

A Dream Deferred: the Microfoundations of Direct Political Action in Pre- and Post-democratization South Africa

Biniam Bedasso

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Abstract

Persistent protests might endanger the stability of young democracies because the economic legacies of the old autocratic regimes tend to outlive their political structures. This paper seeks to explore the micro-level predictors of protest potential in South Africa before and after the end of apartheid. The results of the cohort analysis reveal that the political consciousness of the anti-apartheid struggle has a lasting effect. The gap between actual income and expected returns to education explains protest potential better than comparison of one's income with that of a reference group. The effect of race on protest potential has diminished over time.

Keywords: protest, relative welfare, cohort, democratization, South Africa

Jel Classification: D74, P16

'... after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb', Nelson Mandela (The Long Walk to Freedom)

1 Introduction

The second decade of the twenty-first century began with street protests mushrooming in aging autocracies and mature democracies alike. When TIME Magazine named 'the protestor' the 2011 person of the year, it was already clear that direct political action was here to stay as a way of reacting to political and economic realities despite the availability of institutionalised mechanisms. From North Africa to Wall Street, direct political action has become a common avenue to press for political change as well as to express disenchantment with the economic status quo. In roughly the same period as the Libyan youths were demanding democratic transition, thousands others were occupying western financial centres in protest of economic inequality. The availability of democratic institutions in the latter does not eliminate the need for protest action. In light of this comparative picture, it is important to understand the effect of democratic transition on the micro-level dynamics of direct political action. Particularly, it might be useful to examine if the attainment of political power

accentuates relative economic differences giving rise to a new set of discontents to effectively put the society on an escalator of perpetual protests.

South Africa is a place where direct political action has been the norm rather than the exception. The current political settlement in South Africa was born out of protest. South Africa is also a country where the successful end to its world-famous struggle for political freedom has unleashed a new wave of political activism aimed at achieving economic redress. Given the high level of income inequality in South Africa that has rather increased after the fall of apartheid, popular discontent over economic disparities remains to be a great challenge on the face social stability.¹ Despite its manifest historical and demographic peculiarities, South Africa can be presented as an interesting example for the inbuilt tension between political change and socioeconomic inertia in some of the highly unequal countries in the world today.

This paper aims to describe the pattern of direct political action in South Africa since before the end of apartheid. Then it explores the microfoundations of the propensity to protest in pre- and post-democratization South Africa with special focus on the role of relative welfare and cohort effects. I attempt to accomplish this through the use of three sets of empirical investigations. First, I track the intensity and composition of collective protest at a macro level using a combination of events databases with extensive coverage of South Africa. Second, I employ multiple waves of survey data to disentangle the age, cohort and time effects contributing to the change in protest potential in South Africa since the beginning of the 1990s. Third, I use the same survey data to examine the predictors of the individual propensity to engage in direct political action. In doing so, I focus on identifying the effects of economic factors in general and relative welfare in particular. The availability of multiple waves of data allows tracking the change in the salience of various predictors beginning before the fall of apartheid until thirteen years after the dawn of democracy.

The dynamic nature of collective political action in societies undergoing social and economic transformation has been a subject of profound intellectual curiosity since the times of Alexis de Tocqueville and Karl Marx.² This issue gained more gravity in the post-war period as so much political and socioeconomic change began to happen in the developing world. The scholarly interest to explain the onset of social unrest following an initial constructive change in political and economic conditions is marked with two seminal contributions by James C. Davies and Albert O. Hirschman. Davies (1962) argues that revolutions occur when a long period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. Hirschman (1973), on the other hand, attributes the emergence of social discord to the fading out of what he

¹Leibbrandt et al. (2010) provide detailed analysis of the evolution of income inequality in post-apartheid South Africa.

²The following passage from Tocqueville's book on the French Revolution has inspired research in the area of post-liberation revolutions: 'Nations that have endured patiently and almost unconsciously the most overwhelming oppression often burst into rebellion against the yoke the moment it begins to grow lighter... Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable become intolerable when once the idea of escape from them is suggested' (Tocqueville, 1856, p. 214).

calls ‘the tunnel effect’. The tunnel effect refers to the sense of reassurance people may feel at the initial phase of development when they observe others who they identify with get ahead regardless of their own situations remaining unchanged. Basically, in economic terms, Davies pins the onset of revolutions to slowdown in growth performance and the associated anxiety that ground won in terms of personal progress might be lost. Hirschman puts more weight on inequality and the viability of the hope effect than on growth itself. In practice, these two effects are unlikely to be mutually exclusive. By studying the individual-level predictors of political protest over time, this paper attempts to show if one effect has been more powerful than the other in post-apartheid South Africa.

The explanation of social movements has been contested between various schools of thought placing the emphasis on different factors such as relative deprivation (Gurr, 1972), political mobilization (Tilly, 1978) and political structures (Skocpol, 1994). However, the difference is one of scope more than it is that of logic. Relative deprivation theory seeks to explain revolutions at micro level using individual indicators whereas the mobilization and structural theories focus on macro or systemic factors. In the present paper, I employ a macro-level analysis to establish the overall trend of protest action in South Africa while maintaining a micro-level approach to explain the basic socioeconomic factors behind the aggregate picture. Accordingly, I set the background by describing the pattern of actual protest which is naturally measured at an aggregate level. Then I adopt individual protest potential, instead of actual protest, as the dependent variable for the micro analysis. This is expected to simplify the analysis by steering clear of the task of identifying the drivers of actual protest which might involve several intervening variables measured at different levels.

The results of the empirical analysis conducted in this paper can be summarised as follows. The aggregate analysis shows that the level of direct political action in South Africa is on the rise again, following a sharp decline around the end of apartheid in 1994. Protest action seems to have begun tracking economic slowdowns more closely in the post-apartheid period than before. As South Africa becomes more restive after the end of the first decade of democracy, economic issues have gained prominence over political issues as drivers of protest. The individual-level results indicate that, like in most other places, direct political action in South Africa is more likely to be carried out by the youth than by middle-aged citizens. The cohort and time effects reflect the distinct historical path South African politics has passed through. Thus the political consciousness of the generation that has come of age at the peak of the apartheid period is manifest in the statistical results. The sharp decline in protest potential after the fall of apartheid shows that the potential for direct political action is not only a function of abstract civic-consciousness but also that of political realities on the ground. Another result that may resonate with the popular perception in South African politics pertains to the inverted U-shaped relationship between race and political action between 1990 and 2007. The negative effect of ‘whiteness’ on the probability of taking direct political action increased immediately after the transition before it began its steady decline

as the new political order was consolidated.

The micro-level analysis confirms that direct political action before the democratic transition in South Africa was more about ideology and lack of trust in established institutions than about economics. Economic factors, whether it is household income, employment status or satisfaction with personal finances, have become material to direct economic action after the fall of apartheid. Relative deprivation, as measured by the gap between a household's position in the income distribution and that of the top 10 per cent households in the province, was a force to be reckoned with in the early years after the transition. As for the 'tunnel effect', I have attempted to detect its presence by measuring the average reaction to the relative position of well-off households belonging to the same racial group as the respondent. There is no evidence of low propensity to protest induced by a potential tunnel effect. The consistently significant and growing effect on direct political action comes from falling short of one's own expectation as measured by the gap between actual and expected income conditional on education. Even in a year when most other socioeconomic indicators including education are irrelevant to direct political action, unfulfilled expectations grew in strength at predicting political action.

There has not been sufficient investigation of the evolution of protest action in South Africa in the crucial period following the honeymoon years of the post-apartheid era. There were a few papers devoted to studying the prevalence of relative deprivation (Duckitt and Mputhing, 2002 and Klandermans et al., 2001) and the corresponding effect on political violence (Kock and Schutte, 1998) in the transition period. Additionally, there is a recent contribution by Sablonniere et al. (2013) from a social psychological point of view, documenting the pattern of relative deprivation in South Africa as a response to the dramatic political change. However the supposedly crucial effects of income inequality and overall economic progress on political protest in the post-apartheid period remain barely examined.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section two portrays the incidence and intensity of protests in pre- and post-apartheid South Africa along with economic growth and income inequality. Section three lays out the data and methods of analysis of the micro-level investigation. Section four presents the results of the cohort analysis of direct political action. Section five provides the results of the regression analysis examining the predictors of direct political action. The second part of section five is devoted to a discussion on the effect of relative welfare using three indicators variables. Section six concludes.

2 Protest, economic growth and income inequality in pre- and post-democratization South Africa: trends and patterns

Given the relative orderliness of the democratic transition in South Africa, the level and intensity of protest action in the early post-apartheid period cannot

be expected to be as high as the general trend in the apartheid era. That much is trivial. What is less trivial is the correlation between economic factors and protest as well as the timing of the resurgence of protest action in the post-apartheid period. I employ the fairly extensive Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT) to calculate the level and intensity of protest in South Africa between 1979 and 2012. The machine-coded GDELT provides data on more than 3.8 million events in South Africa alone as reported in local and international newspapers since 1979. I took the count of events coded under the ‘protest’ category for every year and divided it by the total number of events in that particular year to arrive at the protest ratio. Taking the ratio, instead of the count, reduces the apparent bias induced by better reporting of events in recent years. While calculating the ratio, I weighted the number of events by their Average Tone to capture the intensity of protests (see Appendix 1 for full definition of indicators employed in this section).

Figure 1 plots the protest ratio along with the growth rate of per capita GDP for the period between 1979 and 2012. As expected, the level of protest dropped sharply since the time the transition became imminent (Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990) through the transition and until the end of the decade. Apparently, protest action before 1994 was mostly driven by political grievances. The coefficient of correlation between protest ratio and per capita GDP growth before the transition stands at 0.25. On the contrary, the correlation becomes -0.10 in the post-apartheid period. The growth declines of the late 1990s and the global recession in 2008 are accompanied by notable increases in protest activity. As far as correlations are concerned, this pattern seems to support Davies’s notion of political protest triggered by the anxiety of losing hard-won gains.

What about inequality? How does Hirschman’s ‘tunnel effect’ hypothesis hold in light of the descriptive evidence? Figure 2 shows that both overall inequality and within-black inequality have been growing in the post-apartheid period. Although this trend seems to suggest that unrelenting inequality might be behind recent increases in protest action, there is not enough variation in both measures of inequality to confirm that relationship. Interracial inequality, however, have increased in the second half of the 2000s after a sizable decline in the first decade of democracy. This means more black South Africans are falling behind their wealthier compatriots, black and white. This trend coincides with the flare of protest activity in the second half of the 2000s. Whether the increase in protest action was caused by the running out of the ‘tunnel effect’ or the growth decline due to the global recession is hard to tell based only on the descriptive evidence.

The general trend in Figure 1 indicates that protest action has become positively correlated with growth decline in the post-apartheid period. However, that does not show whether or not the actual issues of protest were indeed of economic nature. I use data provided in the Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD) on the issues and nature of protest in South Africa between 1990 and

2012.³ Accordingly, Figure 3 shows that economic issues – defined by jobs, economic resources and economy in general – dominated the protest agenda in high-protest years, accounting for up to 85 per cent of protest recently. The other issue which has grown in importance, albeit slowly compared to economic issues, is service delivery grievance.

The three figures in Appendix 2 illustrate the modes of organization and the spontaneity of protest between 1990 and 2012. Accordingly, protests over economic issues have mostly been organised in the form of general and specific strikes. This implies that labour market issues are at the centre of economic discontents in South Africa. The ubiquity of strikes also shows that unions hold strong organizational capacity. Service delivery protests, on the other hand, are predominantly staged as riots. Given the diversity of service delivery issues and the sections of society where such protests are often held in, one can claim that service delivery protests can stand in as a proxy for poverty protests. This, in turn, implies that organised labour continues to dominate the public platform for economic discontents whereas some of the poorest South Africans might not be featuring in the protest scene except in the form service delivery protests. The recent increase in service delivery protests coupled with the spontaneous and violent nature of such protests may indicate the depletion of the ‘tunnel effect’ if it ever existed in the first place. The penultimate section in this paper partly represents an attempt to examine the existence of a ‘tunnel effect’ using micro-level evidence.

3 Data and methods of micro-level analysis

I use data from the four waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) on South Africa to carry out the micro-level empirical analysis. The surveys were conducted in 1990, 1996, 2001 and 2007. The number of respondents in the four waves range from 2736 to 3000 individuals. Stratification was used to undertake sampling. The sample weights are calculated in such a way that the relevant statistics reflect the demographic makeup of the country particularly in terms of ethnic composition. The four waves can be thought of as corresponding to four distinct phases in the modern political history of South Africa: 1990 represents the pre-democratization period, 1996 is the transition period, 2001 is the consolidation period, 2007 is the post-transition period.

There are three indicator variables in all four waves of WVS intended to measure the level of participation of the individual in political action. These indicators capture whether the respondent has done, might do, or would never do each of the following: (i) sign a petition, (ii) join in a boycott, (iii) attend a lawful demonstration. Signing petition might be too light to represent committed political action. Joining in a boycott, on the other hand, might only

³The human-coded SCAD data is more nuanced than the machine-coded GDELT in terms of capturing qualitative information such as issues, modes of protest and actors. The major shortcoming compared to GDELT is its limited coverage in terms of time and geographical area.

be relevant to specific types of causes where a boycott is an effective course of action. Therefore, I have picked out ‘attending a lawful demonstration’ as a more general indicator of political action.⁴ Accordingly, I have built a dummy variable by assigning 1 to respondents who “Have done” or “Might do” lawful demonstrations. Those who “would never do” a demonstration are assigned the value of 0.

The availability of the WVS data in time-series of cross-sections extending across the watershed period of political transition in South Africa provides a good opportunity to undertake a cohort analysis of political action. Particularly, the distinction between the level and nature of political action in South Africa before and after 1994 is of interest to the current analysis. Therefore, I employ the Age-Period-Cohort (APC) accounting model to analyse the evolution of political action between 1990 and 2007. As the name suggests, the model decomposes the age, period and cohort effects in a certain outcome variable aggregated across a certain population group at a given point in time. In the current context, the age effects measure the variation in the propensity for direct political action in different age groups. The period effects capture the change in the level of direct political action over time applying commonly for all age groups and cohorts. The cohort effects measure the difference in political action exercised by people born in different eras by tracking them across time and age groups.

The most serious methodological challenge of the APC model emanates from the identification problem due to the exact linear dependency between the three factors, i.e. $\text{Period} = \text{Age} + \text{Cohort}$. The common practice to get around the identification problem is to place at least one additional identifying constraint on the parameter vector. However, this approach involves imposing strong prior restrictions on the parameters. That is why Yang et al. (2004) propose the Intrinsic Estimator (IE) method. The IE method achieves identification by imposing a constraint on the geometric orientation of the parameter vector in parameter space instead of the equality constraint on two or more coefficients of the parameter vector. The APC analysis undertaken in the following section employs the IE method.

The second stage of the analysis, after determining the overall period effects, is examining the change in the predictors of political action across time. This is achieved by running separate regressions for each wave using the same specification across waves. Since the dependent variable is transformed into a dichotomous variable, I fit a probit model of the following type to estimate the determinants of political action:

$$\Pr(PA = 1|X) = \phi(X'\beta) \tag{1}$$

PA is the dummy variable indicating whether the individual has partici-

⁴In the first three waves, a question on whether the respondent has joined or would join unofficial strikes is included. This could be a legitimate indicator of propensity to protest. However, as a measure of political action, it might be too limited in its scope. Moreover, some respondents might understate their tendency to participate in unofficial strikes since the activity is labelled ‘unofficial’.

pated or is willing to participate in lawful demonstration. X is composed of three sets of predictor variables. The first set includes basic demographic and socioeconomic variables. These are gender, ethnic/racial group, educational attainment, household income, employment status and political ideology. The ideology variable indicates where the individual positions her/himself on the left-right spectrum on the scale of 1 to 10 (10 being extreme right-wing). The second set consists of subjective evaluation of institutions and personal economic wellbeing. The subjective evaluation of institutions is made up of three variables measuring the confidence of the respondent on parliament, the civil service and political parties. The third set of predictor variables lies at the core of the micro-level analysis in this paper. These include the three indicators of relative welfare I have constructed using the raw data provided in the survey.

The first indicator relates to unfulfilled expectations with respect to human capital accumulation. This is measured by the difference between actual household income and expected household income conditional on education. In order to arrive at expected income for every individual respondent, I estimate the ‘returns to education’ equation for each wave. This provides for an imperfect substitute for the standard Mincerian earnings regression which would ideally be based on individual wage income instead of household income. Household income measures returns to education with some noise. But this is not expected to be pernicious to the purpose of estimating the earnings equation in the current context since the noise is in the dependent variable and it is likely to apply to every household. Once the earnings equation is estimated, predicted income can be calculated, which will be subtracted from actual income to arrive at a proxy for unfulfilled expectations;

$$UE_i = y_i - \beta.e_i \quad (2)$$

where y_i is the household income of respondent i , β is the estimated coefficient of the earnings equation and e_i is the educational attainment of respondent i .⁵

The second indicator of relative welfare is intended as a proxy for egoistic relative deprivation. Runciman (1966) offers a nuanced definition of relative deprivation as follows: ‘We can roughly say that a person is relatively deprived of X when (i) he does not have X , (ii) he sees some other person, which may include himself at some previous or expected time, as having X (whether or not this is or will in fact be the case), (iii) he wants X , and (iv) he sees it as feasible that he should have X ’ (p. 10). The measure of egoistic relative deprivation employed in this paper captures the decile gap between a given household and the richest households in the same province;

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

where d_i^y is the income decile where the respondent’s household falls in the

⁵Household income is recorded in decile intervals in WVS. Therefore, interval regression is used to estimate the earnings equation.

national distribution and d_j^y is the cut-off income decile in the national distribution above which the richest 10 per cent of households residing in the respondent's province are located⁶.

The third indicator captures the comparative standing of the respondent's racial group in the income distribution;

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

where d_{gi}^y is the cut-off income decile in the national distribution above which the richest 10 per cent households belonging to the respondent's racial group who are also residing in the respondent's province are located. This indicator can be used as a proxy for two distinct theoretical notions popularised in the literature. First, it measures fraternal relative deprivation which represents the potential feeling of alienation an individual may have due to inter-group inequality. Second, it may indicate the existence/absence of the 'tunnel effect' once its effect on protest potential is measured over time.

4 Protest action and the zeitgeist: cohort analysis

The results of the APC analysis are presented in Figures 4-6. The full statistical results of the analysis are provided in Appendix 3. Figure 4 shows that direct political action in South Africa is associated with youthfulness. Controlling for period and cohort effects, the likelihood of participating in direct political action remains positive and significantly high until a person becomes 27 years old. Political activism declines towards the end of the 20s and throughout the fourth decade of a person's life. Note also that the effect of age becomes statistically insignificant during this period. The next and last spike in political activism in a person's lifecycle occurs when the individual is around 47 years old. These results are fairly intuitive considering the fact that political apathy is likely to settle in when people become focused on building a career and family mostly in their 30s and early 40s. Political activism is shown to return, albeit for a brief period, once a person begins to mature and starts seeking self-actualization.

The results of the cohort effects, presented in Figure 5, are the mirror image of the political history of South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century. The highest level of political activism is demonstrated by those people who were born in the five years around 1958. This is the generation that came of age at around the Soweto uprising.⁷ The tendency to take political action continues to be positive, relatively high and statistically significant up to the 1973 cohort.

⁶The choice of the top 10 per cent households in the income distribution as a reference group is made for no other reason than that household income is given in deciles in the survey.

⁷The Soweto uprising is a series of protests led by high school students that took place in June 1976 in the South West Townships on the outskirts of Johannesburg. The brutal crackdown of the apartheid government on the student protests galvanised international public opinion against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The Soweto uprising is considered to have marked to beginning of the end of apartheid.

Note that this is the cohort that turned 18 right before South Africa transitioned to democracy.

The results of the period effects are also another manifestation of the phases of transition South Africa has gone through between 1990 and 2007. At the height of the popular struggle for democracy in 1990, one would expect direct political action to be fairly common. Conversely, citizens are expected to be more complacent following the euphoria of democratization in 1996. The sharp decline in the rate of political action between 1990 and 1996 depicted in Figure 6 confirms this intuition. Compare this micro-level result with the macro picture presented in Figure 1. Political activism seems to have gone up after the transition era was over in early 2000s. Therefore, there is some evidence at a micro-level to suggest that Tocqueville’s notion of post-liberation dissatisfaction might have held in post-apartheid South Africa. Nevertheless, the statistical significance of the period effect in 2001 is not strong enough to make that sort of assertion independent of the cohort and age effects. One thing is clear though: the honeymoon period of the post-apartheid regime was already over by 2001. The next section represents an attempt to unbundle this aggregate change in political activism by identifying factors such as unfulfilled expectations and relative deprivation that may predict individual propensity for political action.

5 Predictors of direct political action: regression analysis

The estimation of the individual predictors of political action across time is carried out in two parts. The first set of regressions provides the baseline estimates of the primary predictors of political action. These results are expected to shed light on who is more inclined to take political action and what might have motivated them to take political action in terms of their level of confidence on established institutions and subjective evaluation of their economic wellbeing. The second set of regressions moves on to exploring the impact of relative welfare on direct political action.

5.1 Baseline results

Table 1 presents the results of the baseline estimation for the four periods under investigation. Given the history of South Africa, the role of race in political action is one of the things that are expected to be fairly dynamic across the years. Not surprisingly, whiteness is the most consistently significant factor with a strongly negative relationship with political action throughout the two decades. The evolution of the white coefficient across the four periods shows that white South Africans became more apathetic immediately after the fall of apartheid than they were before. However, this trend has changed gradually. The magnitude of the negative marginal effect of being white on the probability of engaging in direct political action has halved between 1996 and 2007. Likewise, the negative effect of being coloured or Asian vanished by 2001. Boding

well for the national aspiration of non-racialism engraved in the country's constitution, political activism in South Africa is being driven less and less by racial affiliation.

The only time political ideology was material to political action was before the transition. In 1990, left-wing ideology was a strong predictor of direct political action. Similarly, prior to the fall of apartheid, lack of confidence on organised political parties was associated with high propensity for direct political action. This relationship changed dramatically in the transition period when the presence of more confidence in political parties suddenly became a strong and statistically significant predictor of political action. The relevance of confidence on established political parties seems to have waned recently suggesting a possible decentralization of political action once the transition was over. Note that this result corresponds to the recent trend of spontaneity depicted in Appendix 2. It is also worth noting that direct political action in South Africa has not been particularly motivated by disenchantment with parliament or the civil service.

Education, particularly higher education, is shown to be a strong predictor of political action except in 2001. As for economic factors, the results in Table 1 paint a mixed picture. The subjective indicator of economic wellbeing, i.e. the level of satisfaction with one's financial situation, appears to have come out with more consistent and intuitive results. Accordingly, financial dissatisfaction is a significant, albeit a relatively weak, predictor of political action in the transition and post-transition periods. Financial dissatisfaction was immaterial to political action in the apartheid era to the extent that the result for 1990 shows that it was people who were more satisfied with their finances that engaged in direct political action. The objective indicator of economic wellbeing, the dummy for below median household income, is shown to have a negative relationship with political action in 1996 and 2001, particularly once subjective satisfaction is controlled for.

A quick look at Table 1 reveals that the year 2001 stands out as a distinct year in terms of the significance of factors predicting political action. For instance, 2001 is the only year when gender and education are not relevant to political action. Moreover, unemployment is the only economic variable with an intuitive and marginally significant coefficient in 2001. In view of these results as well as the finding depicted in Figure 6 showing that the rate of political action has increased substantially in 2001 independent of the age and cohort effects, 2001 can be thought of as a year when political action was more broad-based. This stands as a confirmation of the macro trend displayed in Figure 1 showing 2000-2001 as a watershed period. Given the importance of economic issues that are behind the above change of pace in protest action as shown in Figure 3, the following subsection is devoted to further unpacking the economic predictors of political action at a micro-level.

5.2 Relative welfare and direct political action

In the specifications in Table 2, I attempt to unbundle the financial satisfaction variable into more specific measurements of relative welfare. Furthermore, I transform the household income variable into decile dummies to capture a clearer picture of the effect of objective economic wellbeing.

The effect of unfulfilled expectations with respect to human capital accumulation (UE) on the probability of direct political action has been increasing steadily over the years. By 2007, a 10 per cent increase in the gap between actual household income and the level of income one would expect to earn given their level of education raises the probability of taking political action by 2.6 per cent. An equivalent increase in UE in 1996 would only cause a 1 per cent rise in the probability of political action. Moreover, the only period when education holds a

statistically significant impact independent of the sense of unfulfilled expectations that might be associated with it is 1996. Particularly in 2007, the strong effect education has on stimulating political action in previous specifications (as shown in Table 1) vanishes once the effect of UE is controlled for. But does this mean more education is leading to a bigger relative shortfall in actual income in recent years that its effect cannot be distinguished from the effect of the unfulfilled expectations it generates? The results in Table 3 indicate to the contrary. The correlation between a person's education and the level of unfulfilled expectation has weakened over the post-apartheid period to finally become insignificant in 2007. In other words, the distribution of unfulfilled expectations has become more uniform across all levels of education in post-apartheid South Africa.

The second indicator of relative welfare, RD , measures egoistic relative deprivation using the economic distance between a given household and the richest 10 per cent households in that particular province. The third indicator, GD , serves as a proxy for fraternal relative deprivation as well as an indicator for the presence of the 'tunnel effect'. It measures the economic distance between the richest households belonging to a given racial group in a given province and the richest households in the province in general. It is not possible to calculate the values for these indicators for 1990 because there is no province data in that wave. Table 2 shows that the only year when both RD and GD are statistically significant is 1996. What is more interesting is the sign of the two coefficients in 1996. The negative coefficient of RD confirms the theoretical hypothesis that egoistic relative deprivation stirs up discontent, and that may in turn motivate direct political action. On the contrary, the positive coefficient of GD demonstrates that fraternal relative deprivation holds the opposite effect to what is suggested by the theory. The positive coefficient implies that people are more motivated to engage in direct political action the closer their own racial group is to the wealth frontier in their province. This finding seems to go against a key proposition in Hirschman's theory of tunnel effect. That is, there is no evidence to confirm that a positive relationship between group affinity and tolerance for the status quo holds in post-apartheid South Africa. On the contrary, the transi-

tion period was characterised by the opposite of the ‘tunnel effect’. Immediately after the fall of apartheid, people might have gotten more impatient the closer their racial group is to the income frontier in their province. In general, the results of the regression on the three indicators of relative welfare indicate that South Africans have become more self-referential over time. In contemplating direct political action, citizens have begun comparing their actual economic status with their own potential rather than comparing themselves or their racial group with others around them.

The year 2001 remains peculiar in the sense that all income, education and even gender indicators are not significantly associated with direct political action. As I pointed out earlier, that particular year represents the first episode of broad-based political activism in the post-liberation era. Along with the decline in the rate of political action (shown in Figure 6), gender and economic factors have become statistically relevant once again in 2007. A potential interpretation of this trend is that the periodic shift in protest tendency that is likely caused by a change in systemic factors such as growth decline tends to push the propensity for direct political action upwards regardless of idiosyncratic factors such as gender and education. In periods when political activism is less popular, those people who still engage in direct political action are more likely to come from sections of society that are traditionally known for political activism (for e.g. males and the working class).

6 Conclusion

South Africa once was an emblem of protest and direct political action for many people around the world. Protest action continues to be fairly common in South Africa after the end of apartheid. The rallying agenda, however, has shifted from political to economic issues in recent years. This paper examines the microfoundations of direct political action in South Africa over the period between 1990 and 2007. The results of the cohort analysis provide a statistical mirror image of the political history of South Africa. The highest level of propensity for political action is shown to belong to the same generation that vowed to make the country ‘ungovernable’ in the 1980s. The rate of direct political action declined dramatically in the transition period only to come back up once the first term of the post-apartheid administration was over.

The motivation for direct political action has shifted from ideology and discontent with established institutions to economic issues after the fall of apartheid. Unfulfilled expectations with respect to one’s human capital accumulation has been the strongest and most significant of all relative welfare indicators to predict a positive probability of political action across the years. Relative deprivation with reference to others was material to political action only in the early days of the transition. Contrary to theoretical predictions and popular expectation, the relative advancement of one’s racial group with respect to the income frontier seems to induce impatience rather than complacency as measured by the propensity to protest. Most of the demographic and socioeco-

conomic predictors turn out to have no effect on the propensity for political action when the overall public mood favours political activism as in 2001. Regardless of such period effects, the most consistent pattern in the predictors of direct political action in post-apartheid South Africa can be summarised as a gradual decline in the relevance of race and a strong increase in the effect of unfulfilled expectations.⁸

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⁸The replacement of race by class as the primary basis of grievances in the post-apartheid period has already been established in Klandermans et al. (2001) based on a series of surveys conducted between 1994 and 1998. The other robust result in this paper, the importance of unfulfilled expectation with respect to education, seems to hold broadly in many of the recent protest waves around the world particularly in North Africa and the Middle East (Campante and Chor, 2012).

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Figure 1: Protest ratio and economic growth in South Africa, 1979-2012

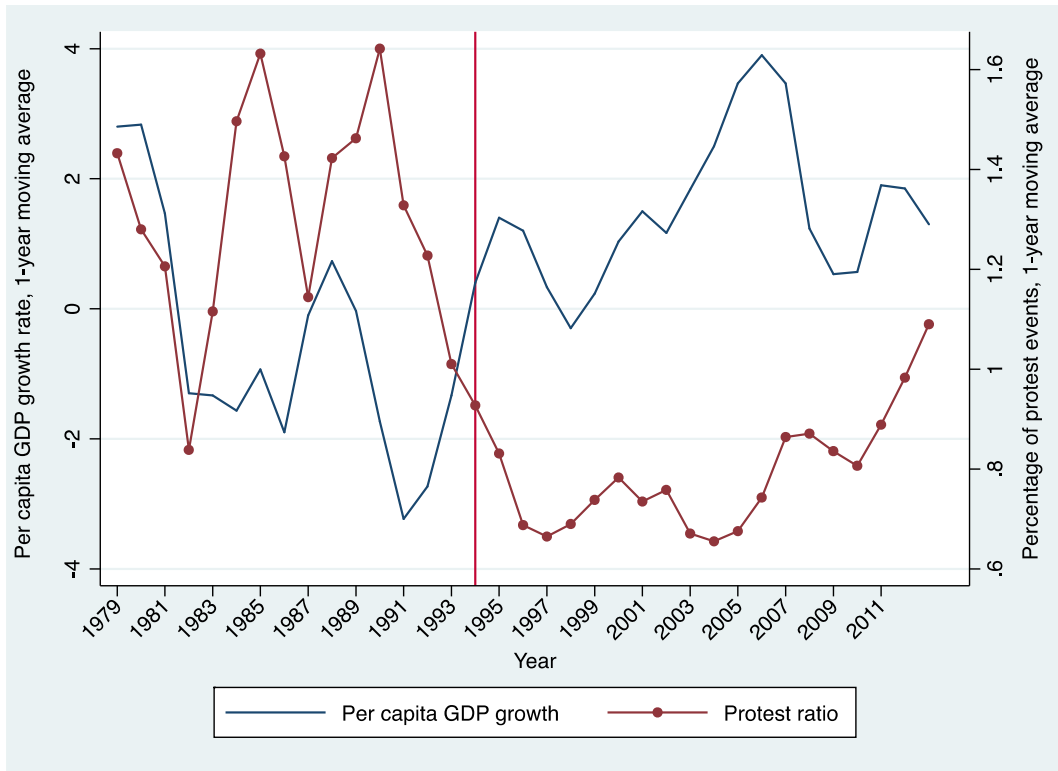


Figure 2: Protest and income inequality in South Africa, 1990-2012

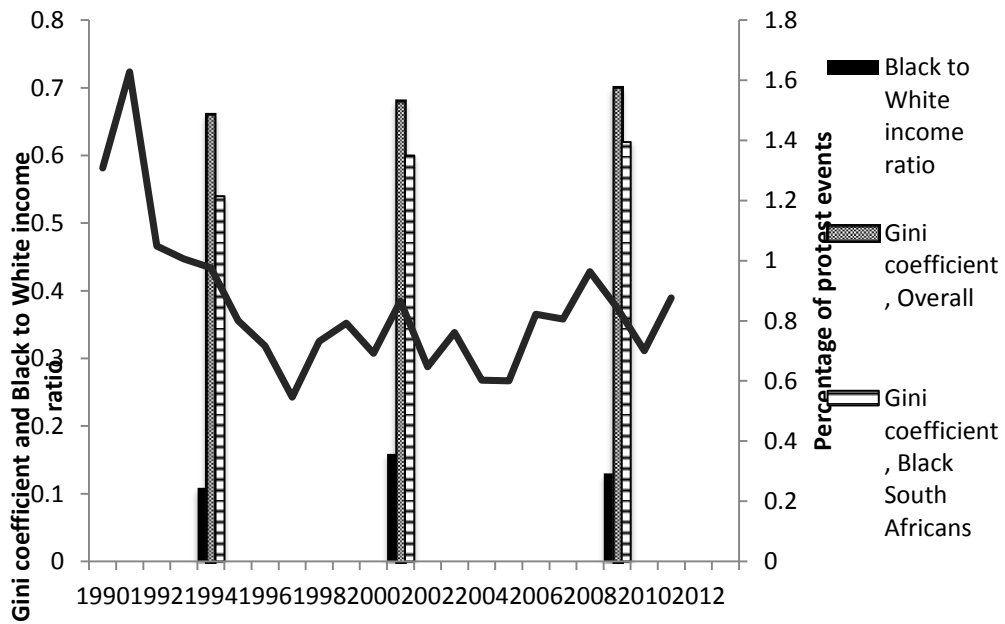


Figure 3: The composition of protest agenda in South Africa, 1990-2012

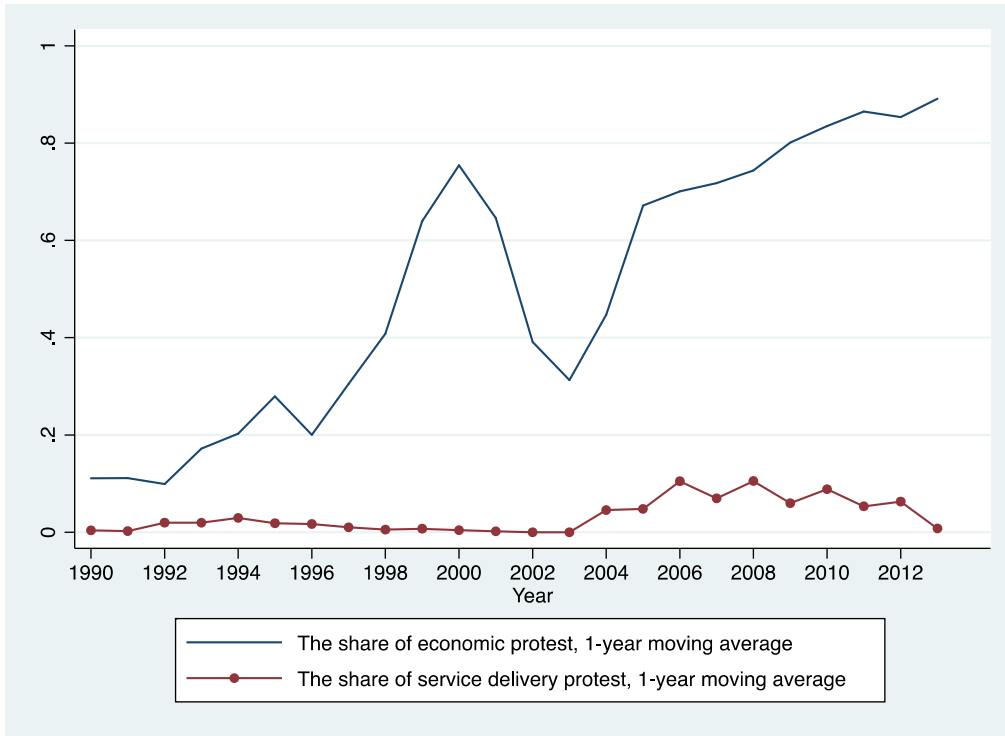


Figure 4: Coefficients of the age effect on the rate of direct political action

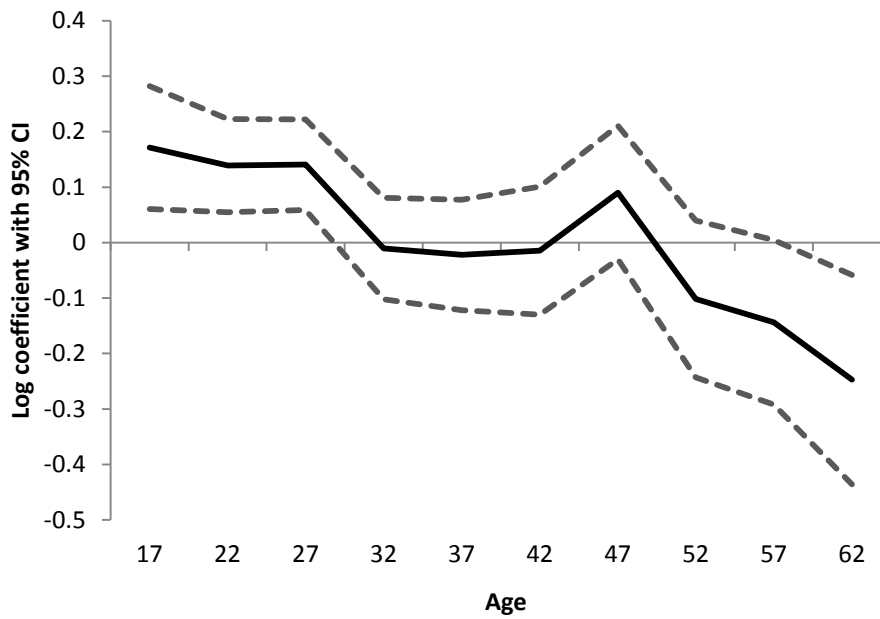


Figure 5: Coefficients of the cohort effect on the rate of direct political action

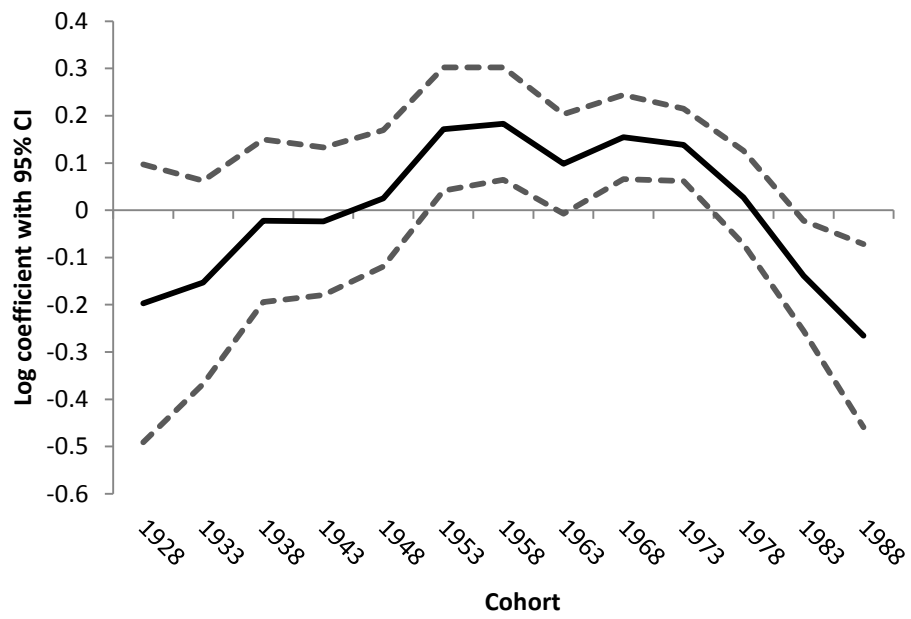


Figure 6: Coefficients of the period effect on the rate of direct political action

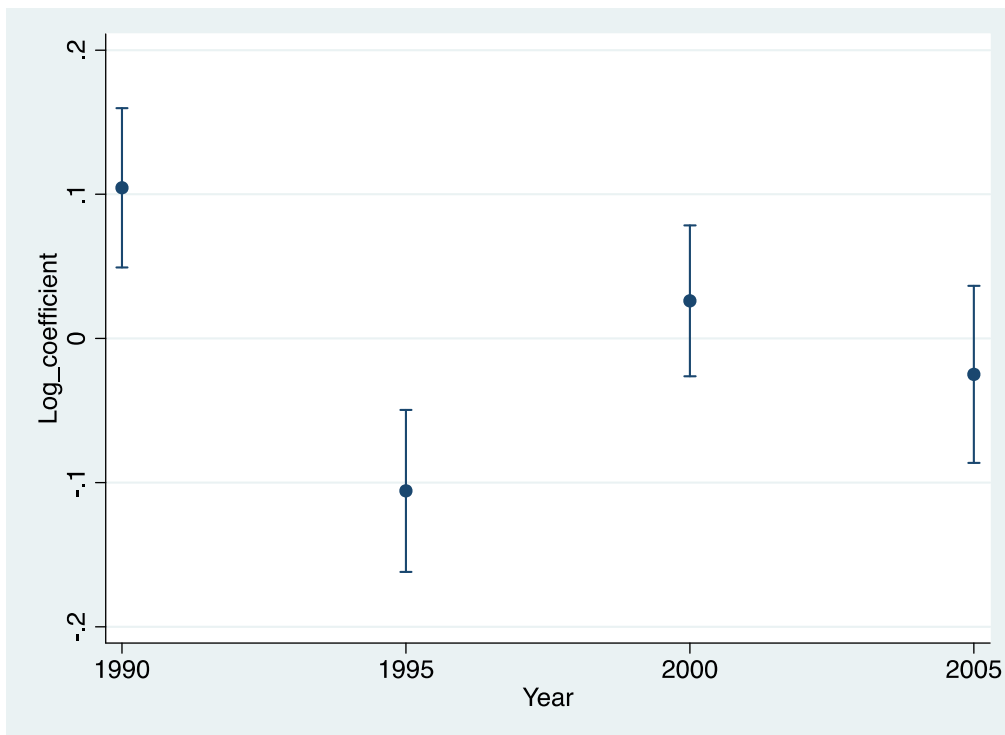


Table 1: Coefficient estimates of the baseline specifications

	Marginal effect of probit estimation (Dependent variable: Willingness to take part in lawful demonstrations)							
	Pre-democratization period		Transition period		Consolidation period		Post-transition period	
Year	1990	1990	1996	1996	2001	2001	2007	2007
Gender (Male=1)	.153 ^a (.027)	.137 ^a (.028)	.147 ^a (.028)	.139 ^a (.030)	.069 (.052)	.052 (.053)	.088 ^a (.029)	.091 ^a (.030)
Racial group (White=1)	-.352 ^a (.046)	-.343 ^a (.051)	-.451 ^a (.033)	-.378 ^a (.045)	-.323 ^a (.076)	-.323 ^a (.087)	-.193 ^a (.037)	-.179 ^a (.042)
Racial group (Coloured or Asian=1)	-.353 ^a (.059)	-.340 ^a (.066)	-.244 ^a (.034)	-.163 ^a (.042)	-.111 (.076)	-.115 (.081)	.086 (.065)	.088 (.066)
Education, middle	.104 ^a (.042)	.063 (.046)	.185 ^a (.034)	.187 ^a (.037)	.076 (.059)	.082 (.063)	.167 ^a (.035)	.172 ^a (.036)
Education, higher	.149 ^a (.042)	.124 ^a (.047)	.346 ^a (.036)	.351 ^a (.036)	.166 (.121)	.154 (.121)	.270 ^a (.052)	.277 ^a (.053)
Household income (below median=1)	.005 (.038)	.028 (.042)	-.087 ^b (.042)	-.105 ^b (.043)	-.129 (.072)	-.134 ^c (.072)	.092 ^a (.032)	.039 (.034)
Unemployed	-.005 (.048)	.009 (.052)	-.019 (.039)	.008 (.042)	.130 ^b (.060)	.107 ^c (.063)	.049 (.036)	.035 (.037)
Ideology (left =1, right=10)	-.013 ^a (.004)	-.015 ^a (.005)		.009 (.006)	.015 (.011)	.005 (.012)	-.010 (.007)	-.011 (.007)
No or low confidence on Parliament		.014 (.037)		-.015 (.040)		.051 (.067)		-.002 (.040)
No or low confidence on Civil Service		.013 (.032)		.011 (.036)		.026 (.056)		-.003 (.035)
No or low confidence on Political Parties		.082 ^b (.033)		-.182 ^a (.036)		-.121 ^c (.070)		-.014 (.036)
Satisfaction with personal finances (unsatisfied=1, satisfied=10)		.011 ^b (.005)		-.027 ^a (.005)		-.007 (.011)		-.022 ^a (.006)
N	1639	1462	1886	1712	2151	1984	2333	2220

Note: a, b, c signify 1 per cent, 5 per cent, 10 per cent statistical significance, respectively. Standard errors are given in parenthesis.

Table 2: Coefficient estimates of specifications with relative welfare

	Marginal effect of probit estimation (Dependent variable: Willingness to take part in lawful demonstrations)			
	Pre-democratization period	Transition period	Consolidation period	Post-transition period
	1990	1996	2001	2007
Unfulfilled expectations (<i>UE</i>)	-.038 (.060)	-.108 ^b (.056)	-.162 ^b (.079)	-.260 ^a (.096)
Relative deprivation (<i>RD</i>)	--	-.056 ^a (.017)	.051 (.042)	-.012 (.035)
Relative group welfare (<i>GD</i>)	--	.083 ^a (.017)	-.014 (.042)	.002 (.038)
Controls				
Gender (Male=1)	.154 ^a (.027)	.158 ^a (.028)	.060 (.048)	.092 ^a (.029)
Racial group (White=1)	-.330 ^a (.055)	-.680 ^a (.036)	-.363 ^b (.154)	-.203 ^a (.045)
Racial group (Coloured or Asian=1)	-.346 ^a (.062)	-.444 ^a (.043)	-.110 (.091)	.085 (.066)
Education, middle	.066 (.076)	.105 ^c (.059)	-.066 (.116)	-.004 (.072)
Education, higher	.098 (.101)	.188 ^b (.098)	-.067 (.223)	-.003 (.123)
Household income, first decile	-.105 (.197)	.508 ^a (.025)	-.067 (.333)	.517 ^a (.049)
Household income, second decile	-.037 (.159)	.441 ^a (.052)	.144 (.391)	.523 ^a (.040)
Household income, third decile	-.048 (.129)	.469 ^a (.029)	.165 (.335)	.546 ^a (.115)
Household income, fourth decile	-.127 (.113)	.454 ^a (.043)	.243 (.259)	.509 ^a (.146)
Household income, fifth decile	-.029 (.079)	.391 ^a (.071)	.144 (.249)	.473 ^a (.153)
Household income, sixth decile	-.002 (.051)	.302 ^a (.089)	-.036 (.240)	.437 ^a (.146)
Household income, seventh decile	-.036 (.042)	.317 ^a (.073)	-.017 (.188)	.335 (.138)
Household income, eighth decile	--	.253 ^a (.071)	.069 (.126)	.206 ^c (.109)
Household income, ninth decile	--	.183 ^a (.054)	.046 (.103)	.156 ^b (.078)
Unemployed	-.036 (.051)	-.014 (.039)	.099 ^c (.059)	.042 (.037)
Ideology (left =1, right=10)	-.013 ^a (.005)	.009 ^c (.005)	.016 (.011)	-.010 (.007)
N	1639	1886	2151	2333

Note: a, b, c signify 1per cent, 5 per cent, 10 per cent statistical significance, respectively. Standard errors are given in parenthesis.

Table 3: Correlation between unfulfilled expectations and level of education

Year	Correlation between level of education and <i>UE</i>
1990	-.058 (.004)
1996	-.050 (.012)
2001	-.042 (.035)
2007	.018 (.330)

Standard errors are given in parenthesis

Appendix 1: Description and source of data used in section two

1. Events that are classified under the ‘protest’ category in GDELT are identified as follows:
 - a. Engage in political dissent (a residual category)
 - b. Demonstrate or rally for leadership change, policy change, rights, change in institutions, regime, or unspecified above
 - c. Conduct hunger strike for leadership change, policy change, rights, change in institutions, regime, or unspecified above
 - d. Conduct strike or boycott for leadership change, policy change, rights, change in institutions, regime, or unspecified above
 - e. Obstruct passage to leadership change, policy change, rights, change in institutions, regime, or unspecified above
 - f. Engage in violent protest to demand leadership change, policy change, rights, change in institutions, regime, or unspecified above

Source: GDELT

2. Average Tone is defined as: “This is the average “tone” of all documents containing one or more mentions of this event. The score ranges from -100 (extremely negative) to +100 (extremely positive). Common values range between -10 and +10, with 0 indicating neutral. This can be used as a method of filtering the “context” of events as a subtle measure of the importance of an event and as a proxy for the “impact” of that event. For example, a riot event with a slightly negative average tone is likely to have been a minor occurrence, whereas if it had an extremely negative average tone, it suggests a far more serious occurrence. A riot with a positive score likely suggests a very minor occurrence described in the context of a more positive narrative (such as a report of an attack occurring in a discussion of improving conditions on the ground in a country and how the number of attacks per day has been greatly reduced)”.

Source: GDELT

3. Growth rate of GDP per capita, Source: South Africa Reserve Bank.
4. Overall and within-black Gini-coefficient and Black to White income ratio, Source: Leibbrandt et al. (2010).
5. The share of economic protests is calculated as the total number of protests organized around the issues of jobs, economy and economic resources, divided by the total count of protests and conflicts in a given year, weighted by the duration of the events. Source of raw data: SCAD.
6. The share of service delivery protests is calculated as the total number of protests organized around issues of food, water, subsistence and education, divided by the total count of protests and conflicts in a given year, weighted by the duration of events. Source of raw data: SCAD.

Appendix 2: Modes and spontaneity of protest

Figure A2.1: Modes of organizing protests on economic issues, 1990-2012

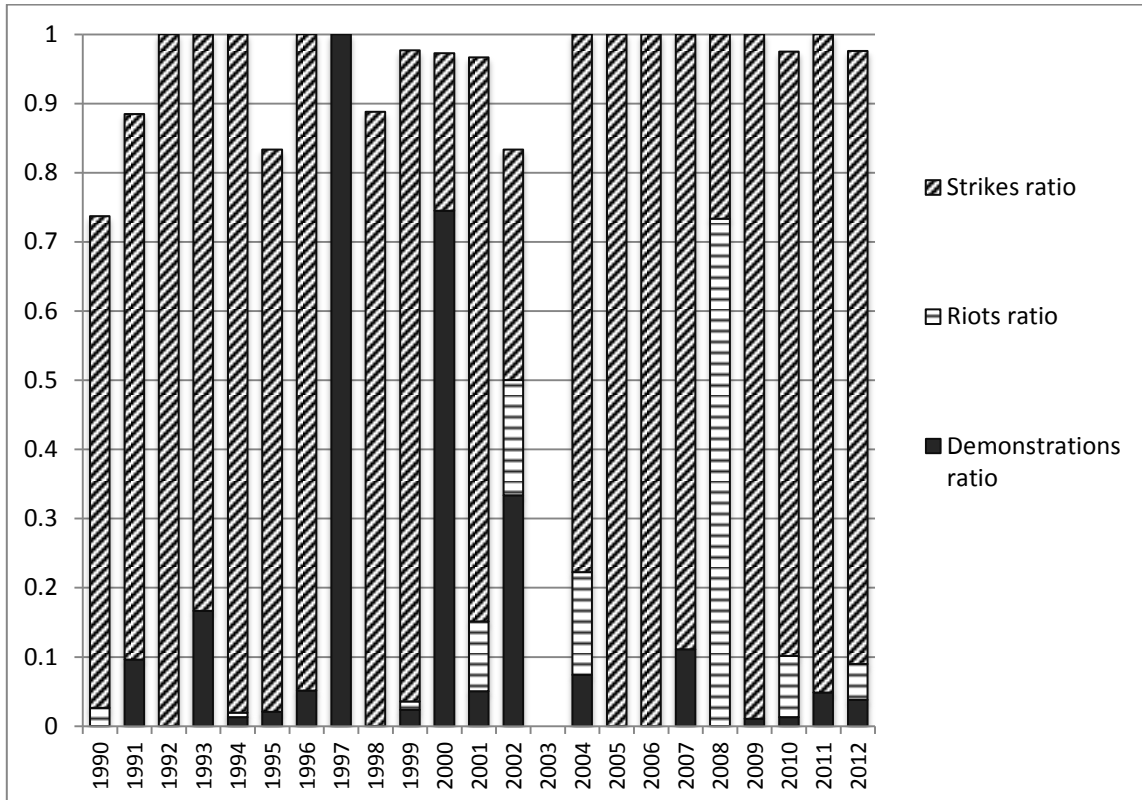


Figure A2.2: Modes of organizing protests on issues of service delivery, 1990-2012

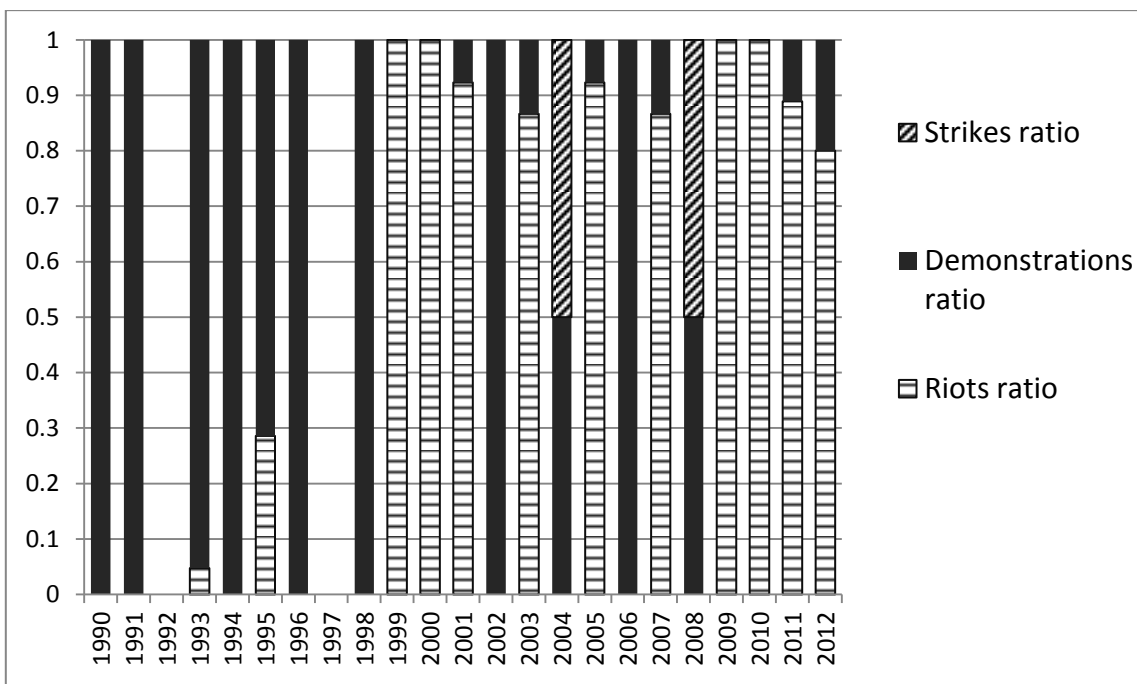
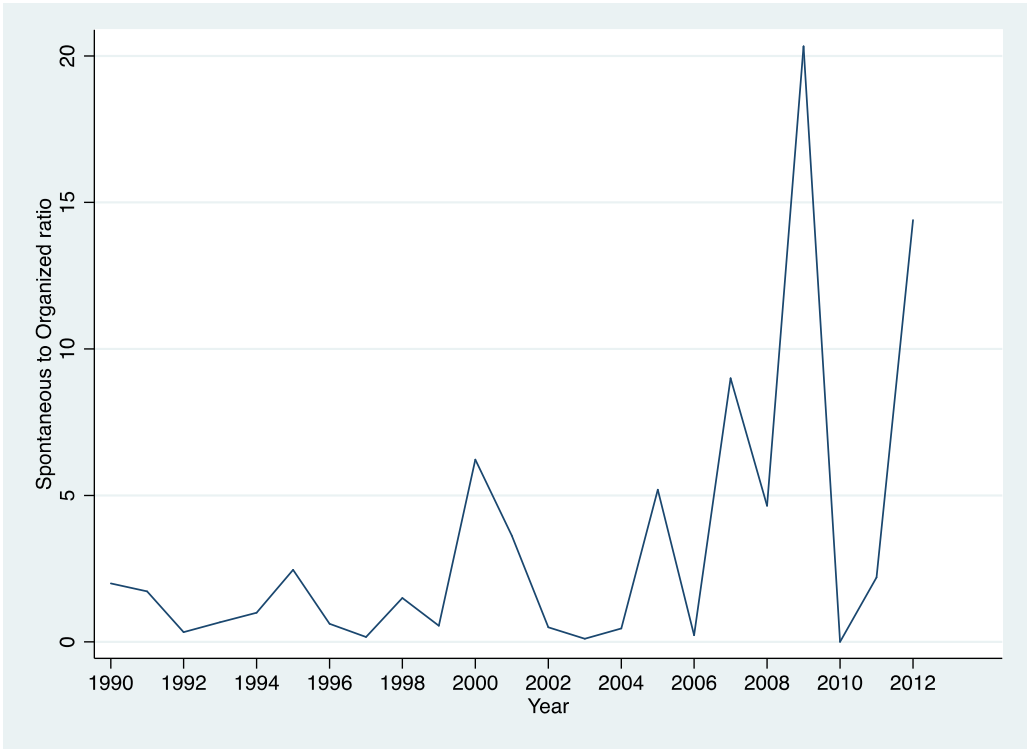


Figure A2.3: The ratio of spontaneous demonstrations to organized demonstrations, 1990-2012



Appendix 3: APC estimates of the determinants of the rate of direct political action

	Coefficient	Std. Err.
age_17	0.277	0.184
age_22	0.034	0.149
age_27	0.143	0.127
age_32	-0.104	0.136
age_37	-0.095	0.145
age_42	-0.086	0.169
age_47	0.045	0.178
age_52	-0.257	0.221
age_57	-0.082	0.234
age_62	0.126	0.273
period_1990	0.074	0.087
period_1996	-0.494	0.097
period_2001	0.388	0.075
period_2007	0.031	0.096
cohort_1928	-0.746	0.521
cohort_1933	-0.360	0.402
cohort_1938	0.164	0.276
cohort_1943	0.080	0.255
cohort_1948	0.369	0.229
cohort_1953	0.646	0.201
cohort_1958	0.614	0.184
cohort_1963	0.442	0.165
cohort_1968	0.541	0.143
cohort_1973	0.523	0.120
cohort_1978	-0.123	0.179
cohort_1983	-0.768	0.229
cohort_1988	-1.383	0.458
Constant term	-2.166	0.085