

A Dream Deferred

The Microfoundations of Direct Political Action in Pre- and Post- Democratization South Africa

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Research agenda

- What is the effect of democratic transition on the micro-level dynamics of direct political action?
 - Escalator of perpetual protests undermining stability
- Twin forces of inertia:
 - Political inertia: slow transition from direct to indirect political action
 - Economic inertia: the persistence of economic inequality in spite of political change
- The case of South Africa

Theoretical background

- ‘Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable become intolerable once the idea of escape from them is suggested’ (Tocqueville, 1856, p. 214).
- Why revolution after constructive change?
- J-curve hypothesis (Davies, 1962): relative deprivation due to economic growth being followed by decline
- The ‘tunnel effect’ hypothesis (Hirschman, 1973): the eventual realization that you may not make it like your neighbour did

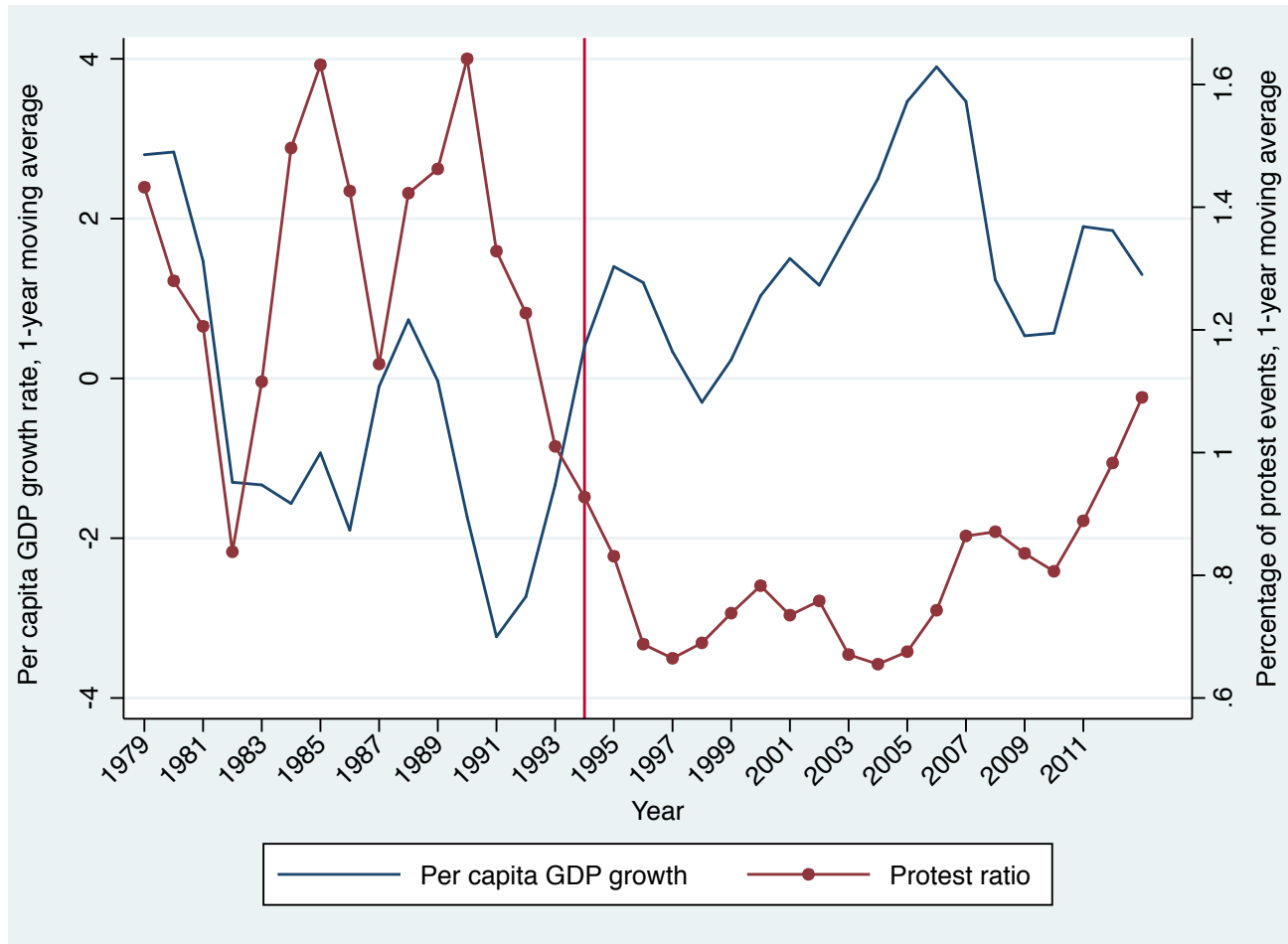
Methods and data

A two-level approach

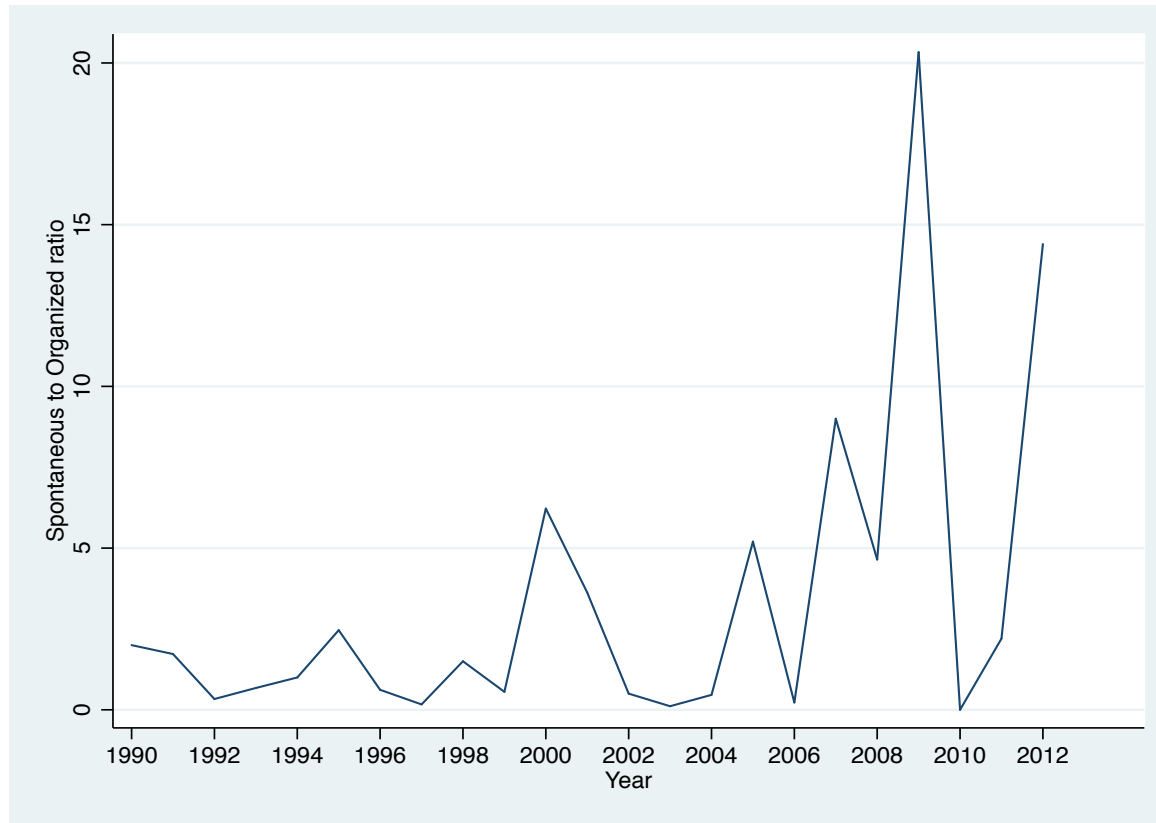
1. Macro-level manifestation of protest in South Africa
 - Documenting the intensity and composition of protest since 1979
 - Data source: Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT) and Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD)

2. Microfoundations of protest in South Africa
 - Cohort analysis: disentangling the age, cohort and time effects contributing to protest potential
 - Regression analysis: estimating predictors of individual propensity for direct political action
 - Data source: World Values Survey (four rounds: 1990, 1996, 2001, 2007)

Macro trends: Protest and economic growth, 1979-2012



Macro trends: The ratio of spontaneous demonstrations to organized demonstrations, 1990-2012



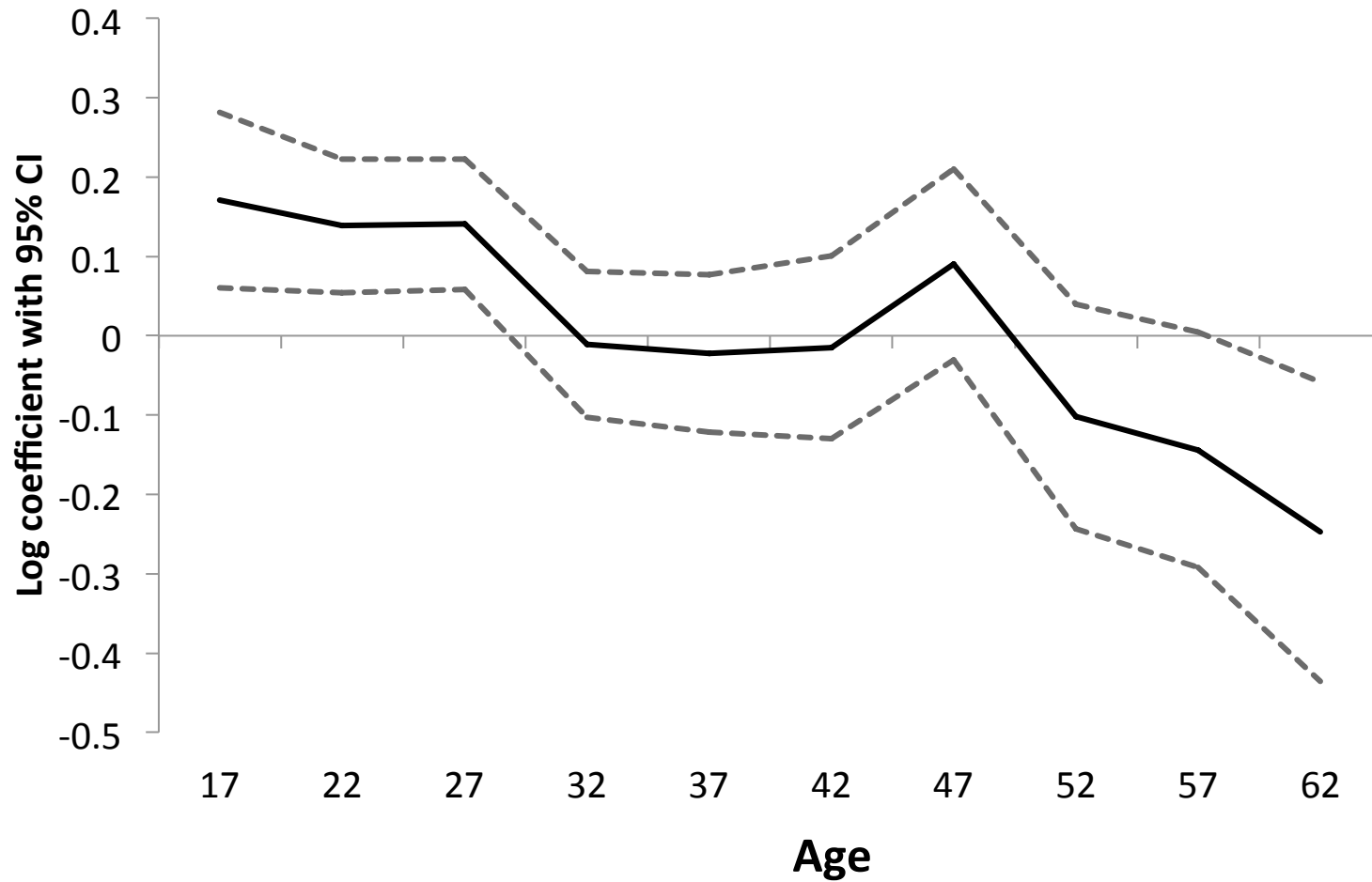
Macro trends

- Economic issues (jobs and economic resources) have the lion's share of grievances
- Service delivery issues have gained importance since 2004
- Organized labor is still the biggest actor
- Service delivery protest as poverty protest

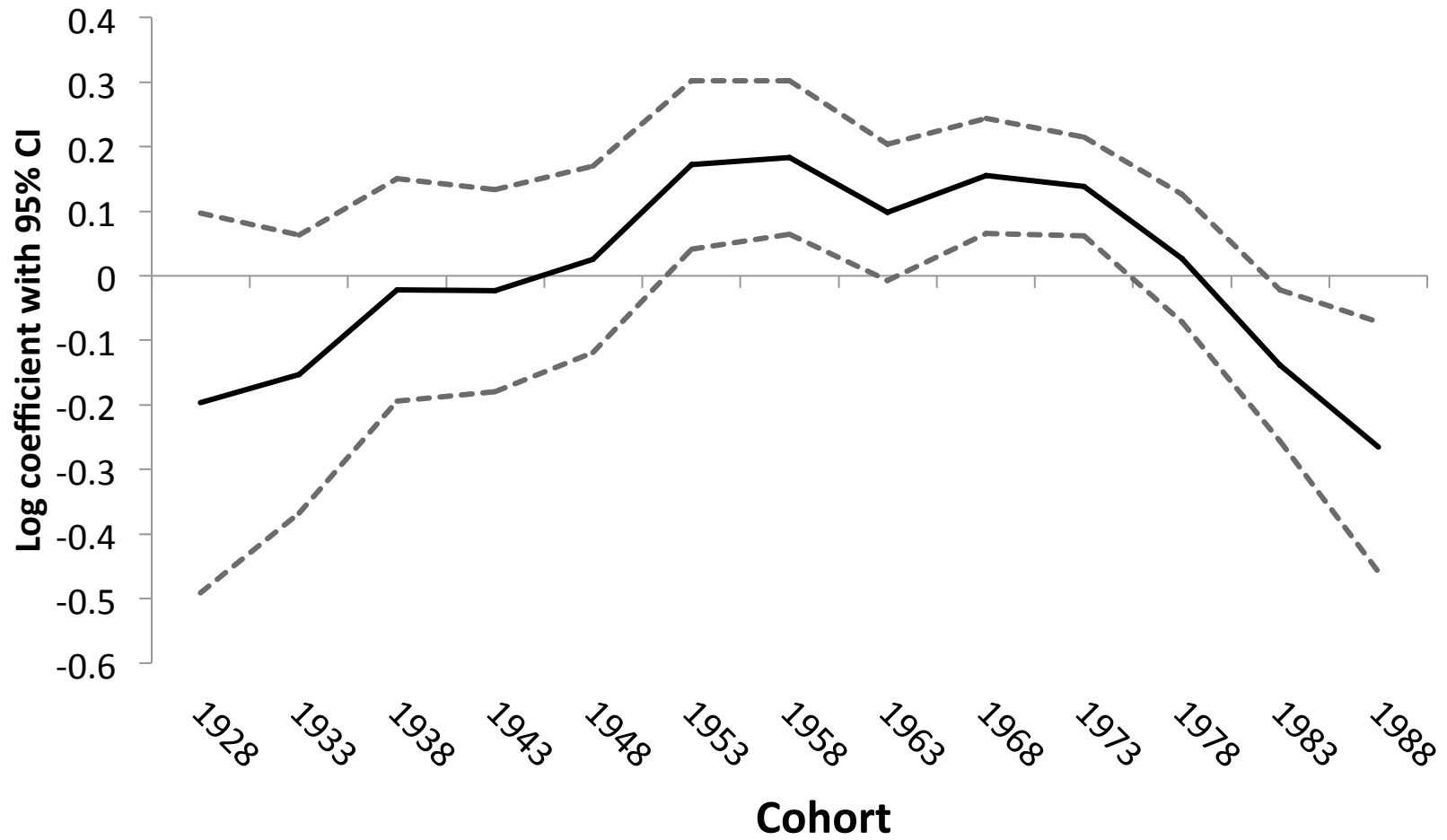
Micro-level analysis

- Number of respondents: 2736 to 3000
- Indicator of protest propensity: a dummy variable
 - I have attended a lawful demonstration = 1
 - I might attend a lawful demonstration = 1
 - I would never attend a lawful demonstration = 0
- Cohort analysis: Age-Period-Cohort accounting method
 - Intrinsic Estimator (IE) method achieves identification
- Probit regression

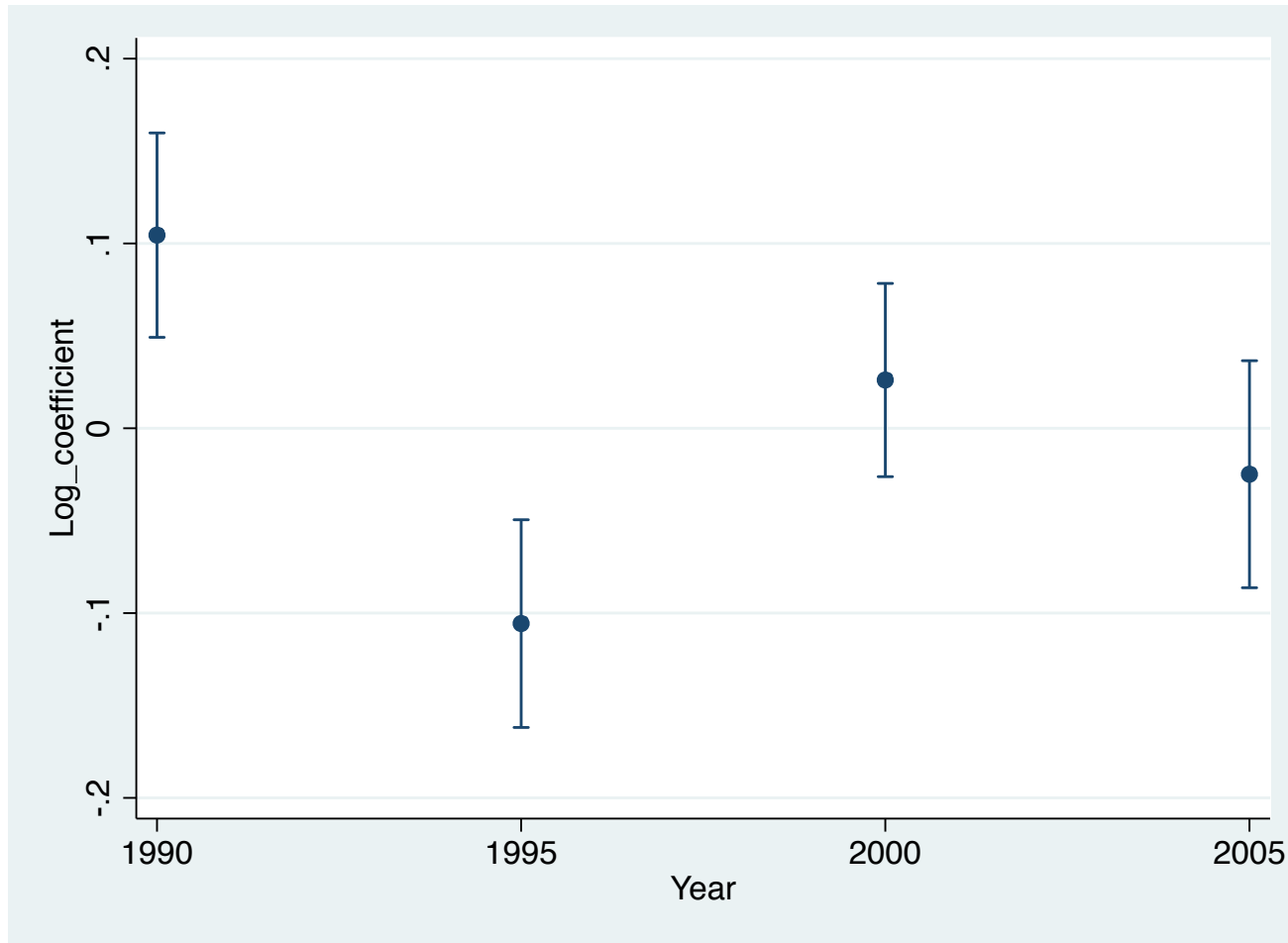
Cohort analysis: age effects



Cohort analysis: cohort effects



Cohort analysis: period effects



Cohort analysis: main findings

- Youthfulness is positively correlated with activism
- The SOWETO-uprising generation has a lasting effect
- The post-apartheid honeymoon period did not last long

Predictors of direct political action: baseline results (marginal effects)

Year	1990	1996	2001	2007
Gender(Male=1)	.137 ^a	.139 ^a	.052	.091 ^a
Racial group (White=1)	-.343 ^a	-.378 ^a	-.323 ^a	-.179 ^a
Racial group (Coloured or Asian=1)	-.340 ^a	-.163 ^a	-.115	.088
Education, middle	.063	.187 ^a	.082	.172 ^a
Education, higher	.124 ^a	.351 ^a	.154	.277 ^a
Household income (below median=1)	.028	-.105 ^b	-.134 ^c	.039
Unemployed	.009	.008	.107 ^c	.035
Ideology (left =1, right=10)	-.015 ^a	.009	.005	-.011
Satisfaction personal finances (unsatisfied=1, satisfied=10)	.011 ^b	-.027 ^a	-.007	-.022 ^a
N	1639	1886	2151	2333

Predictors: baseline results

- Race is still relevant, but declining in importance
- Ideology was material only before the transition
- Satisfaction with personal finance gives more intuitive results
- In 2001, protest was more broad-based

Unpacking the effects of subjective economic wellbeing

- Unfulfilled expectations (with respect to returns on human capital)

$$UE_i = y_i - b.e_i$$

- Individual relative deprivation

$$RD_i = d_j^y - d_i^y$$

- Group relative deprivation

$$GD_i = d_j^y - d_{gi}^y$$

Predictors of direct political action: relative welfare (marginal effects)

Year	1990	1996	2001	2007
Unfulfilled expectations (UE)	-.038	-.108 ^b	-.162 ^b	-.260 ^a
Individual relative deprivation (RD)	--	.056 ^a	-.051	.012
Group relative deprivation (GD)	--	-.083 ^a	.014	-.002
Controls: Gender, Race, Education, Income, Employment status, Ideology				
N	1639	1886	2151	2333

Predictors of direct political action: relative welfare

- Unfulfilled expectations becoming a major driver
- Unfulfilled expectations no more associated with higher levels of education
- Individual relative deprivation was relevant only immediately after the transition
- No evidence of the presence of a 'tunnel effect'

Conclusion

- Resurgence of direct political action in SA
- The results of the cohort analysis mirror the history of SA: generational path-dependence
- Predictors of direct political actions shifted from the political to the economic realm
- Systemic factors more relevant than individual predictors in high protest years
- Post-apartheid era: a gradual decline in the relevance of race and a strong increase in the effect of unfulfilled expectations