



# Support for political mobilization and protest in Egypt and Morocco: an online experimental study

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## ABSTRACT

Why do individuals engage in or support acts of contentious politics? Building from previous work, this article uses a 2 (high/low grievance) × 2 (high/low risk) × 2 (high/low opportunity) online experimental design to examine the impact of these factors on political action with participants from Egypt ( $n = 517$ ) and Morocco ( $n = 462$ ). Participants assumed a first-person perspective as a member of a fictional oppressed ethnic minority group in one of eight vignettes. Participants then indicated the extent to which they would engage in various forms of protest and violence, and how justified such actions were. Participants answered several social-personality measures: Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), and Activism and Radicalism Intentions Scale (AIS and RIS). Analyses show that higher SDO and RIS scores largely drive violent engagement and justification for these actions. Higher AIS scores predicted protest engagement and justification, while SDO negatively influenced non-violence. RWA scores decreased engagement in and support for any form of political action. In contrast with previous experimental findings, grievance did not impact decisions about political mobilization.

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## Introduction

The current research focuses on the question of why people mobilize, a phenomenon long explained by repression and grievance (e.g., Bloom, 2005; Crenshaw, 1983; Pinard, 2011; Ross, 1993). However, many people regularly face political repression and express grievances, yet comparatively few actually take action (Collier & Hoeffler, 2001, p. 2). Repression and grievance alone prove insufficient to explain galvanization to protest and violence. Marx himself argued that, given oppression's constant presence in cross-demographic daily life, identification of other factors remains necessary (Marx & Engels, 1848). Why then do some people who experience grievance mobilize for political action while others do not? In addition to contextual factors like grievance, risk, and opportunity, how do individual-level factors influence mobilization?

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The majority of scholarly interest on mobilization has focused on the state level (e.g., Collier & Hoeffler, 2001; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Gurr, 1970; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Skocpol, 1979; Tarrow, 1998). Considerably fewer studies investigate individual-level factors that lead to mobilization (for an important exception see Weinstein, 2007). Further, scholars rarely use experimental methods to understand mobilization. This constitutes an opportunity to shed new light on questions of galvanization to political action. With the ability to ensure control over treatments, researchers can tackle issues that are difficult to measure or control for – even crudely – with exclusively observational data.

This study adds three components to our previous experimental work on mobilization. First, our original work focused on the United States where people have less experience with discrimination, mass protest, and violence over the past few decades. Thus, our vignettes may have had limited salience. The present study aims – in part – to rectify this limitation with online general population samples from two countries that have recently experienced large-scale mobilization for social and political change: Egypt and Morocco. Second, we add a new variable for experimental manipulation: the opportunity to engage in action. In this project, we manipulate three contextual factors (grievance, risk, and opportunity) and examine how each impacts on mobilization. Third, we include new social-personality measures that are theoretically linked to mobilization: Activism and Radicalism Intention (ARIS). We measure four social-personality factors in this study and examine their impact on mobilization: Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1988), and Activism and Radicalism Intention (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009). Combining contextual variables and individual factors can provide insight to address the puzzle of why some people decide to engage in political action while others do not.

We first discuss how grievances, risk, and opportunity may influence support for various forms of mobilization. As the present paper shares similar background and context with our previous work, we provide an abbreviated review of the literature on grievance and risk here (see Lemieux & Asal, 2010 for a full discussion). We then explore the potential impact exerted by individual-level factors on the actions people will justify and undertake in the context of intergroup relations. We next describe our experimental design, country selection and background details, data collection process, and analysis. We conclude with a review of our findings, their limitations, and points of consideration for future research.

## Grievances and mobilization

Dating back at least to Machiavelli (1532), political action has been explained by grievances based upon fundamental rights violations. More recently, Gurr (1970) argued that relative deprivation creates a sense of grievance that drives mobilization. Here relative deprivation is defined as “a perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations and their value capabilities” (p. 13). Yet it is difficult to measure relative deprivation (Aya, 1990), so discrimination is often used as a proxy for grievance (e.g., Gurr, 1993; Gurr & Moore, 1997). Studies using multiple data sources find that ethnic minorities subject to discrimination are more likely to mobilize politically and to engage in violence (e.g., Goodwin, 2001; Hibbs, 1973).

While the general focus on grievances and mobilization has been at the macro-level, early evidence suggests that this link exists at the individual level as well. Qualitative research, largely from psychology, links grievances and violence, especially in the context of terrorism

(Horgan, 2005; Victoroff, 2005). Some quantitative research similarly finds that grievance influences mobilization (Ennis & Schreuer, 1987; Irons, 1998), while other work argues that the connection is weak (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2006). In the present study, salient points across multiple categories of grievance were woven into a single cohesive narrative to create the experimental conditions of high and low grievance. Overall, we expect that there may be some differences between countries, but that the general responses here will be consistent with results from our previous work. We anticipate that the effect of grievance should remain relatively consistent as an underlying influence on mobilization, specifically:

- (1) High grievance will:
  - (a) increase the likelihood of any form of political participation in general;
  - (b) increase participation in protests;
  - (c) increase participation in attacks;
  - (d) increase justification for protests;
  - (e) increase justification for attacks.

### **Risk, opportunity, and mobilization**

Research on how opportunity structures influence political mobilization finds that risks or opportunities presented by the political environment move individuals or groups away from or towards mobilization (Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978). When people perceive the capacity and capability for success, it plausibly influences the type of actions they choose to take, or the level of support that they lend. When there is a safe way to engage in politics, more people will mobilize (Tilly, 1978). Since most research on how costs and benefits impact mobilization operates from a perspective of game theory (Lichbach, 1998), there is less empirical research on this topic (Almanzar & Herring, 2004). At the individual level, risk of punishment has been shown to impact people's decision to mobilize (Ennis & Schreuer, 1987). Many studies, however, operationalize risk as a cost to be paid rather than the likelihood that a potential cost would be imposed on the individual (Goldstone & Tilly, 2001). This is problematic, as the potential risks faced by those who mobilize in the real world are not guaranteed and can differ across individuals, as Lichbach (1995) discusses. From this discussion, we expect that:

- (2) High risk will:
  - a) reduce the likelihood of any form of political participation in general;
  - b) reduce participation in protests;
  - c) reduce participation in attacks;
  - d) not impact justification for protests;
  - e) not impact justification for attacks.
  
- (3) High opportunity will:
  - (a) increase the likelihood of any form of political participation in general;
  - (b) increase participation in protests;
  - (c) increase participation in attacks;
  - (d) increase justification for protests;
  - (e) increase justification for attacks.

## Social-personality factors and mobilization

Most theoretical discussion of mobilization focuses on contextual factors in society. Yet individual-level research provides the ability to explore how personality factors can explain why some people mobilize while others do not, particularly when the contextual factors remain similar. Social Dominance Orientation, Right Wing Authoritarianism, Activism Intention, and Radicalism Intention constitute a few such social-personality factors.

Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) argues how and why some people are inclined to maintain a hierarchically organized society. The more someone is invested in maintaining group-based dominance in society, the higher they will score on SDO. RWA is associated with concerns about maintaining the status quo in society. Higher RWA scores should be associated with less inclination to take action of any sort. Our previous work finds that SDO and RWA play consistent roles in the likelihood to mobilize, type of action preferred, and justification for political action regardless of grievance and risk conditions (see Lemieux & Asal, 2010). We find that people with higher SDO scores were more likely to both engage in and justify violence, but less likely to do either for non-violent action. People with higher RWA scores, however, were less likely to engage in or justify any action at all. We expect these factors to have the same impact in the present study.

Moskalenko and McCauley (2009) created the Activism and Radicalism Intention Scales to measure propensity to engage in both legal, non-violent political action (AIS) and illegal, violent political action (RIS). Rather than activism functioning as a precursor to radicalization, they clearly distinguish between these two dimensions of political action using samples from the United States and Ukraine. We expect that people with higher RIS scores will behave similarly to those with higher SDO scores. Stated differently, participants with higher RIS scores prove more likely to both engage in and justify violence, but less likely to do either in the case of non-violent action. Conversely, we expect that higher AIS scores will increase support for protest only, but not violence. Given that ARIS measures have been validated in samples from different countries, we expect the same clear patterns to emerge across cultural contexts in the present study.

- (4) Higher SDO will increase participation in and justification for attacks only.
- (5) Higher RIS will increase participation in and justification for attacks only.
- (6) Higher AIS will increase participation in and justification for protest only.
- (7) Higher RWA will decrease participation in and justification for both attacks and protest.

## Research design, sample, country background, and methodology

We aim to explain individuals' willingness to mobilize or justify violent or non-violent action on the basis of both manipulated factors (grievance, risk, and opportunity) and measured factors (SDO, RWA, AIS, and RIS). The experimental method's strength lies in its capacity to control the treatment that each participant receives, and thus ensure our data includes sufficient and representative variation along multiple dimensions of interest. Studies that rely on observational data may lack such variation, cannot disentangle the impact of factors that tend to co-vary, and often select participants on dependent variables (i.e., interviewing people who have engaged in terrorism; Post, Sprinzak, & Denny, 2003).

## Sample

A potential limitation of our previous work in the United States is that the vignettes describe scenarios that may not have direct salience with much of the population. In the present study, we examine the extent to which our previous findings are applicable across cultural and political contexts. To do so, we chose two samples: one from Egypt and one from Morocco. These samples allow us to test our argument with populations that have country-level experience with grievances, protests, and violence. As briefly discussed below, there are differences in the political and social contexts across the two countries. These differences may shape how participants respond to our experimental manipulations and survey questions. To account for this possibility, we analysed results for the two countries separately.<sup>1</sup>

Zogby Analytics, an international polling firm, administered the study. The sample drew from online panels representative of each country's adult population in Egypt ( $n = 517$ ) and Morocco ( $n = 462$ ). Thousands of adults in each country were invited to participate in this study. Using census data, voter files, and other resources, Zogby used weighting techniques to approximate the demographics of each population for the samples. Data for the Egyptian sample were collected on 3–7 October 2013. Data for the Moroccan sample were collected between 3 October and 4 November 2013. See Table 1 for a detailed demographic breakdown.

### Egypt

Since the revolution of 1952 and the start of Gamal Abdel Nasser's rule, the military has been the dominant force in Egyptian politics and its economy. However, Egypt's military dictatorship, its emphasis on Arab nationalism as a guiding philosophy, and its close relations with the US and Israel have inflamed many on both the left and the right in society. There were three cycles of protest in the decade prior to the 2011 uprising against the war in Iraq, in favour of democracy, and inspired by labour and employment concerns (El-Mahdi, 2014).

First, Egypt's peace treaty with Israel was a source of deep resentment. The 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel never had the support of the Egyptian people (*The Guardian*, 2011). Under Mubarak, many Egyptians thought their regime supported Israel's security and facilitated its power, and became Israel's primary provider of energy. After Mubarak was overthrown, protestors destroyed the Israeli embassy in Cairo – a manifestation of the resentment – while Egyptian security forces looked on.

Second, the country suffered from high unemployment, with a record 13.2% in 2010 (Fam & Shahine, 2013). Eight out of every ten unemployed were under 30 – and more than a quarter held university degrees. High unemployment and the lack of representation in government were prime catalysts for the Arab Spring in Egypt.

**Table 1.** Demographics by country.

	Egypt	Morocco
Male	280 (54.1%)	225 (48.7%)
Female	229 (44.3%)	225 (48.7%)
Mean age	30.5 (8.5)	33.0 (10.4)
Age range	18–66	18–83
Religion	Muslim: 92% Christian: 7% Other: 1%	Muslim: 93% Christian: 6% Other: 1%
<i>N</i>	517	462

Third, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had decades of conflict with the military regime. After the Brotherhood attempted to assassinate Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954, thousands of its members were imprisoned and the government banned it from political participation. Still, the group provided social welfare goods where the state was unable or unwilling to do so, and thus became influential. After Arab Spring protests helped to successfully depose Hosni Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party came to power – at least in part – because of its strong organization and connection with society, built over decades, in comparison with the fervent but unseasoned contenders. Mass protests against Muslim Brotherhood rule called for a new election, early elections, and Mohamed Morsi's impeachment.

### **Morocco**

There are significant points of contention in Morocco. First, the Moroccan government has a large Salafi Jihadist movement within its borders – one that has perpetrated major terrorist attacks on home soil. Second, many Moroccans consider the quality of their government as very low and see corruption as a significant problem. Third, there is a longstanding conflict over the Western Sahara between Morocco and the Polisario Front, with occasional involvement from Algeria and France. Views on this issue tend to run parallel to other grievances against the government (CIA, 2016). Yet many are hesitant to rebel given the recent history of incarcerating political dissidents.

Transparency International's National Integrity System Assessments (2010) found that nepotism in Morocco is considered "a fact of life". Morocco attempted to address this problem through ratifying the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the most comprehensive international convention targeting corruption (Transparency International's National Integrity System Assessments, 2011). The state also tried to address grievances brought to its attention during the Arab Spring through significant institutional reforms. In a 2011 referendum, the vast majority of Moroccans (98.49%) voted for reforms that shifted considerable power from the king to the prime minister and parliament (CNN, 2011). For instance, voters now elect a prime minister where in the past the king appointed him. Further, the prime minister can now dissolve the parliament, and must be consulted if the king wishes to do the same. Yet one of the remaining grievances aired often on the ground is the overwhelming control by the monarchy over the Moroccan economy, and the fact that political reforms cannot remove entrenched nepotism at the heart of the economic sector.

### **Design**

The online experiments were conducted using a 2 (high/low grievance) by 2 (high/low risk) by 2 (high/low opportunity) experimental design that created eight conditions. Each participant was randomly assigned to read one vignette that reflected the relevant combination of factors. These vignettes asked the participant to imagine that they lived in a hypothetical country, which allows for control over the information received by participants and increased internal validity (McDermott, 2002). Participants were then asked to indicate the likelihood that they would take any action (a general propensity to mobilize), which action(s) they would take, and the extent to which each form of action was justified. We also measured a series of social-personality factors<sup>2</sup>: SDO (9-item scale,  $\alpha = 0.74$ ), RWA (10-item scale,  $\alpha = 0.68$ ), AIS (4-item scale,  $\alpha = 0.93$ ), and RIS (4-item scale,  $\alpha = 0.90$ ).<sup>3</sup> All experimental materials and

protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board, and all materials were translated by certified professionals for online administration and were assessed for accuracy.

## Results and discussion

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for the key variables by country. While about half of the participants in each country state that they would engage in protest, far fewer indicate that they would participate in or justify violence in any form. Normatively, this is a positive thing. Though the small number of participants who indicate that they would engage in violence limits our ability to make statistical inferences about factors that contribute to these decisions.

For this study, there are 13 outcome variables. First, we are interested in participants' likelihood to engage in any form of action. Next, we are interested in whether or not participants are willing to take seven different actions in support of the cause: protest locally, protest against US embassy, student union bombing, police station bombing, train station bombing, US embassy bombing, and US homeland bombing. The targets of violence range from symbolic to state agents to civilian: student union bombing (no casualties), police station bombing (state-linked casualties), and train station bombing (civilian casualties). Third, we are interested in how justified participants think these seven possible actions are. We estimated separate regression models for each country and dependent variable. Recall that participants were randomly assigned to read one vignette that manipulated three elements: the level of grievance-provoking behaviours their group faces at the hands of the majority group, the extent to which those who take action are likely to be punished, and the opportunity to successfully engage in actions. All models are reported with dummy variables for high levels of each treatment (grievance, risk, opportunity) and with scores for

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics.

	Egypt	Morocco
Action: Protest	53.90%	47.30%
Action: Bomb student union	1.60%	7.10%
Action: Bomb police station	1.30%	4.90%
Action: Bomb train station	1.00%	4.50%
Action: Donate to protest	15.90%	15.50%
Action: Donate to bombing	8.00%	0.50%
Action: No action	37.70%	40.30%
Likelihood of action	4.17 (2.09)	3.92 (2.22)
Justify protest	4.85 (2.20)	5.04 (2.08)
Justify: Student union bomb	1.72 (1.41)	2.25 (2.00)
Justify: Police station bomb	1.69 (1.38)	2.28 (1.99)
Justify: Train station bomb	1.57 (1.24)	2.12 (1.90)
Justify: US embassy attack	1.78 (1.48)	2.18 (1.88)
Justify: US embassy protest	4.47 (2.17)	4.34 (2.08)
Justify: US attack	1.84 (1.56)	2.42 (2.08)
SDO	2.63 (1.04)	2.59 (1.12)
RWA	4.70 (1.04)	4.62 (0.92)
RF	5.53 (1.11)	5.36 (1.54)
ALS	3.84 (1.53)	4.17 (1.83)
RIS	2.24 (1.49)	2.85 (1.79)
N	517	462

Note: For action options, the percentage of participants who selected that they would engage in each action is reported. For justification questions, higher scores indicate greater level of agreement. For the social-personality factors, higher scores indicated stronger levels of each.

each of the social-personality factors (SDO, RWA, AIS, and RIS). While demographics like gender and age could reasonably be expected to affect results, we did not find that either had a systematic impact on outcomes in a similarly designed study with a different population. We estimated models to include age and race, but again neither substantively altered the findings so we do not report those models. We also estimated models with only treatment dummies, with only each condition, and with each condition plus the social-personality factors. These modelling decisions did not substantively alter the findings across outcome and thus are not reported. All tables present odds ratios for each independent variable; ratios greater than one indicate a positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables whereas ratios less than one indicate a negative relationship. For simplicity's sake across models, we do not report constants and all standard errors are presented in parentheses after the odds ratios.

First, we examine actions that participants are willing to take. In Table 3, we examine participants' likelihood to take any action. Participants were asked "How likely is it that you will engage in any form of political action?" on a seven-point scale, so we estimated these models with ordered logistic regression.<sup>4</sup>

We expected that the treatments would impact on a person's likelihood to engage in political action,<sup>5</sup> yet the results do not support this. In Egypt, there are no effects. In Morocco, risk decreases the likelihood of taking any action. Freedom of speech in Morocco has several clear red lines that absolutely affect what people see as action, and what people consider as risk, which may explain the findings in this context. When we turn to individual-level factors, clearer patterns emerge. As expected, higher AIS scores are positively associated with political engagement in both samples. While higher SDO, RWA, and RIS were each associated with lower likelihood of action, results varied between the samples. These findings demonstrate that individual-level factors can help explain political action, but suggest that cultural factors may affect their importance.

**Table 3.** Engaging in any form of political action.

	Likelihood to engage in any action	
	Egypt	Morocco
Grievance	1.30 (0.16)	1.27 (0.18)
Risk	1.20 (0.16)	<b>0.65*</b> <b>(0.18)</b>
Opportunity	1.06 (0.16)	1.04 (0.18)
SDO	<b>0.81*</b> <b>(0.09)</b>	0.95 (0.11)
RWA	0.95 (0.09)	<b>0.78*</b> <b>(0.11)</b>
AIS	<b>1.70***</b> <b>(0.05)</b>	<b>2.01***</b> <b>(0.07)</b>
RIS	<b>0.87*</b> <b>(0.07)</b>	1.07 (0.08)
N	517	462

Note: Ordered logistic regression models. Constants not reported. Significant coefficients in bold.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 4.** Choosing to engage in various forms of political action.

	Protest		Student Union Bombing		Police Station Bombing		Train Station Bombing	
	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco
Grievance	1.22 (0.20)	1.02 (0.21)	1.02 (0.73)	0.77 (0.43)	1.89 (0.84)	1.59 (0.49)	4.56 (1.24)	<b>3.18*</b> (0.55)
Risk	1.29 (0.20)	0.75 (0.21)	2.40 (0.79)	0.70 (0.45)	6.00 (1.05)	1.41 (0.51)	0.11 (1.44)	0.52 (0.55)
Opportunity	1.37 (0.20)	<b>1.66*</b> (0.21)	0.75 (0.73)	<b>0.30</b> (0.44)	0.98 (0.82)	<b>0.31*</b> (0.52)	2.97 (1.04)	<b>0.24*</b> (0.57)
SDO	<b>0.57***</b> (0.11)	<b>0.59**</b> * (0.12)	2.00 (0.45)	<b>2.31**</b> (0.31)	1.59 (0.48)	1.81 (0.34)	2.38 (0.61)	<b>4.55**</b> *(0.42)
RWA	<b>0.81*</b> (0.10)	<b>0.74*</b> (0.13)	<b>0.42*</b> (0.41)	<b>0.26**</b> (0.43)	0.85 (0.48)	0.63 (0.41)	0.50 (0.53)	<b>0.36*</b> (0.49)
AIS	<b>1.59***</b> (0.07)	<b>1.35**</b> * (0.07)	0.85 (0.30)	0.88 (0.18)	0.99 (0.31)	0.68 (0.20)	0.65 (0.42)	1.53 (0.24)
RIS	<b>0.77**</b> (0.09)	0.84 (0.09)	1.34 (0.30)	<b>2.00**</b> (0.21)	1.92 (0.35)	<b>2.27**</b> (0.24)*	1.24 (0.41)	1.18 (0.23)
N	517	462	517	462	517	462	517	462

Note: Participants answer the following questions:

- (1) "I would join Dalig if he proposed to organize a protest march. This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and would be unlikely to hurt anyone."
- (2) "I would join Vadan if he proposed bombing the student union at night. This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and would be unlikely to hurt anyone."
- (3) "I would join Vadan if he proposed bombing a police station. This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and kill or injure police officers who repress the Estamese people."
- (4) "I would join Vadan if he proposed bombing the train station. This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and kill or injure civilians."

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported. Significant coefficients in bold.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

In Table 4, we examine participants' decision to engage in protest and various forms of violence.<sup>6</sup> The text of these questions is found in the table. The dependent variables are each a binary choice so we estimated these models with logistic regression.

Again, we expected that the treatments would affect engagement in various forms of political action, but the results largely do not support this. While grievances are linked to political action in our previous experimental work, grievance only increases engagement in the train station bombing with the Moroccan sample. Risk does not impact on action, though this is largely in line with previous findings. This suggests that risk is not a particularly deterrent factor. As expected, opportunity increased engagement in protests, though only in the Moroccan sample. During the Arab Spring, people were more willing to come out in the open, when the monarchy was willing to allow a "steam valve" for dissent without the normal consequences. For example, people were allowed to take photos in parliament during a six-month period, which was unprecedented. On throne day in July 2011, this was shut down abruptly, and repression was reinstated as the norm. Protestors gauged risk based, in part, on the ability of the international media to cover the events, and came out – or did not – accordingly. Contrary to expectations, opportunity decreased engagement in violence for Moroccans. In Egypt, the treatment conditions have no effect.

When we turn to individual-level factors, clearer patterns begin to emerge. As expected, higher RWA scores consistently decrease the likelihood of protest and violence in both samples while higher AIS scores increase engagement in protest. SDO and RIS have the expected impact on the outcomes, but are less consistent between the two samples. For example,

**Table 5.** Justification for locally directed actions.

	Protest		Student union bombing		Police station bombing		Train station bombing	
	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco
Grievance	<b>1.39*</b> (0.16)	1.39 (0.17)	1.09 (0.15)	1.21 (0.23)	0.92 (0.22)	1.49 (0.22)	0.64 (0.25)	1.03 (0.25)
Risk	1.19 (0.16)	0.96 (0.18)	0.85 (0.59)	<b>0.59*</b> (0.23)	1.08 (0.22)	<b>0.49**</b> (0.23)	0.89 (0.25)	0.63 (0.26)
Opportunity	1.03 (0.16)	1.29 (0.17)	1.01 (0.00)	<b>0.59*</b> (0.23)	0.82 (0.22)	0.75 (0.22)	1.22 (0.25)	1.50 (0.25)
SDO	<b>0.47***</b> (0.09)	<b>0.56***</b> (0.10)	<b>1.77***</b> (0.12)	<b>2.51***</b> (0.13)	<b>1.74***</b> (0.12)	<b>2.47**</b> (0.12)*	<b>2.48**</b> (0.14)*	<b>3.77**</b> (0.16)*
RWA	0.90 (0.08)	1.01 (0.10)	<b>0.65**</b> (0.11)	0.81 (0.15)	<b>0.66***</b> (0.11)	<b>0.72*</b> (0.14)	<b>0.71**</b> (0.13)	0.85 (0.18)
AIS	<b>1.60***</b> (0.05)	<b>1.50***</b> (0.06)	0.97 (0.07)	1.08 (0.09)	<b>0.86*</b> (0.08)	1.18 (0.09)	0.87 (0.09)	1.12 (0.11)
RIS	<b>0.80**</b> (0.07)	1.03 (0.08)	<b>1.42***</b> (0.08)	<b>1.84***</b> (0.10)	<b>1.87***</b> (0.09)	<b>1.99**</b> (0.10)*	<b>1.84**</b> (0.10)*	<b>2.08**</b> (0.11)*
N	517	462	517	462	517	462	517	462

Note: Participants answer the following questions:

- (1) "To what extent would Dalig be justified in organizing the protest? This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and would be unlikely to hurt anyone."
- (2) "To what extent would Vadan be justified in organizing a bombing the student union at night? This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and would be unlikely to hurt anyone."
- (3) "To what extent would Vadan be justified in organizing a bombing of a police station? This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and kill or injure police officers who repress the Estamese people."
- (4) "To what extent would Vadan be justified in organizing a bombing of the train station? This would send a message about the plight of the Estamese and kill or injure civilians."

Ordered logistic regression models. Constants not reported. Significant coefficients in bold.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

higher SDO scores decrease engagement in protest in both samples, but only increase engagement in violence for some targets in the Moroccan sample. Similarly, higher RIS scores decrease engagement in protest in the Egyptian sample only but increase some forms of violent engagement in the Moroccan sample only. Overall, these social-personality factors demonstrate clearer impacts on the outcome variables than did the treatment conditions.

In Tables 5 and 6, we examine participants' level of justification for both protest and various forms of violence that are directed at local targets and against US targets, respectively. The test of each question appears below the table. Each dependent variable is rated on a seven-point scale, so we estimate these models with ordered logistical regression.

While grievance and risk do not impact actions, higher levels of grievance do increase justification for local protest in Egypt. Higher levels of risk and opportunity each decrease justification for some forms of violence in Morocco. The treatments have an inconsistent impact across samples and are weaker than we have found in previous studies. When we look at social-personality factors, SDO continues to play the most consistent role across outcomes and samples. Higher SDO scores are associated with less justification for protest and more justification for violence. Higher RWA scores are generally associated with lower justification for any action, though this is not consistent across all outcomes. As expected, higher AIS scores consistently increase justification for protest while higher RIS scores increase justification for violence in both samples.

This study expanded on our previous experimental work in three ways: new samples from countries with recent history of large-scale mobilization, a new treatment variable, and new

**Table 6.** Justification for actions directed against the US.

	Protest against US embassy		Attack against US embassy		Attack on US soil	
	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco	Egypt	Morocco
Grievance	1.07 (0.16)	1.31 (0.17)	0.77 (0.21)	1.03 (0.23)	0.85 (0.21)	1.37 (0.22)
Risk	1.00 (0.16)	1.30 (0.17)	0.93 (0.21)	<b>0.58*</b> (0.23)	1.00 (0.21)	0.65 (0.22)
Opportunity	1.04 (0.16)	1.34 (0.17)	0.88 (0.21)	1.31 (0.23)	0.77 (0.21)	0.66 (0.22)
SDO	<b>0.62***</b> (0.09)	<b>0.76**</b> (0.10)	<b>1.81***</b> (0.12)	<b>2.93***</b> (0.14)	<b>1.76***</b> (0.11)	<b>2.74**</b> (0.12)*
RWA	0.86 (0.08)	<b>0.80**</b> (0.10)	<b>0.68***</b> (0.11)	0.82 (0.15)	<b>0.75**</b> (0.10)	0.95 (0.14)
AIS	<b>1.30***</b> (0.05)	<b>1.50***</b> (0.06)	0.89 (0.08)	1.11 (0.09)	0.95 (0.07)	1.06 (0.09)
RIS	0.99 (0.07)	1.05 (0.07)	<b>1.64***</b> (0.09)	<b>1.71***</b> (0.10)	<b>1.42***</b> (0.08)	<b>1.95**</b> (0.10)*
N	517	462	517	462	517	462

Note: Participants answer the following questions:

- (1) "To what extent would Dalig be justified in planning a protest directed toward the United States, given ongoing US support for the Buchari regime?"
- (2) "To what extent would Vadan be justified in planning an attack directed toward the United States Embassy in Bucharastan, given ongoing US support of the Buchari regime?"
- (3) "To what extent would Vadan be justified in planning an attack to occur within the US given ongoing US support of the Buchari regime?"

Ordered logistic regression models. Constants not reported. Significant coefficients in bold.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

social-personality measures. With the Egyptian and Moroccan samples, our hypotheses about the impact of grievance, risk, and opportunity on political mobilization are not supported. Though each treatment was occasionally associated with a significant change in the outcome, no consistent pattern emerges in these data. While the simplest explanation may be that our treatments did not work, nearly identical vignettes do elicit the expected results for the grievance and risk treatments in samples from the United States, Jordan, Malaysia, and – to some degree – Turkey. While the opportunity treatment did not impact our results in this study, we may see a significant impact using a different sample as well. Our surprising non-significant results suggest that some other mechanism or mechanisms are the driving force behind decisions on political action in Egypt and Morocco. These data were collected in the aftermath of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and the Arab Spring. Given the amount of grievance and risk these populations see or experience in their daily lives, it is possible that participants were already primed to these factors so our treatments were ineffective at moving this further.

While our treatments had little effect on the outcomes, the social-personality factors paint a clearer picture. The starting puzzle for this project was to understand why some people mobilize for political action while others do not, particularly when the contexts are similar. Individual-level factors like SDO, RWA, AIS, and RIS help to explain these differences across a range of contexts. As expected, higher SDO scores are consistently associated with more engagement in and – especially – justification for violence. This is supported by our previous findings as well. Similarly, higher RWA scores are consistently associated with lower justification for any action. These were the first samples where we asked about AIS and RIS, both of which display consistent impacts on political action. Situational factors alone are

insufficient to explain mobilization and the forms that it can take. Further unpacking how individual-level characteristics predict differences in mobilization helps us to better address the question of why some people take political action while others do not.

## Conclusion

In the present research, we examine the relative contributions of grievance, risk, and opportunity with an experimental paradigm. Unlike the previous iterations of our experiments, we did not find empirical support that grievances have a demonstrable impact on justifications, but rather that individual-level factors (SDO, RWA, AIS, and RIS) were more predictive of participation and support across a wide range of actions. Consistent with our previous data, it is important to emphasize that, in general, we saw very low levels of engagement in and justification for terrorism.

This work presents some interesting challenges that should be unpacked further. In many previous experiments, we found a distinct and consistent impact of grievance on mobilization. However, in the present research this effect is not evident. We have found empirical support for the importance of SDO and RWA (consistent with our previous findings) and with the role of AIS and RIS scores, which are a new addition to our evaluative measures. Additionally, the level of religious fundamentalism generally corresponded with higher levels of justification for non-violent action, and against more violent forms of action that explicitly targeted civilians. These findings suggest areas for further research.

## Limitations, contributions, and future directions

One potential limitation of this research design is that the respondents may not identify strongly with, or relate to, the hypothetical situation described by the treatment. However, the population from which our sample is drawn is diverse, including adults in Egypt and Morocco. In fact, given the political climate in both countries, the actual grievances, risks, and opportunities faced by both populations may overshadow any impact that our treatments would otherwise have. This could have several different implications, which lead to a need for additional research for clarification. First, the experimental manipulation may simply not have worked – and even though grievance would or should be a factor that is influential in terms of support for both non-violent and violent forms of political action, it simply was not manipulated in a way that connected with the particular samples from Egypt and Morocco. Given our past experience with a wide variety of aforementioned samples, this is unlikely even though it is plausible. Second, it is possible that the violence associated with the Arab Spring has reduced the inclination to respond to grievances with either protest or violence. Third, there may not have been an impact of grievance on the justification levels because they were relatively fixed and stable across conditions and reflected more deeply held values (i.e., protest is *generally* something that one should or should not do, and acts of violence toward a range of targets are *generally* something that one should or should not do). Thus, the particular “dose” and type of grievance manipulation that was employed here did not move the needle on justification of forms of action. Rather, the extent to which the levels of justification were predicted was influenced by individual measures of Social Dominance Orientation, Activism and Radicalism Intentions, and – to a lesser extent – Right

Wing Authoritarianism. Thus, the findings lend support to individual-level factors that influence the types of actions that are supported, and to what extent.

Additionally, participants were assigned to one treatment condition rather than reading multiple vignettes. While this is common in experimental research, it limits examination of within-person differences. Recent advancements in experimentation, such as the conjoint design, allow for participants to evaluate multiple scenarios with far more limited detail to meaningfully assess how contextual factors impact on individual decisions. This is a consideration for future research.

The current research was inconsistent with our previous findings and hypotheses, particularly with regard to the impact of grievance. These findings suggest a number of directions for future work on the relationships between grievances and mobilization. One important advance would be to seek to confirm and validate these findings in other cultural and political contexts. It is possible that variation in these contexts might alter specific conclusions, and this possibility should be investigated in a systematic fashion to examine the universality of grievances on mobilization. Experiments of the type employed here have the potential to address many of the issues that observational data pose, such as measurement problems and endogenous relationships between mobilization and repression. Importantly, the current research underscores the importance of individual-level factors to help address the puzzle of why only some people mobilize for political action – and the forms that action takes.

## Notes

1. We also combined the samples and estimated each model reported. In most cases, the results are unchanged. In a few models, grievance was significant, which is most likely due to a larger sample size. However, the impact of other variables in these models washed out and the nuance in country-level differences was lost.
2. We also measured religious fundamentalism (RF; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004) though we did not have expectations of how this would impact on the outcomes of this study. We estimated all models reported to include the RF score. Religious fundamentalism did not have a clear impact on outcomes and did not influence the impact of other independent variables and thus these models are not reported.
3. The absolute value of the correlations among these variables ranges from 0.015 to 0.473. This reduces concerns about potential multicollinearity when all individual-level personality variables are included in the models.
4. There is an argument for collapsing the Likert-scale responses into a binary variable and estimating the models with logistic regression. The greatest concern with this approach is how to determine the cut-offs in ways that are not arbitrary and thus could be interpreted as p-hacking. For this reason, we argue that ordered logistic regression is better despite its restrictive assumptions since it avoids making arbitrary decisions about the cut-off points. We still estimate the models with logistic regression as well. The impact of each treatment variable generally does not change. The socio-personality variables, however, sometimes have different influence on the outcome but there is no systematic pattern to these changes. Thus, these models are not reported.
5. We also estimated models with a binary indicator of opting to join neither action. The models produce consistent results and thus are not reported here.
6. We report models for violence against different targets. Due to the low frequency with which participants state they would engage in each form of violent action, we also estimated these results with a collapsed violence variable (yes if any of these violent actions would be taken,

no otherwise). The results do not change. Since we see differences by target of violence, each model is reported separately.

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## Appendix

Experimental vignettes that vary levels of grievance, risk, and opportunity are presented below. The critical experimental passages that vary between conditions are presented in italics. Note: Because this is a between-subjects design, participants will read and respond to one vignette.

### Condition 1: Low grievance, low risk, low opportunity

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you used to suffer discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago. But treatment of the Estamese has improved since then.

You are a university student. You occasionally hear comments about your ethnicity from fellow students. *But on the whole you have been accepted and have good relations with students of many ethnicities.* Your professors treat you fairly. Incidents involving discrimination against Estamese students are rare. On one occasion, you witnessed a fight that started when two Estamese students were attacked by Buchari students. The police arrested the Buchari students, and left the two Estamese students alone.

Recently, you have been approached by two fellow Estamese students who would like to see you get involved politically. Dalig has asked you to help organize and *march in a peaceful protest.* A *non-violent march* will revive the cause of Estamese nationalism and bring it to the attention of the Buchara government and the rest of the world. You know that Dalig does not have strong connections in the Estamese community, and in the past few people have attended his protests.

Vadan has also approached you. In a secret meeting, Vadan asked you if you would be willing to support the Estamese Liberation Organization in its plans to *launch violent attacks.* Vadan argues that only by *striking out and hurting the oppressors* can the spirit of Estamese nationalism be rekindled. You know that the Estamese Liberation Organization has few members and little access to weapons or bombs, and that their past attempts at launching violent attacks have frequently failed.

When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very low.* The police force is corrupt and inefficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very small chance of being caught and punished by the authorities.*

### Condition 2: Low grievance, high risk, low opportunity

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you used to suffer discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago. But treatment of the Estamese has improved since then.

You are a university student. You occasionally hear comments about your ethnicity from fellow students. *But on the whole you have been accepted and have good relations with students of many ethnicities.* Your professors treat you fairly. Incidents involving discrimination against Estamese students are rare. On one occasion, you witnessed a fight that started when two Estamese students were attacked by Buchari students. The police arrested the Buchari students, and left the two Estamese students alone.

Recently, you have been approached by two fellow Estamese students who would like to see you get involved politically. Dalig has asked you to help organize and *march in a peaceful protest.* A *non-violent march* will revive the cause of Estamese nationalism and bring it to the attention of the Buchara government and the rest of the world. You know that Dalig does not have strong connections in the Estamese community, and in the past few people have attended his protests.

Vadan has also approached you. In a secret meeting, Vadan asked you if you would be willing to support the Estamese Liberation Organization in its plans to *launch violent attacks.* Vadan argues that only by *striking out and hurting the oppressors* can the spirit of Estamese nationalism be rekindled. You know that the Estamese Liberation Organization has few members and little access to weapons or bombs, and that their past attempts at launching violent attacks have frequently failed.

When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest march or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very high.* The Buchara police force is very efficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very high chance of being caught and punished by the authorities.*

### Condition 3: High grievance, low risk, low opportunity

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you have long suffered discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago.

You are a university student. *You are discriminated against because you are Estamese.* Fellow students make *humiliating comments* about your ethnicity. Your work is as good as that of your peers, but you consistently receive lower grades. Even Estamese like you with a good education are hired last and fired first. The authorities treat Estamese citizens unfairly. For example, the police *stop Estamese without any reason*. Estamese are not allowed to vote or to express their political views. Buchari leaders *regularly deride the Estamese as unpatriotic and ridicule Estamese culture and language*.

Recently, you have been approached by two fellow Estamese students who would like to see you get involved politically. Dalig has asked you to help organize and *march in a peaceful protest*. A *non-violent march* will revive the cause of Estamese nationalism and bring it to the attention of the Buchara government and the rest of the world. You know that Dalig does not have strong connections in the Estamese community, and in the past few people have attended his protests.

Vadan has also approached you. In a secret meeting, Vadan asked you if you would be willing to support the Estamese Liberation Organization in its plans to *launch violent attacks*. Vadan argues that only by *striking out and hurting the oppressors* can the spirit of Estamese nationalism be rekindled. You know that the Estamese Liberation Organization has few members and little access to weapons or bombs, and that their past attempts at launching violent attacks have frequently failed.

When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very low*. The police force is corrupt and inefficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very small chance of being caught and punished by the authorities*.

#### **Condition 4: High grievance, high risk, low opportunity**

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you have long suffered discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago.

You are a university student. *You are discriminated against because you are Estamese.* Fellow students make *humiliating comments* about your ethnicity. Your work is as good as that of your peers, but you consistently receive lower grades. Even Estamese like you with a good education are hired last and fired first. The authorities treat Estamese citizens unfairly. For example, the police *stop Estamese without any reason*. Estamese are not allowed to vote or to express their political views. Buchari leaders *regularly deride the Estamese as unpatriotic and ridicule Estamese culture and language*.

Recently, you have been approached by two fellow Estamese students who would like to see you get involved politically. Dalig has asked you to help organize and *march in a peaceful protest*. A *non-violent march* will revive the cause of Estamese nationalism and bring it to the attention of the Buchara government and the rest of the world. You know that Dalig does not have strong connections in the Estamese community, and in the past few people have attended his protests.

Vadan has also approached you. In a secret meeting, Vadan asked you if you would be willing to support the Estamese Liberation Organization in its plans to *launch violent attacks*. Vadan argues that only by *striking out and hurting the oppressors* can the spirit of Estamese nationalism be rekindled. You know that the Estamese Liberation Organization has few members and little access to weapons or bombs, and that their past attempts at launching violent attacks have frequently failed.

When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest march or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very high*. The Buchara police force is very efficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very high chance of being caught and punished by the authorities*.

#### **Condition 5: Low grievance, low risk, high opportunity**

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you used to suffer discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago. But treatment of the Estamese has improved since then.

You are a university student. You occasionally hear comments about your ethnicity from fellow students. *But on the whole you have been accepted and have good relations with students of many ethnicities*. Your professors treat you fairly. Incidents involving discrimination against Estamese students are rare. On one occasion, you witnessed a fight that started when two Estamese students were attacked by Buchari students. The police arrested the Buchari students, and left the two Estamese students alone.

Recently, you have been approached by two fellow Estamese students who would like to see you get involved politically. Dalig has asked you to help organize and *march in a peaceful protest*. A *non-violent*

*march* will revive the cause of Estamese nationalism and bring it to the attention of the Buchara government and the rest of the world. You know that Dalig has strong connections in the Estamese community, and in the past many people have attended his protests.

Vadan has also approached you. In a secret meeting, Vadan asked you if you would be willing to support the Estamese Liberation Organization in its plans to *launch violent attacks*. Vadan argues that only by *striking out and hurting the oppressors* can the spirit of Estamese nationalism be rekindled. You know that the Estamese Liberation Organization has many members and easy access to weapons and bombs, and that their past attempts at launching violent attacks have frequently succeeded.

When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very low*. The police force is corrupt and inefficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very small chance of being caught and punished by the authorities*.

**Condition 6: Low grievance, high risk, high opportunity**

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you used to suffer discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago. But treatment of the Estamese has improved since then.

You are a university student. You occasionally hear comments about your ethnicity from fellow students. *But on the whole you have been accepted and have good relations with students of many ethnicities*. Your professors treat you fairly. Incidents involving discrimination against Estamese students are rare. On one occasion, you witnessed a fight that started when two Estamese students were attacked by Buchari students. The police arrested the Buchari students, and left the two Estamese students alone.

Recently, you have been approached by two fellow Estamese students who would like to see you get involved politically. Dalig has asked you to help organize and *march in a peaceful protest*. A *non-violent march* will revive the cause of Estamese nationalism and bring it to the attention of the Buchara government and the rest of the world. You know that Dalig has strong connections in the Estamese community, and in the past many people have attended his protests.

Vadan has also approached you. In a secret meeting, Vadan asked you if you would be willing to support the Estamese Liberation Organization in its plans to *launch violent attacks*. Vadan argues that only by *striking out and hurting the oppressors* can the spirit of Estamese nationalism be rekindled. You know that the Estamese Liberation Organization has many members and easy access to weapons and bombs, and that their past attempts at launching violent attacks have frequently succeeded.

When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest march or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very high*. The Buchara police force is very efficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very high chance of being caught and punished by the authorities*.

**Condition 7: High grievance, low risk, high opportunity**

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you have long suffered discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago.

You are a university student. *You are discriminated against because you are Estamese*. Fellow students make *humiliating comments* about your ethnicity. Your work is as good as that of your peers, but you consistently receive lower grades. Even Estamese like you with a good education are hired last and fired first. The authorities treat Estamese citizens unfairly. For example, the police *stop Estamese without any reason*. Estamese are not allowed to vote or to express their political views. Buchari leaders *regularly deride the Estamese as unpatriotic and ridicule Estamese culture and language*.

Recently, you have been approached by two fellow Estamese students who would like to see you get involved politically. Dalig has asked you to help organize and *march in a peaceful protest*. A *non-violent march* will revive the cause of Estamese nationalism and bring it to the attention of the Buchara government and the rest of the world. You know that Dalig has strong connections in the Estamese community, and in the past many people have attended his protests.

Vadan has also approached you. In a secret meeting, Vadan asked you if you would be willing to support the Estamese Liberation Organization in its plans to *launch violent attacks*. Vadan argues that only by *striking out and hurting the oppressors* can the spirit of Estamese nationalism be rekindled. You know that the Estamese Liberation Organization has many members and easy access to weapons and bombs, and that their past attempts at launching violent attacks have frequently succeeded.

When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very low*. The police force is corrupt and inefficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very small chance of being caught and punished by the authorities*.

**Condition 8: High grievance, high risk, high opportunity**

You are a member of the minority Estamese ethnic group in the country of Buchara. Estamese like you have long suffered discrimination, and rebelled against the Buchari authorities decades ago.

You are a university student. *You are discriminated against because you are Estamese*. Fellow students make *humiliating comments* about your ethnicity. Your work is as good as that of your peers, but you consistently receive lower grades. Even Estamese like you with a good education are hired last and fired first. The authorities treat Estamese citizens unfairly. For example, the police *stop Estamese without any reason*. Estamese are not allowed to vote or to express their political views. Buchari leaders *regularly deride the Estamese as unpatriotic and ridicule Estamese culture and language*.

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When thinking about taking part in either the peaceful protest march or the violent attack, you know that the *personal risk you face is very high*. The Buchara police force is very efficient when it comes to dealing with challenges to the government. If you were involved in any kind of challenge to the government, *you face a very high chance of being caught and punished by the authorities*.