

# Protesting and Policing in a Multiethnic Authoritarian State

Evidence from Ethiopia

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When do ethnic groups engage in antigovernment protests in authoritarian states? What impact do the repressive strategies of such governments have on the violence associated with protests? Widely accepted theories of ethnic conflict suggest that the introduction of electoral competition in multiethnic states almost inevitably degenerates into violence.<sup>1</sup> Yet, while it seems straightforward that groups experiencing an uncertain political liberalization might resort to protest or other forms of violence to pursue their collective interests, the empirical findings on the relationship between regime type and ethnic mobilization remain ambiguous. Some scholars find that political violence is more likely to occur with the initial democratization of multiethnic states,<sup>2</sup> while others show that ethnic protest is no more likely to emerge in newly democratized states.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the uncertain association between regime type and ethnic mobilization, only a limited understanding exists of how dissent unfolds in multiethnic states governed by authoritarian regimes. This gap in knowledge is troubling considering that the countries classified as autocracies and partial democracies have levels of ethnic diversity that are 40–50 percent higher, on average, than countries considered full democracies.<sup>4</sup> Establishing whether or how authoritarian regimes liberalize thus entails identifying the conditions influencing the mobilization of the aggrieved groups they govern. It also requires understanding how the repressive strategies of those regimes influence the dynamics of mobilization. Although studies of ethnic conflict and state repression have produced important contributions in this respect, the cross-national and aggregated nature of much of this scholarship may obscure what occurs within these countries.<sup>5</sup> If this is the case, the impact of ethnic mobilization's most commonly cited causes—grievances and resources—may be misspecified.

In this article I examine the antigovernment protests that erupted in Ethiopia's most populous, ethnically defined region, Oromia. The protests began when the long-ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and opposition parties failed to reach an accord on the composition of a new parliament after elections in 2005, the first in the country's history to be contested nationwide.<sup>6</sup> The protests among the titular ethnic group of Oromia resulted in more than 15,000 detentions, over 500 documented instances of woundings, and some 80 confirmed deaths. These protests present puzzling patterns. Why were protests concentrated in thirty of Oromia's 180 districts when the titular ethnic group forms the majority in every part of the region? Why did the protests vary in levels of violence with twelve of thirty districts accounting for over 80 percent of woundings?

I argue that local heterogeneity dampens protest onset by shaping individual-level calculations of being punished by an authoritarian regime. Employing insights from the informational cascade model of collective action,<sup>7</sup> I show that would-be protesters in Oromia, anticipating the government's use of force, were less likely to mobilize in districts with greater heterogeneity due to uncertainty over the extent to which anti-regime preferences were shared locally, across ethnic groups as well as within the ethnic majority. A binomial logistic regression analysis indicates that protests were less likely to be initiated in districts with higher levels of ethnic fractionalization and a larger number of effective parties.

I further argue that protest violence in authoritarian states can vary according to the interaction of local heterogeneity and a government's repressive strategies. Invoking the logic of in-group policing,<sup>8</sup> I claim that protest violence is lower where protesters are policed by co-ethnics rather than members of other ethnic groups. Police forces who lack local knowledge or language skills are more likely to mete out the kind of indiscriminate punishment that, in turn, provokes greater resistance. I show that violence spiraled where ethnic Oromo protestors were confronted by federal police officers, who are recruited nationally and therefore unlikely to be members of the same ethnic group. A logistic regression analysis of district-protest days indicates that the likelihood of individuals being wounded was largely driven by the interaction of federal policing and district homogeneity.

## **Explanations for Protest Onset and Protest Violence**

Recognizing that collective action often fails to occur due to the free rider problem, scholars interested in political mobilization have sought to specify the conditions in which individuals become willing to assume the cost of participating in dissent. I review here the relative deprivation and resource mobilization hypotheses as plausible explanations for protest onset in authoritarian states. I then discuss the backlash and substitution hypotheses as supplementary explanations for the level of violence associated with such protests.

Ethnic-based deprivation is the standard explanation for mass mobilization in multiethnic states. Grievances are thought to foment rebellion as the unfulfilled

expectations of individuals are transformed into a sense of deprivation shared among all members of a group.<sup>9</sup> These same grievances provide the sentiment that politicians competing in multiparty systems can manipulate through ethnic outbidding, voicing strident communal appeals in an attempt to rally the support of co-ethnics.<sup>10</sup> Violence arises in such circumstances because members of disadvantaged groups do not merely use politics to secure greater access to material resources; they perceive politics as a means of reinstating the relative worth of their groups.<sup>11</sup>

H1: Indicators reflecting greater socioeconomic deprivation or political marginalization should be associated with a higher likelihood protest onset.

Claiming that grievance is too common a condition to account for political mobilization, some scholars have focused on the resources available to dissidents as an explanatory variable.<sup>12</sup> The resource mobilization hypothesis suggests that a group's capacity to control and organize resources, and not its sense of deprivation, is what explains collective action. A group overcomes the free rider problem when it can marshal the resources necessary to facilitate communication, offer selective benefits, or impose sanctions. In Nigeria, for instance, Alexandra Scacco shows that individuals, rather than being motivated by grievances alone, are more likely to participate in riots when they are members of neighborhood social networks.<sup>13</sup>

H2: Measures reflecting greater control of resources, whether organizational or material, should be associated with a higher likelihood of protest onset.

The research focused on explaining the intensity of violence stresses the reciprocal relationship between political mobilization and regime reactions. The "Law of Coercive Responsiveness," as summarized by Christian Davenport, suggests that governments will attempt to suppress protests as quickly as possible, lest they become more threatening forms of dissent that destabilize the entire political system.<sup>14</sup> But some scholars claim that escalating levels of repression can lead to a backlash among citizens by stoking a sense of outrage that feeds further antigovernment mobilization and thereby greater violence.<sup>15</sup> Repression in Zimbabwe, for example, produced greater resistance to Mugabe's regime because police on the ground, unable to distinguish opposition voters from others, applied repression indiscriminately.<sup>16</sup>

H3: Greater state repression of dissent should increase the likelihood of protest-related violence.

The scholarship on state repression indicates that dissidents can adapt their actions in tit-for-tat fashion when responding to the state. Mark Lichbach models this interaction to show that greater state coercion in the repression of nonviolent protest will provoke dissidents into switching to more violent tactics, generating greater violence in the process.<sup>17</sup> Will Moore found support for this substitution model with

time-series data from Peru and Sri Lanka, and later refined its intuition with a model that explains how states additionally mix their strategies between accommodation and repression in response to dissident actions.<sup>18</sup>

H4: Greater state repression of nonviolent dissent should increase the likelihood of protest-related violence.

### **Heterogeneity and Protest in Multiethnic Authoritarian States**

While scholars often impute individual preferences from ethnic group membership to explain patterns of political mobilization, assuming that preferences are polarized across groups and homogeneous within them,<sup>19</sup> I build here on prior research that raises doubts about the extent to which preferences can be inferred from ethnic identities. In the case of Russia, Elise Giuliano explains that radical Tatar nationalism was undercut by intraethnic cleavages that produced a diversity of opinion on the issue of sovereignty.<sup>20</sup> In their study of interwar pogroms in Poland, Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg show how Jewish political assimilation with the titular majority made such violence less likely.<sup>21</sup> Implicit in their finding is the fact that Jewish voters demonstrated a diversity of partisan preferences with some opting for ethnic parties that advocated autonomy and others supporting nationalist parties that espoused integration.

I argue that political mobilization in multiethnic authoritarian states is shaped by the local distribution of cleavages—between groups as well as within them. Heterogeneity impedes the onset of protest by increasing the perception among would-be protesters that they will be singled out for punishment by the regime. This perception is consequential because authoritarian regimes can impose sufficiently high costs on the expression of dissent and that may well neutralize the individual motivation provided by grievances or the coordination facilitated by resources. Authoritarian regimes are not only able to exact punitive measures that are unencumbered by institutional constraints or democratic norms, but they are also able to target their repression.

The informational cascade model of collective action helps to clarify just how local heterogeneity can affect the likelihood of protest in an authoritarian context.<sup>22</sup> Because would-be protesters recognize that they face high personal costs as well as a low probability of success in challenging an authoritarian regime, their decisions become interdependent—the likelihood of any individual joining a protest rises along with the number of others who are expected to do the same. Local heterogeneity enters this calculus by creating uncertainty for would-be protesters over the number of others who might join them, thereby influencing perceptions of the potential costs to be borne. Individuals holding antigovernment sentiments could interpret a larger number of local cleavages as representing greater variation in protest thresholds. They could also believe that a larger number of cleavages may result in more denunciations being

made to authorities, making it even more likely that they will be punished. This line of reasoning yields a testable hypothesis.

H5: The revelation of a larger number of local cleavages should be associated with a lower likelihood of protest onset.

The argument attributing protest onset to local heterogeneity has a corollary for the level of violence. If protest is more likely to break out in homogeneous communities, then the resulting level of violence may depend on the repressive strategies pursued by governments under those conditions. It is precisely where political preferences are relatively uniform, and reflect low protest thresholds, that interactions of police and protesters should become violent. The risk is greater in this context if the police lack sufficient information to target their repression; they are more likely to wound or kill indiscriminately as a result. Where politicians can easily recast incidents as acts of interethnic conflict or state discrimination, any police-protester interaction is a potential focal point for collective action.

James Fearon and David Laitin suggest that mechanisms for in-group policing, in which ethnic groups are empowered to punish their own, are less likely to produce widespread violence because co-ethnics have the information necessary for punishing in a targeted manner.<sup>23</sup> Violence escalates under out-group policing because punishment is applied randomly due to the lack of information across groups. Kalyvas similarly claims that political actors are less likely to rely on indiscriminate violence where they can extract local information.<sup>24</sup> Where they exercise sufficient control, political actors can secure the civilian collaboration needed to employ selective violence instead. Jason Lyall argues that co-ethnics who share social networks have an advantage in identifying rebels and issuing credible threats. Using data on military operations in Chechnya, he shows that areas patrolled by Chechen units were less likely to experience insurgent attacks when compared to those patrolled by Russian units.<sup>25</sup> Such findings suggest the following hypothesis.

H6: State repression carried out by co-ethnics should decrease the likelihood of protest-related violence.

### **Local Political Cleavages and Protest Mobilization in Oromia**

To explain how local heterogeneity influenced the calculations of would-be protestors, it is important to examine the role of intraethnic political cleavages among ethnic Oromo.

**Political Cleavages and Protest Onset** Most Oromo have come to perceive themselves as members of a group that, despite being a demographic plurality, has been politically marginalized and economically exploited since the formation of the modern Ethiopian state.<sup>26</sup> Yet, while Oromo politicians of all stripes invoke a discourse

emphasizing the group's historic exploitation, they have never cohered around a common political agenda.<sup>27</sup> This divided political class has been further splintered by the political arrangement offered by the EPRDF. After coming to power in 1991, the ruling party instituted a federal system that presents ethnic groups with a bargain: acceptance of the EPRDF's political monopoly in exchange for limited self-rule, including the authority to staff regional offices and the exercise of language rights. This link between ethnic identity and regional power is explicit in Oromia. Article 8 of its regional constitution recognizes that "Sovereign power in the region resides in the people of the Oromo Nation." Article 39(6) further defines members of that group as "those people who speak the Oromo language, who believe in their common Oromo identity, who share a large measure of a common culture as Oromos and who predominately inhabit in a contiguous territory of the Regional State."

Divided over the status quo, Oromo politicians presented their co-ethnics with a range of options in the 2005 parliamentary elections. The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the ruling party's regional affiliate, promoted the EPRDF's accommodation through the distribution of state patronage. Among the opposition, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), founded in 1973 to fight for self-determination, remained legally banned due to its continued low-level insurgency against the EPRDF.<sup>28</sup> The Oromo National Congress (ONC) promoted a platform demanding greater regional autonomy within the existing federal system. The Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) called for the wholesale reform of the political system, including a directly elected president and recognition of the Oromo language as a national language. A nationalist opposition party, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), campaigned by promising to dismantle ethnic federalism and enact land privatization.

Prior to the 2005 elections most Oromo could not have known the local distribution of political cleavages reflected by the various political parties. To be sure, in no part of Ethiopia had the local distribution of partisan preferences been publicly revealed. Haile Selassie had banned political parties, while Mengistu Haile Mariam had instituted a single-party regime. The EPRDF did not encounter real opposition in its first two parliamentary elections. Most opposition parties boycotted the 1995 parliamentary elections and then competed in fewer than half of the country's districts in the 2000 parliamentary elections.

The 2005 election results for the first time provided citizens with common knowledge about the local distribution of political preferences. Once the results were posted outside polling stations, as required by the electoral law, Oromo voters discovered that their co-ethnics held a broad range of preferences. Most districts in Oromia turned out to be highly competitive with over two-thirds having 1.5 or more effective political parties.<sup>29</sup> The opposition won nearly 40 percent of votes region-wide, but those votes were divided among the ONC (19 percent), the OFDM (7 percent), and the CUD (13 percent).<sup>30</sup> The CUD's performance is noteworthy in this respect. Although its platform was perceived as antithetical to Oromo interests, that is, promising to eliminate ethnic federalism, its vote share suggests that a sizable minority of Oromos still supported the party. In the sixteen districts where the CUD won, on

average, Oromos constituted 74.3 percent of the population and the party received 59.5 percent of votes.<sup>31</sup>

The revelation of intra-Oromo partisan cleavages in May 2005 would affect the pattern of protest onset seen in November 2005, since local political heterogeneity inevitably shaped individual expectations of state retribution. It quickly became evident to would-be protesters that their mobilization would be met with force by the government. On the same evening of the May 15, 2005 elections, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi announced on state television a ban on mass gatherings and demonstrations in the capital. Within a month of the elections, the government had placed opposition politicians under house arrest, an opposition parliamentarian-elect had been killed in his Oromia district, thousands of suspected opposition supporters had been detained, and over thirty protesters had been killed with at least one hundred more wounded. By the time protests erupted in the capital and towns across the country on November 1, 2005, when the EPRDF announced it was shutting down negotiations over the parliament's composition, a government crackdown would have been anticipated by would-be protesters.

**Policing Strategies and Protest Violence** Opposition protests in Oromia were met with force because the Ethiopian government perceived them as a proto-insurgency. The government alleged that the OLF was collaborating with its neighboring rival, Eritrea, to incite a rebellion among Oromos.<sup>32</sup> This interpretation was reinforced by OLF public statements that claimed credit for mobilizing a popular uprising, though there was little direct evidence that the rebel group played any part in coordinating protesters.<sup>33</sup> While Oromo opposition party leaders themselves did not call on their supporters to demonstrate, they did not dare disavow the protests for fear of being perceived as apologists for the EPRDF.

The Ethiopian government had two possible policing strategies for suppressing the protests: regional versus federal policing. It could have allowed Oromia's regional authorities to act alone. Each region of the country is constitutionally permitted to organize police forces at the regional and district levels. The 2001 constitution of Oromia stipulates that its regional force is organized by the regional legislature and supervised by the regional president.<sup>34</sup> Recruits for the regional police are required to write, read, and speak the Oromo language.<sup>35</sup> This virtually guarantees that its officers will be members of the titular ethnic group, ensuring an institutionalized form of in-group policing.

The Ethiopian government is empowered to send federal police when a security crisis exceeds a region's capacities.<sup>36</sup> This intervention ostensibly occurs at the request of the concerned region. However, since the EPRDF controls every level of government, in practice the executive can deploy the federal police at will.<sup>37</sup> The regional police become accountable to the federal police in such instances.<sup>38</sup> Functioning like a national gendarmerie, this force receives better training and equipment than its regional counterparts. What is consequential, in the context of the Oromia protests, is that members of the federal police are recruited nationally among the country's multiple ethnic groups. This means that Amharic, the working language of the federal government,

is a basic requirement for recruitment.<sup>39</sup> The deployment of federal police to regions like Oromia thus approximates a form of out-group policing.

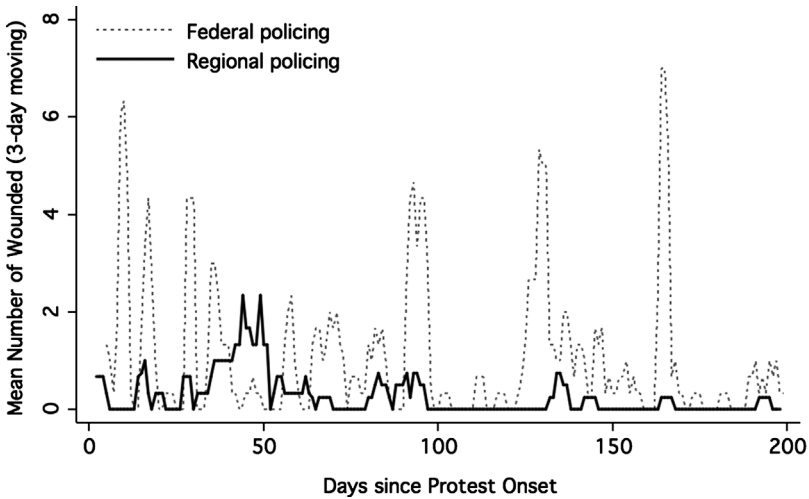
The application of these policing strategies was consequential for the varying levels of violence that would become associated with the protests. Differences in the composition of federal and regional police forces affected the nature of police-protester interactions by creating perceptions of in-group versus out-group policing in Oromia. Violence was unlikely to escalate in the eighteen protest districts where the policing was done by regional authorities. In these districts, ethnic Oromo protesters were confronted by ethnic Oromo police, reducing the likelihood of miscommunication or misidentification. Violence was more likely to spiral in the twelve protest districts where federal police intervened. One practical problem in such cases concerned communication; only about one in five individuals in Oromia can understand Amharic.<sup>40</sup> This inevitably exacerbated policing efforts to identify protest leaders, issue comprehensible instructions, or clarify misunderstandings. Federal policing was further stymied by the symbolic problem created by an Amharic-speaking force. Not only is language one of the most observable attributes of ethnicity in Ethiopia, but Amharic also has an association with the historic domination of the Oromo by northern groups in control of the state.

The claim that protests were more likely to turn violent where the federal police intervened is corroborated by a report commissioned by the Oromia State Council, the elected regional parliament controlled by the EPRDF's affiliate, the OPDO. A thirteen-member inquiry commission was tasked with investigating the causes of the protests and assessing potential human rights violations.<sup>41</sup> This report, not surprisingly, faults the opposition for causing the violence associated with the protests. It notes that protesters labeled government forces as "invaders" or "*Woyane*,"<sup>42</sup> claims which could fuel resistance among the local population. The report also acknowledges that interviewed witnesses were more likely to accuse the federal police of violating rights.

I estimate the rates of violence associated with federal and regional policing directly from the records collected by the investigators working for the commission described above.<sup>43</sup> Figure 1 shows the three-day moving average for the number of individuals wounded during the 200 days that followed the onset of protest in thirty districts.<sup>44</sup> The divergent patterns between districts policed by federal versus regional forces make clear that individuals were far more likely to be injured in the former. These twelve districts account for over 80 percent of woundings in all thirty protest districts. Over the entire protest period, there were 1.44 incidents of wounding per 10,000 residents in districts subjected to federal policing, but only 0.37 incidents per 10,000 in districts with regional policing. Districts with federal policing also appear to be more violent because their protests lasted longer, with an average total of thirty protest days versus the average twenty days found in districts with regional policing.

The apparent differences in protest-related violence beg the question of endogeneity. Were federal police deployed to districts that were already at risk of becoming more violent? The data from the commission suggest that this was not the case. There was, on average, a lag of eight days between the time of protest onset and the arrival of federal



**Figure 1** Woundings under Federal and Regional Policing

police, so the Ethiopian government could have used the first week of protest to gauge where violence would be more likely to erupt and have federal forces intervene accordingly.<sup>45</sup> Yet the federal police were sent to districts in Oromia where the average arrest rates were not significantly different during the first week of protest: 0.04 arrests per 10,000 residents in districts where federal policing would later occur versus 0.02 arrests per 10,000 in districts with regional policing.

The districts that would be subjected to federal intervention had, in fact, lower rates of protest mobilization, as measured by the amount of property damage generated by protesters. Protesters were focused on state institutions in this regard: 71 percent of all recorded property damage involved state buildings such as district offices, agriculture extension offices, and schools. The average rate of property damage during the first week of protest was somewhat lower in districts where federal police would later intervene: 0.08 incidents per 10,000 residents in such districts versus 0.12 incidents per 10,000 in districts with regional policing.

Rather than being driven by objective measures of protest mobilization, the deployment of federal police was conditioned by a political calculus in two respects. The first rationale was partisan. Federal police were only deployed to districts where opposition parties won parliamentary races. While ten of the thirty protest districts were won by the OPDO, the ruling party affiliate, none of these districts was patrolled by federal police during the course of the protests. The second rationale was geographic. Federal police were deployed to districts within proximity of Addis Ababa, the national capital. Districts subjected to federal policing were, on average, 126 kilometers from Addis Ababa, while those with regional policing were, on average, 283 kilometers from the capital.

The deployment of federal police along partisan and geographic criteria suggests the Ethiopian government was concerned with insulating its hold on power. It may have sought to ensure its physical control of the capital as well as those districts in which it had lost in the election, possibly fearing that they could not trust local officials to contain protests that might reach Addis Ababa. Because protests were simultaneously occurring in the capital itself, where some 15,000 people were arrested, it is likely that the government sought to limit its deployment of federal police to areas from which they could be easily recalled.

## **Data and Method**

Since alternative sources of information on protests outside Ethiopia's capital are limited or nonexistent, the best source of data for studying protest mobilization in Oromia comes from the inquiry commission established by the Oromia State Council. Relying on government data in this respect entails important caveats regarding their reliability. The officials in Oromia who supplied the information have had to manage a delicate balance in their relations with the central government, depending on the ruling party for their appointed positions while attempting not to appear completely subservient to non-Oromo government. It remains unknown to what extent they may have had incentives to obfuscate. Nevertheless, concerns about data manipulation may be attenuated by the fact that these records were never intended for public consumption; they were neither analyzed nor published as part of the original government report. These data also provide considerable advantages in terms of access and consistency. Oromo-speaking government investigators were responsible for collecting records and conducting interviews with other Oromo-speaking local government officials. These investigators visited nearly all protest-affected districts and amassed some 1,400 individual-level records concerning detentions, property damage, and woundings.<sup>46</sup>

**Dependent Variables** I examine the nature of protest mobilization in Oromia by focusing on two dependent variables, protest onset and protest violence. The dependent variable for protest onset is dichotomized to equal one if commission records indicate that any protest-related event—such as a protester being detained by police, a government building being damaged by protesters, or a protester being wounded or killed—is recorded in a district; it is zero otherwise. For this dependent variable, I estimate a binomial logistic regression model in which the units of analysis are districts, which overlap with single-member parliamentary constituencies in most cases. Because districts in which protests break out appear to be geographically concentrated, I cluster the standard errors at the level of the zone as a way of compensating for possible spatial autocorrelation among the observations.<sup>47</sup>

The second dependent variable is restricted to the subset of districts in which protests erupted. Protest violence in these districts is gauged by the likelihood of individuals being wounded on a given day. This measure is dichotomized to equal

one if commission records show that a person was wounded by gunshot, explosion, knifing, stoning, or beating; it is zero otherwise. For this analysis, I estimate a random effects logistic regression model in which the units of analysis are district days. Because these data are time-series cross-sectional, I control for temporal dependence through the cubic polynomial method.<sup>48</sup> I control for the number of days in the previous week in which woundings were recorded in each district, assuming that prior violence influences subsequent occurrences. I extend this analysis by alternating the dependent variable with two other potential indicators of protest intensity—detentions by police forces and property damage by protesters. Both are dummy variables coded and analyzed in the same manner as the likelihood of being wounded.

**Independent Variables** To test the competing hypotheses related to protest onset and violence, I constructed the relevant measures using election results from the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and socioeconomic information from the country's Central Statistical Authority.<sup>49</sup>

The relative deprivation hypothesis (H1) suggests that antigovernment protest should be more likely to occur in areas with greater socioeconomic grievances. The percentage of the population living below the poverty line within a district is used as such a measure. Moreover, because the protests in Oromia erupted after the declaration of election results, political grievances may also be driving their mobilization. The percentage of votes declared invalid by local election authorities is used to capture this effect.

According to the resource mobilization hypothesis (H2), individuals require material and organizational resources to overcome the problems of collective action. The percentage of the district population living in urban areas is used as a measure. Individuals living in towns are more likely to have access to organizational resources. Literacy, for example, is highly correlated with urbanization in Ethiopia. Similarly, districts located near Addis Ababa are likely to have better access to information and transport, all of which might facilitate protest. The distance in kilometers from each district seat to the capital is added as an additional measure.

Prior mobilization may reflect local organizational capacities related to the resource mobilization hypothesis. I therefore control for voter turnout, as a percentage of registered voters, for each district. I also include a measure for a district's protest history, since previous mobilization might suggest the presence of an institutionalized riot system.<sup>50</sup> I identified the fourteen districts in which protests were mobilized by Oromo university and high school students in 2002, clashing with security forces over several months.

To assess the local heterogeneity hypothesis (H5), I use the electoral performance of opposition parties as a proxy for revealed intra-Oromo political cleavages. One such measure is the percentage of votes won by each of the major opposition parties: the Oromo National Congress (ONC), the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM), and the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD). Another measure is the effective number of parties. I use the vote shares for all political parties and independent candidates at the district level to calculate the effective number of parties.<sup>51</sup> A larger number of effective parties is expected to have a dampening effect on protest onset,

since individuals may surmise that neighbors who voted for different parties are unlikely to join them in protest.

Parliamentary districts won by ethnic Oromo opposition parties are coded dichotomously as another measure for testing the local heterogeneity hypothesis. Would-be protesters should interpret an opposition victory as a strong signal that a sufficient number of others are likely to join them in challenging the government. This variable is equal to one if a candidate of the ONC or the OFDM won the parliamentary seat. A win by a candidate of the CUD is not similarly coded because it was not considered a vehicle for Oromo interests even when fielding Oromos as candidates.<sup>52</sup>

Ethnic cleavages provide an obvious source of local heterogeneity in multiethnic states. Ethnic heterogeneity may be one of the heuristics that would-be protesters consider when deciding whether a sufficient number of others will join them in protest. Ethnic fractionalization at the district level was constructed with data on ethnic identities from the 1994 national census. All categories of self-identification were used in calculating the scores.

To assess hypotheses related to the impact of state repression on the likelihood of protest violence, I use the deployment of federal police as an indicator of the level of policing in a district. Since the federal police in Ethiopia function as an anti-riot force, their presence in a district is expected to represent a heightened level of policing by the government. The backlash hypothesis (H3) suggests that federal policing, reflecting greater state repression, should increase the likelihood of wounding occurring on any given protest day, as a larger number of protesters turn out to confront the police. The substitution hypothesis (H4) further predicts that federal policing should result in greater likelihood of wounding, as protesters switch from attacking state buildings to confronting police officers. Districts are identified dichotomously as being subject to federal policing from the first day in which committee records indicate that a civilian was detained, wounded, or killed by a federal police officer. Districts that were patrolled by state or local police, both of which are Oromo-speaking forces, are coded as having regional policing.

I test the co-ethnic policing hypothesis (H6) through the interaction of the variables for federal policing and ethnic fractionalization. This argument suggests that the probability of a wounding should be considerably higher in homogeneous districts patrolled by the federal police. In homogeneous Oromo districts, an intervention force staffed by Amharic-speaking officers is likely to generate greater resentment and therefore resistance among the local population. Miscommunication or misidentification problems are also more likely to occur in interactions of members of different language groups.

## **Empirical Analysis**

Table 1 reports the results from the binomial logistic regression analysis of protest onset. The results, shown in log-odds units, corroborate the local heterogeneity hypothesis (H5). However, they fail to provide evidence for the relative deprivation hypothesis (H1) and offer limited support for the resource mobilization hypothesis (H2).

**Table 1** Local Heterogeneity and Protest Onset

	1	2
Ethnic opposition party: ONC vote (%)	1.832** (0.624)	
Ethnic opposition party: OFDM vote (%)	2.910** (1.117)	
Nationalist opposition party: CUD vote (%)	-10.436*** (2.504)	
Ethnic opposition party victory		1.532** (0.539)
Effective number of parties		-1.043* (0.570)
Ethnic fractionalization	-8.582*** (2.714)	-8.193** (2.712)
Below the poverty line (%)	2.709 (6.017)	1.796 (5.408)
Invalid votes (%)	0.432 (2.127)	0.376 (1.750)
Urban population (%)	6.516** (2.635)	3.580 (2.274)
Distance to capital (log km)	-0.393 (0.426)	-0.329 (0.386)
Voter turnout (%)	-1.793 (2.306)	-3.733 (2.796)
Oromo student protests in 2002	1.034 (0.889)	1.414* (0.769)
Constant	1.206 (2.095)	4.512 (3.343)
Log likelihood	-46.85	-52.72
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.3810	.3035
N	168	168

Note: Robust standard errors, adjusted for clustering on zones, in parentheses.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , one-tailed tests.

The degree of local heterogeneity (H5) significantly influenced the onset of anti-government protest in Oromia. The first model specified in Table 1 uses the vote shares of opposition parties as a measure of intra-Oromo political cleavages. Attaining the 0.01 significance level or better in one-tailed tests, the log odds estimated for these parties suggest that the propensity for protest among their respective supporters varied considerably. Not only is greater support for the nationalist opposition party associated with a lower likelihood of protest onset, but the likelihood of participating in protest also differs between the two ethnic opposition parties.

The second model specified in Table 1 uses the effective number of parties as a measure of local heterogeneity. The estimated log odds have their expected negative

sign and attain the .05 confidence level in a one-tailed test. This result indicates that antigovernment protests were more likely to occur in politically homogeneous districts, while being less likely in districts where multiple political tendencies were revealed through the 2005 election. Less competition in an opposition-won district—representing a move from the sample mean of 1.7 effective parties to 1.25 effective parties at the 25th percentile—would be associated, on average, with a nearly a 50 percent increase in the predicted probability of protest onset from 0.21 to 0.30, holding all other variables constant.<sup>53</sup>

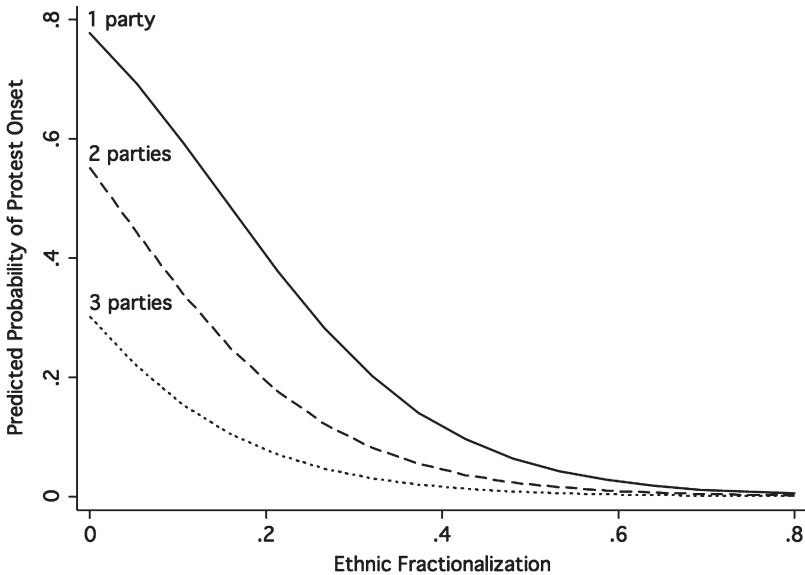
An Oromo opposition party victory provided a clear signal to would-be protesters that they would be joined by a sufficient number of like-minded people. The estimated log odds on this dichotomous variable are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Protests were far more likely to emerge in districts won by a candidate from either the ONC or the OFDM. Based on the log odds reported for this variable in Table 2, the average predicted probability of protest onset is estimated at 0.06 in a district won by the ruling party or a non-Oromo opposition party. That probability would more than triple to 0.21 in an Oromo opposition-won district.

Ethnic heterogeneity reduced the likelihood of protest across Oromia's districts. As shown in Table 2, the estimated log odds are negative and statistically significant. These results suggest that, despite the politicization of ethnicity in Ethiopia, a considerably high degree of ethnic homogeneity was required for antigovernment protests to mobilize. The mean ethnic fractionalization score in protest districts is 0.13, or nearly half the regional mean of 0.23. Reducing the level of ethnic fractionalization from 0.23 to 0.11, at the 25th percentile, would increase the predicted probability of protest onset, on average, from 0.21 to 0.39.

Figure 2 graphically shows the impact of local heterogeneity, political as well as ethnic. Focusing on districts won by Oromo opposition parties, it shows how a larger number of political cleavages is associated with a lower likelihood of protest in ethnically homogeneous areas. Consider, for example, that the predicted probability of protest onset is estimated to be 0.16 in districts at the regional mean of ethnic fractionalization (0.23) with two effective parties. A more homogeneous district, with ethnic fractionalization at 0.13, would require an additional effective party to reach a comparably low likelihood: its predicted probability for protest onset would be 0.15 with three effective parties.

The relative deprivation hypothesis (H1) is not supported by any of the relevant controls. While districts across Oromia vary in the degree to which they have been economically or politically exploited, this alone seems to have played little role in fomenting antigovernment protest. Neither the proportion of the population living below the poverty line nor the number of invalid votes is statistically distinguishable from zero.

The resource mobilization hypothesis (H2) receives mixed support in the analysis. Urbanization is significantly and positively associated with protest onset in the first model shown in Table 1, but loses significance in the second. Similarly, the dummy variable for the prior mobilization of Oromo student protests attains significance in

**Figure 2** Predicted Probability of Protest Onset in Opposition-Won Districts

the second model, but not in the first. Distance to the capital and voter turnout, as alternate measures of organizational capacity, do not attain statistical significance under any specification.

The varying levels of violence associated with the protests in Oromia appear to have been driven by the application of distinct policing strategies. Table 2 reports the results from the random effects logistic regression of protest violence. It also reports the results for the protest-related acts of detentions by the police and property damage by protesters. Reported in log-odds units, these results provide unambiguous support for the co-ethnic policing hypothesis (H6) as well as indirect support for the substitution hypothesis (H4). The backlash hypothesis (H3) is not supported by the evidence.

The likelihood of being wounded depends on a district's ethnic homogeneity and the policing strategy to which it was subjected. The constitutive elements of the interaction of federal policing and ethnic fractionalization attain statistical significance at the 0.01 level in one-tailed tests. They indicate that protests suppressed by federal police in more homogeneous districts had a higher likelihood of woundings, corroborating the expectations of the co-ethnic policing hypothesis (H6). This result holds while controlling for factors included in the analysis for protest onset. The level of protest violence, as reflected in the likelihood of wounding, appears to have less to do with the intensity of party competition or an opposition party victory than the type of policing strategy pursued by the government.

**Table 2** Policing Strategy and Protest Violence

	Wounded	Property	Detained
Federal police intervention	1.790** (0.725)	-3.533*** (0.837)	1.810* (0.894)
Ethnic fractionalization	7.779** (2.908)	-17.112*** (4.856)	-4.701 (3.675)
Federal police x ethnic fractionalization	-13.156** (4.432)	24.237*** (5.408)	0.596 (5.393)
# days with woundings in previous week	0.031 (0.117)	-0.059 (0.125)	-0.045 (0.134)
# days with property damage in previous week	0.061 (0.089)	0.153 (0.098)	-0.020 (0.097)
# days with detentions in previous week	-0.246* (0.123)	-0.283** (0.119)	0.440*** (0.121)
Days since last protest day	-0.063 (0.039)	-0.104*** (0.033)	0.079** (0.031)
Days since last protest day <sup>2</sup>	0.002 (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)
Days since last protest day <sup>3</sup>	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)
Oromo opposition victory	0.350 (0.438)	1.167** (0.569)	-1.366** (0.551)
Effective number of parties	0.684 (0.636)	-2.208*** (0.778)	2.897*** (0.735)
Below the poverty line (%)	-7.343* (3.932)	-6.813 (5.351)	15.040*** (4.396)
Invalid votes (%)	-7.036 (4.647)	1.496 (3.524)	1.341 (2.727)
Urban population (%)	-0.627 (1.833)	4.757* (2.508)	0.068 (2.347)
Distance to capital (log km)	0.346 (0.516)	-1.243** (0.574)	1.348** (0.605)
Voter turnout (%)	-1.349 (5.070)	3.758 (5.817)	-4.246 (5.725)
Oromo student protests in 2002	-0.418 (0.370)	-0.590 (0.483)	0.284 (0.439)
Constant	0.516 (6.290)	9.697 (7.618)	-14.018* (7.107)
Log likelihood	-249.57	-221.72	-223.29
$\chi^2$	38.32	83.18	64.10
<i>p</i> of $\chi^2$	.0022	.0000	.0000
N	420	420	420
Districts	21	21	21

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , one-tailed tests.



The results in Table 2 show that federal policing interacts with ethnic fractionalization to influence the likelihood of property damage. Property damage, however, is less likely to occur in homogeneous districts under federal policing. The presence of federal police may have led protesters to shift their attention from state buildings to state security forces. These patterns, if influencing one another, would provide indirect support for the substitution hypothesis (H4). Property damage, unlike woundings, also appears to be affected by local political conditions. An Oromo opposition victory increases the likelihood of property damage in a district, but it is dampened by a larger number of effective parties.

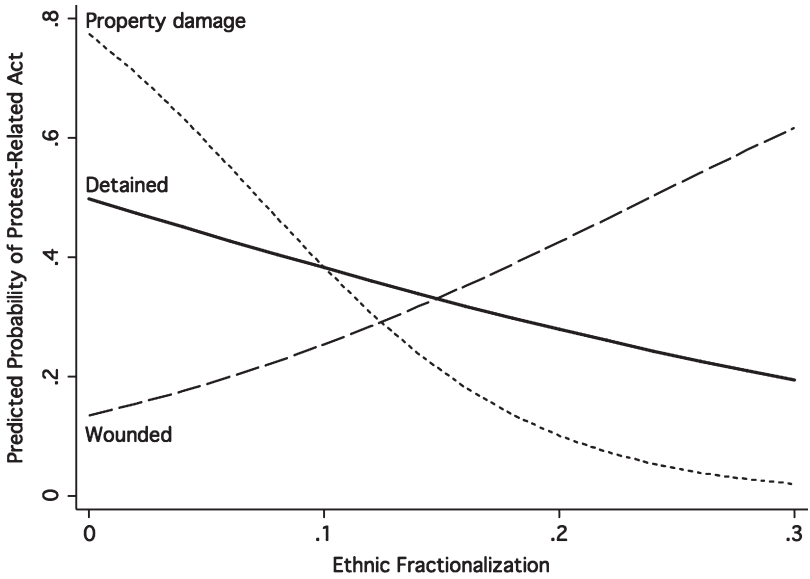
The likelihood of being detained is not affected by the interaction of federal policing and ethnic fractionalization. The results in Table 2 show that federal policing alone is associated with a greater likelihood of arrests, attaining statistical significance at the 0.05 level in a one-tailed test. But neither ethnic fractionalization nor the interaction term does. The likelihood of detention is, however, tied to local politics. That likelihood is lower in opposition-won districts, but rises with the number of effective parties. This may result from a greater rate of denunciation or misidentification in areas with competing partisan loyalties.

The results in Table 2 indicate that federal policing itself is generally associated with a higher degree of repression, whether measured through woundings or detentions. The exact mechanism producing this increased level of repression remains unknown. There is insufficient information about the federal police's internal operations to make a determination at this time. It may be due to the nature of the force's command or the type of training received by its members. Further research is needed to establish which aspect of the federal police's internal organization may be leading its members to employ greater coercion when confronting civilians.

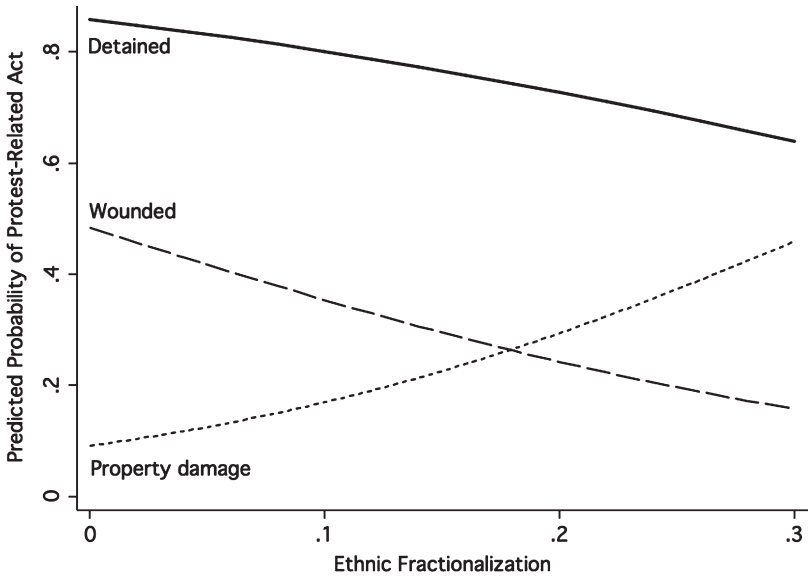
The backlash hypothesis (H3) is not supported by the results in Table 2. When the number of days with detentions in the previous week is included as a control for the likelihood of wounding or property damage, the results indicate that a higher incidence of detention lowers the probability of further woundings or property damage. These findings are reinforced by the temporal dependence in the models, which include a cubic polynomial based on the number of intervening days between protest acts. The log odds for this polynomial indicate that the likelihood of arrest rises for the first thirty-six days after protest onset. Possibly, as a result, the likelihood of wounding declines for about twenty-three days after protest onset; the likelihood of property damage declines for forty-one days after protest onset. The polynomial attains statistical significance for the likelihood of detention and property damage, but not for the likelihood of wounding.

To provide a concrete sense of how policing strategies influence protest patterns, I plot the predicted probabilities for the likelihood of being wounded or detained, and of sustaining property damage over ethnic fractionalization. Figure 3 shows the probabilities under regional policing, and Figure 4 shows these probabilities under federal policing.<sup>54</sup> Two patterns become evident. The first is the greater likelihood of detention under federal policing at all levels of ethnic fractionalization. The second is the

**Figure 3** Predicted Probability of Protest-Related Acts under Regional Policing



**Figure 4** Predicted Probability of Protest-Related Acts under Federal Policing



apparent reversal between rates of wounding and property damage. Homogeneous districts are more likely to experience the former than the latter, while the opposite is true in heterogeneous districts. This suggests that the impact of harsher state repression, as represented by a higher likelihood of detention, is not straightforward. It depends on the local context in which it is applied and by whom.

## Conclusion

This article shows that protest mobilization in multiethnic, authoritarian states can be influenced by local heterogeneity. In the Ethiopian case, intraethnic political cleavages among Oromos shaped antigovernment mobilization. Anticipating a coercive response from the state, would-be protesters used information about the distribution of partisan preferences in their communities to determine whether or not they would take to the streets. Moreover, the Ethiopian government's own policing strategies significantly affected levels of violence once protests erupted. Protests were more likely to result in woundings wherever ethnic Oromos were subjected to federal (interethnic) rather than regional (co-ethnic) policing.

These findings illuminate two mechanisms that deserve greater attention from social scientists interested in investigating patterns of ethnic conflict in multiethnic authoritarian states. First, even in countries where democracy has yet to be consolidated, multiparty elections may encourage stability, though not because they provide greater freedom or equality. Elections can reveal the local distribution of political preferences, making it more difficult for political entrepreneurs to convince others to mobilize when repression is the government's likely response. Second, the organization of policing may affect the degree of violence associated with antigovernment mobilization. A police force staffed by locals may be more likely to attain the information needed to target punishment within a community, lowering the likelihood of generalized violence between security personnel and the civilian population.

## NOTES

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4. Countries coded as autocracies in 2005 have a mean ethnic fractionalization score of 0.529; the mean for partial democracies is 0.582; the mean for full democracies is 0.377. Ethnic fractionalization scores are from James D. Fearon, "Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country," *Journal of Economic Growth*, 8 (June 2003), 195–222. The regime classifications are based on Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers, "Polity IV Project," University of Maryland, College Park, 2009. Countries with polity scores from 8 to 10 are full democracies; those with polity scores between 1 and 7 are partial democracies; and those with polity scores from -10 to 0 are autocracies.

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28. The OLF joined the EPRDF-led transitional government in 1991, but withdrew when it became apparent that the EPRDF sought to sideline them.

29. The effective number of parties was calculated with vote shares from each constituency. See Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera, "Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to Western Europe," *Comparative Political Studies*, 12 (April 1979), 3–27.

30. Oromia is represented by 178 seats in the national parliament: forty-one seats were won by the ONC, eleven by the OFDM, and sixteen by the CUD.

31. Ethnic shares were calculated with data from the 1994 census.

32. Workineh Gebeyehu, "Report of the Federal Police Commissioner to Parliament," Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 14, 2005.

33. See the statements issued by the OLF: "The Uprising of the Oromo People is Directed Against the Repressive Regime But Not Against Any People," Press Release, Washington, D.C., November 19, 2005; "Oromo Uprising Nearing Three Months," Press Release, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2006; "Popular Uprising in Oromia Reaches a Critical Stage," Press Release, Washington, D.C., February 15, 2006.

34. Articles 47, 49, and 57 of the Enforcement Proclamation of the Revised Constitution of 2001 of the Oromia Region, No. 46/2001.

35. Article 12 of the Oromia Police Proclamation, No. 32/2002.

36. Article 7(5) of the Federal Police Commission Proclamation, No. 313/2003.

37. The Federal Police Commission falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Federal Affairs, who is accountable to the House of Peoples' Representatives, the national parliament. See Article 4 of the Federal Police Commission Proclamation, No. 313/2003.

38. Article 23 of the Federal Police Commission Proclamation, No. 313/2003.

39. Article 5 of the 1994 constitution states that Amharic is the language of federal government. Article 15(2) of the Federal Police Commission Proclamation, No. 313/2003, states that recruitment is expected to reflect "equitable representation of gender, nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia." A report by a retired British colonel confirms that in the federal police "all have to operate using Amharic." See Michael Dewar, "Modernising Internal Security in Ethiopia," July 2008, along with "A British Ex-Colonel's Report," *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 25 October 2008.

40. This calculation is based on the 1994 census: 11.2 percent of Oromia's inhabitants are Amharic mother-tongue speakers; another 11.5 percent are Amharic second-language speakers. These rates do not seem to have not risen over time. According to the 2007 census, only 9.1 percent of the region's inhabitants are Amharic mother-tongue speakers; no data was collected on second languages.

41. The commission was established by Proclamation No. 107/1998 on 24 March 2006. See Komishinii Komishinii Gartummaan Alaa Jeequmsa Naannoo Oromiyaa Keessaatti Ka'e Qulqulleessu, "Caffee Oromiyaa tiif Gabaasa Waliigalaa Komishinii Gartummaan Alaa Jeequmsa Naannoo Oromiyaa Keessaatti Ka'e Qulqulleessu Irraa Dhiyaatee, Finfinee, Gurraandhala 1999." ["Final Report Assessing the Riots in Oromia Region Prepared by the Independent Commission for the Oromia State Council, Addis Ababa, February 2007."] ]

42. *Woyane* is a colloquial appellation for members of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the senior partner in the EPRDF, and sometimes for Tigrayans more generally. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is from Tigray. The name comes from the revolt launched in that region against Haile Selassie in 1943.

43. The commission records include information on whether district, regional, or federal police detained protesters. I treat district and regional police as regional forces, since both are constituted by Oromos.

44. Wounded is a category for injury by gunshot, explosion, knifing, stoning, or beating.

45. This estimate is based on dates in the commission records. I find that it took federal police eight days, on average, to appear in a district after the onset of protest.

46. The protest data used in this article can be accessed by contacting the author directly.

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52. Ethiopia's former president, Negasso Gidada, is counted here as a member of OFDM although he won his seat as an independent due to rules barring former executives from running on party candidates; otherwise, it is quite likely that, at the time, he would have run on the OFDM ticket.

53. For these simulated values, the independent variables in Model 2 of Table 1 are set at: ethnic opposition party victory=1, ethnic fractionalization=0.23, population below the poverty line=0.39, invalid votes=0.15, urban population=0.14, distance to capital=5.24, voter turnout=0.88, Oromo student protests in 2002=0.

54. To generate the predicted probabilities in Figures 3 and 4, the independent variables in Table 2 are set at: population below the poverty line=0.39, invalid votes=0.15, urban population=0.14, distance to capital=5.24, voter turnout=0.88, Oromo student protests in 2002=0, days since last protest day=9, days with detentions=1, days with property damage=2, days with wounding=1.