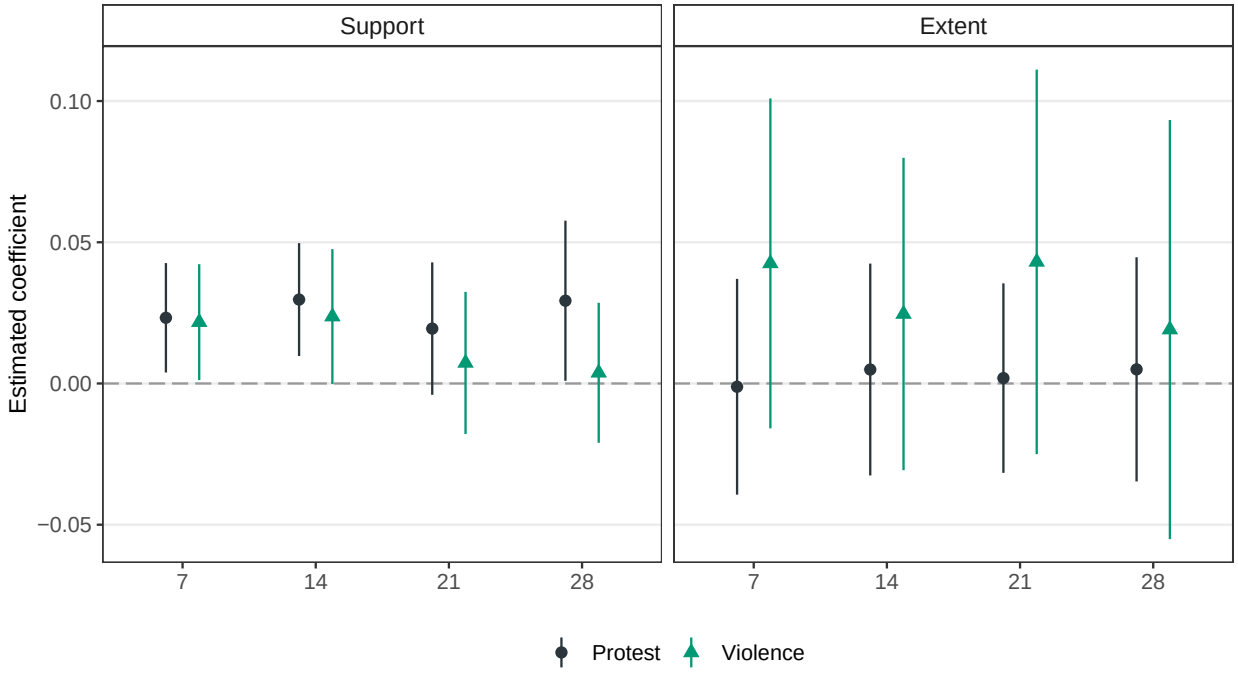
	Support of democracy			Extent of democracy		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
State	-0.017			0.078		
	(0.038)			(0.122)		
State×In-group	0.039			0.129		
	(0.032)			(0.098)		
No state		0.072**			-0.035	
		(0.028)			(0.060)	
No state×In-group		-0.050*			0.139	
		(0.028)			(0.096)	
Civilians			0.060*			0.116*
			(0.032)			(0.057)
Civilians×In-group			-0.046			-0.004
			(0.027)			(0.086)
In-group	0.088**	0.046	0.083**	0.111	0.052	0.159***
	(0.035)	(0.061)	(0.029)	(0.082)	(0.078)	(0.049)
N	4448	5999	6374	4380	5885	6259
R^2	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.20	0.18	0.19
Mean(Y)	0.72	0.72	0.71	2.54	2.52	2.48
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(3) is a dummy that takes value one if the interviewee indicated that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. The dependent variable in columns (4)-(6) is perceived extent of democracy, which takes values 1–4. *State* is a dummy that takes value one if a conflict event involving state forces occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. *No state* is a dummy for an event without state involvement, and *Civilians* is a dummy for an event with civilian victims. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

First, the impact of exposure to violence to democratic support seems to be a short-term one (Figure B.2). The estimated effects on support for democracy are positive and statistically significant when using the 7 and 14 day windows, but become negligible with wider time windows. The estimates indicate that the effect on extent of democracy, less precisely estimate, is somewhat more persistent. Second, the impact of protest exposure on support for democracy is persistent and the point estimates remain stable across different time windows. The perceived extent of democracy is not influenced by protest exposure.

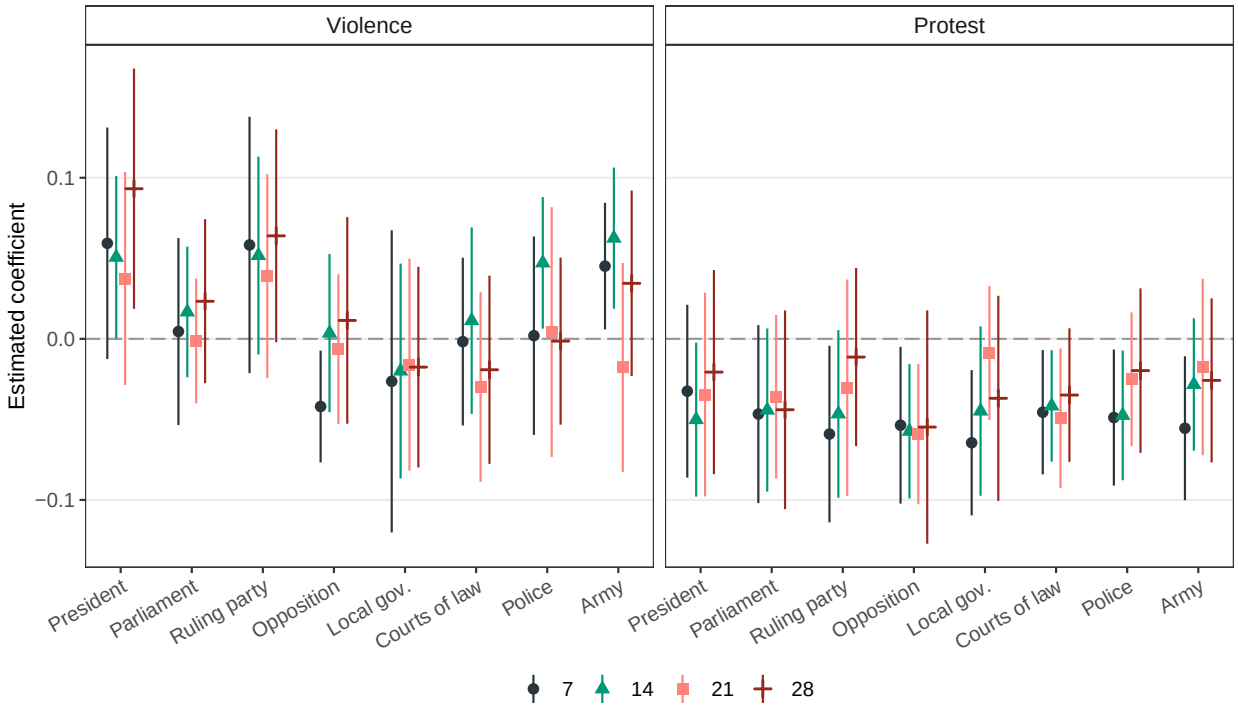
The effects on trust are fairly stable over time. In particular, violence has a positive effect on trust in the president and in the ruling party that is persistent. The effects of protest exposure are also fairly stable, with the negative effect on trust in the opposition and courts of law being most persistent.

Figure B.2: Time sensitivity of the effect of conflict exposure on democratic views



Notes: The figure presents estimates for the effect of conflict exposure on support for democracy (left panel) and perceived extent of democracy (right panel). Each dot represents an estimate from a separate regression with a varying time window used to define treatment. The x-axis shows the time window in days. Light green triangles represent estimates of violence exposure, and dark green dots represent estimates of protest exposure. All specifications include controls, region-round FEs and month-year FEs. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. Vertical bars represent 95 % confidence intervals.

Figure B.3: Time sensitivity of the effect of conflict exposure on trust



Notes: This figure presents estimates for the effect of violence (left panel) and protest (right panel) exposure on trust in institutions. Each dot represents an estimate from a separate regression with a varying time window used to define treatment. The x-axis ticks denote the dependent variable. Colors and shapes denote the time window in days. All specifications include controls, region-round FEs and month-year FEs. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. Vertical bars represent 95 % confidence intervals.

Appendix C Ethnicity

This Appendix presents additional results on conflict exposure conditional on ethnicity. After matching the Afrobarometer and EPR data, our subsample contains the following ethnic power groups: dominant (1 %), senior partner (43 %), junior partner (42 %), powerless (7 %), discriminated (1 %), and irrelevant (6 %). In our main analysis, in-group consists of senior and junior partners, and out-group of the remaining categories. As the group sizes are significantly imbalanced, we also estimate our model using the following three groups: senior, junior, and powerless (consisting of the remaining categories). Table C.1 presents estimates on support for democracy and extent of democracy. Table C.2 presents results on trust in institutions.

Table C.1: Effect of conflict exposure on democratic views—3 power groups

	Support for democracy		Extent of democracy	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Violence	0.000		0.032	
	(0.016)		(0.048)	
Protest		0.012		0.018
		(0.032)		(0.041)
Violence×Powerless	0.037		0.100	
	(0.024)		(0.079)	
Protest×Powerless		0.015		-0.059
		(0.041)		(0.083)
Violence×Senior	0.008		0.135*	
	(0.017)		(0.074)	
Protest×Senior		0.033		-0.044
		(0.043)		(0.063)
Group: Powerless	-0.066*	-0.088***	-0.139**	-0.017
	(0.033)	(0.028)	(0.059)	(0.093)
Group: Senior	0.007	-0.039	0.011	0.185**
	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.050)	(0.086)
N	8004	12979	7874	12883
R^2	0.09	0.10	0.20	0.22
Mean(Y)	0.72	0.75	2.52	2.56
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(2) is a dummy that takes value one if the interviewee indicated that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. The dependent variables in columns (3)-(4) is perceived extent of democracy, which takes values 1–4. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Ethnic power groups: senior, junior (reference category), and powerless. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

Table C.2: Effect of conflict exposure on trust in institutions by in-group status—Power groups

	Trust in...							
	President	Parliament	Ruling party	Opposition	Local government	Courts of law	Police	Army
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Violence								
Violence	0.098	-0.026	0.030	-0.017	-0.018	-0.089	-0.079	-0.004
	(0.080)	(0.082)	(0.109)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.072)	(0.059)	(0.095)
Violence×Powerless	0.129	0.096	0.206	0.011	0.064	0.203*	0.259***	0.190*
	(0.124)	(0.156)	(0.142)	(0.207)	(0.088)	(0.099)	(0.085)	(0.103)
Violence×Senior	0.148	0.131	0.141	-0.036	0.112	0.166**	0.093	0.094
	(0.111)	(0.110)	(0.139)	(0.075)	(0.138)	(0.064)	(0.085)	(0.098)
Group: Powerless	-0.113	-0.155	-0.276**	-0.053	-0.094	-0.118	-0.243**	-0.197*
	(0.119)	(0.116)	(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.090)	(0.125)	(0.111)	(0.105)
Group: Senior	0.032	-0.131	0.021	-0.174**	-0.065	-0.097	-0.135***	-0.064
	(0.098)	(0.130)	(0.147)	(0.061)	(0.120)	(0.062)	(0.040)	(0.110)
N	8309	8143	8262	8083	8181	8198	8403	7575
R^2	0.22	0.18	0.18	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.24	0.23
Mean(Y)	1.59	1.37	1.39	1.17	1.37	1.55	1.32	1.86
Panel B: Protest								
Protest	-0.072**	-0.095	-0.089**	-0.121*	-0.096	-0.092**	-0.122***	-0.136**
	(0.033)	(0.078)	(0.036)	(0.058)	(0.069)	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.064)
Protest×Powerless	0.167*	0.164	0.138*	-0.014	-0.005	-0.035	0.080	0.051
	(0.093)	(0.139)	(0.077)	(0.062)	(0.080)	(0.071)	(0.065)	(0.063)
Protest×Senior	0.019	-0.001	-0.019	0.082	-0.051	0.001	-0.055	0.051
	(0.041)	(0.090)	(0.055)	(0.069)	(0.119)	(0.045)	(0.063)	(0.069)
Group: Powerless	-0.155	-0.069	-0.132	0.069	0.013	0.125	-0.130	-0.050
	(0.146)	(0.196)	(0.172)	(0.076)	(0.143)	(0.093)	(0.092)	(0.059)
Group: Senior	0.287***	0.146**	0.310**	-0.178	0.162**	0.093	0.068	0.023
	(0.100)	(0.062)	(0.134)	(0.121)	(0.068)	(0.054)	(0.061)	(0.103)
N	13480	13291	13284	13119	13128	13243	13573	12681
R^2	0.25	0.16	0.22	0.10	0.14	0.18	0.24	0.28
Mean(Y)	1.59	1.27	1.33	1.08	1.18	1.51	1.21	1.71
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable is trust in (1) president, (2) parliament, (3) ruling party, (4) opposition, (5) local government, (6) courts of law, (7) police, (8) army. The outcomes take values 0=Not at all, 1=A little bit, 2=A lot, 3=A very great deal. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Ethnic power groups: senior, junior (reference category), and powerless. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

Appendix D Additional Tables

This Appendix presents additional tables regarding our analysis.

Table D.1: Balance of individual characteristics and lagged conflict—Exposure to violent events

	Treat			Control				
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Difference	Std. Error
Female	16531	0.50	0.50	11010	0.50	0.50	-0.00	0.002
Urban	16531	0.37	0.48	11010	0.40	0.49	-0.04	0.026
Age	16488	35.38	13.68	10962	35.83	13.83	-0.45	0.485
Education	16130	3.43	2.20	10780	3.46	2.13	-0.03	0.063
Employment	16441	1.20	1.17	10975	1.24	1.18	-0.05	0.036
Number of unsuccessful calls	16531	0.33	0.87	11010	0.31	0.82	0.02	0.018
Number of calls	11958	1.06	0.29	7937	1.05	0.24	0.01	0.009
Ethnic in-group	5363	0.90	0.30	3428	0.89	0.32	0.01	0.012
Violent events	16531	275.43	317.50	11010	221.04	299.28	54.39	0
Demonstration events	16531	226.40	342.90	11010	230.90	365.08	-4.50	0

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. Differences are within country-round. Weighted with the multi-country weighting factor. Violent events and demonstration events are number of events in $t-1$.

Table D.2: Balance of individual characteristics and lagged conflict—Exposure to protests

	Treat			Control				
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Difference	Std. Error
Female	32158	0.50	0.50	15248	0.50	0.50	-0.00	0.002
Urban	32158	0.57	0.49	15248	0.49	0.50	0.09	0.026**
Age	32044	36.16	14.23	15171	36.20	14.03	-0.05	0.376
Education	30960	3.84	2.07	14800	3.55	2.09	0.30	0.072*
Employment	32036	1.30	1.19	15178	1.33	1.20	-0.03	0.038
Number of unsuccessful calls	32158	0.40	1.00	15248	0.33	0.86	0.08	0.022
Number of calls	21439	1.06	0.26	10469	1.04	0.20	0.02	0.006
Ethnic in-group	9689	0.91	0.29	4497	0.86	0.34	0.05	0.022
Violent events	31925	158.83	283.73	15074	160.08	291.06	-1.25	0.108
Demonstration events	31925	234.93	344.91	15074	165.75	231.63	69.18	0.108*

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. Differences are within country-round. Weighted with the multi-country weighting factor. Violent events and demonstration events are number of events in $t-1$.

Table D.3: Effect of conflict exposure on support for authoritarian governance

	Approval of...					
	One-party rule		Military rule		One-man rule	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Violence	0.003		0.049		-0.025	
	(0.032)		(0.042)		(0.034)	
Protest		-0.015		-0.063**		-0.030
		(0.027)		(0.029)		(0.022)
N	26001	44449	25922	44362	25778	43555
R^2	0.12	0.12	0.16	0.15	0.14	0.10
Mean(Y)	2.01	1.97	2.02	2.00	1.75	1.75
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable is approval of one-party rule (columns (1)-(2)), of military rule (columns (3)-(4)), or of one-man rule (columns (5)-(6)). Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

Table D.4: Effect of conflict exposure on support for authoritarian governance by in-group status

	Approval of...					
	One-party rule		Military rule		One-man rule	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Treat Violence	0.124		-0.163		0.042	
	(0.108)		(0.093)		(0.071)	
Treat Protest		0.230***		0.147		0.069
		(0.059)		(0.135)		(0.087)
Treat Violence×In-group	-0.119		0.166*		-0.056	
	(0.120)		(0.092)		(0.065)	
Treat Protest×In-group		-0.243***		-0.279**		-0.107
		(0.067)		(0.131)		(0.068)
In-group	0.108*	0.066	-0.160*	0.079	0.080	0.018
	(0.059)	(0.048)	(0.087)	(0.123)	(0.079)	(0.108)
N	8318	13476	8281	13440	8225	13365
R^2	0.13	0.12	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.13
Mean(Y)	2.00	1.87	1.95	1.84	1.76	1.69
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable is approval of one-party rule (columns (1)-(2)), of military rule (columns (3)-(4)), or of one-man rule (columns (5)-(6)). Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

Table D.5: Effect of conflict exposure on trust in institutions

	Trust in...							
	President	Parliament	Ruling party	Opposition	Local government	Courts of law	Police	Army
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Violence								
Violence	0.059	0.005	0.058	-0.042**	-0.026	-0.002	0.002	0.045**
	(0.037)	(0.030)	(0.041)	(0.018)	(0.048)	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.020)
N	25999	24639	24874	25232	25051	25570	26271	22906
R^2	0.21	0.18	0.19	0.13	0.17	0.14	0.21	0.21
Mean(Y)	1.64	1.42	1.40	1.16	1.42	1.58	1.38	1.89
Panel B: Protest								
Protest	-0.032	-0.047	-0.059**	-0.054**	-0.065***	-0.046**	-0.049**	-0.056**
	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.023)
N	43866	42723	41899	42242	41768	43624	44755	41630
R^2	0.21	0.15	0.20	0.10	0.14	0.16	0.19	0.21
Mean(Y)	1.58	1.33	1.33	1.10	1.29	1.55	1.34	1.83
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable is trust in (1) president, (2) parliament, (3) ruling party, (4) opposition, (5) local government, (6) courts of law, (7) police, (8) army. The outcomes take values 0=Not at all, 1=A little bit, 2=A lot, 3=A very great deal. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

Table D.6: Effect of conflict exposure on democratic views: by regime type

	Autocracy				Democracy			
	Support		Extent		Support		Extent	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Violence	0.021		0.083**		0.020		-0.026	
	(0.013)		(0.036)		(0.019)		(0.047)	
Protest		0.037**		0.033		0.007		-0.037
		(0.016)		(0.023)		(0.011)		(0.031)
N	15320	20286	14961	20026	9563	22408	9506	22222
R^2	0.12	0.12	0.19	0.19	0.11	0.09	0.17	0.13
Mean(Y)	0.75	0.73	2.41	2.36	0.69	0.72	2.61	2.67
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(2) and (5)-(6) is a dummy that takes value one if the interviewee indicated that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. The dependent variable in columns (3)-(4) and (7)-(8) is perceived extent of democracy, which takes values 1–4. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Violence (Protest) is a dummy that takes value one if a violent (protest) event occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.

Table D.7: Effect of conflict exposure on democratic views by actor type

	Support of democracy			Extent of democracy		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
State	0.046*			-0.031		
	(0.022)			(0.060)		
No state		0.012			0.070**	
		(0.011)			(0.033)	
Civilians			0.018			0.046
			(0.012)			(0.033)
N	14152	18709	20497	13878	18367	20115
R^2	0.09	0.12	0.11	0.21	0.22	0.20
Mean(Y)	0.73	0.73	0.73	2.43	2.47	2.44
Region-Round FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Month-Year FEs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$. Standard errors adjusted for clustering at country level. All specifications use the multi-country weighting factor from the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(3) is a dummy that takes value one if the interviewee indicated that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. The dependent variable in columns (4)-(6) is perceived extent of democracy, which takes values 1–4. *State* is a dummy that takes value one if a conflict event involving state forces occurred in the region within a week before the individual was interviewed. *No state* is a dummy for an event without state involvement, and *Civilians* is a dummy for an event with civilian victims. Controls include gender, age, age squared, education, employment, and a dummy for urban.