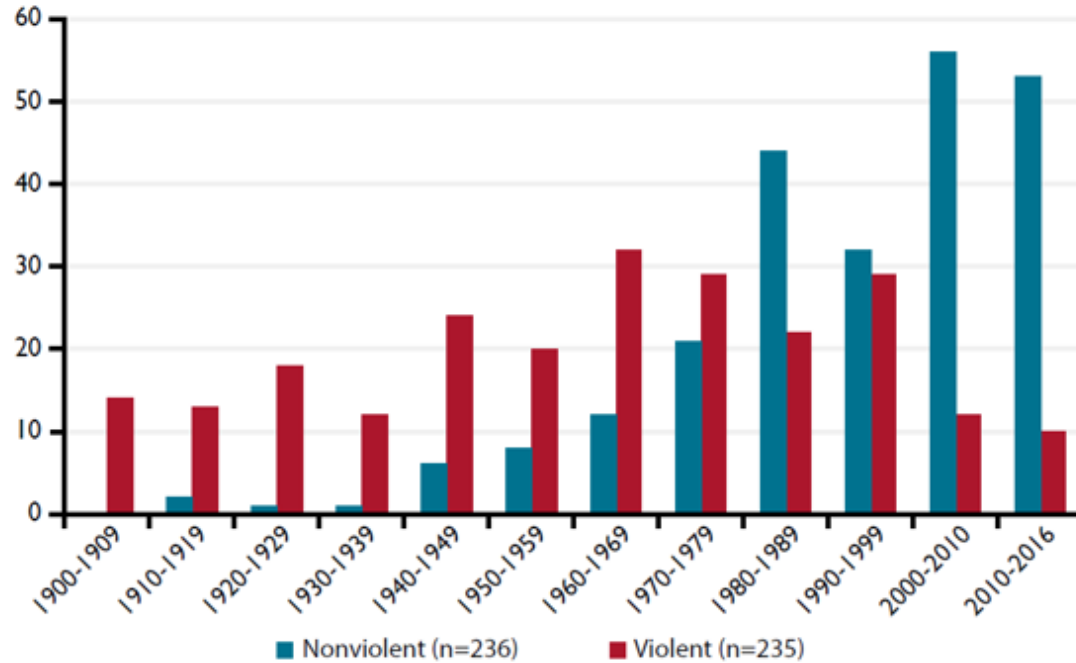


# Subjective Well-Being and Peaceful Uprisings

Caroline Witte, Martijn Burger & Elena Ianchovicina

# Peaceful uprisings



*Peaceful uprisings: campaigns which are typically organized by “activists, public figures and civilians, who attempt to change the status quo by coercing the opponent through disruption and pressure”  
(Chenoweth and Ulfelder, 2017: 299)*

Exploring the causes of nonviolent uprisings is valuable for several reasons

- Often lead to replacement of regime, followed by a transition to democracy and subsequent periods of civil (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011).
- When nonviolent resistance fails, opposition groups often use this as a justification to escalate to civil war (Regan & Norton, 2005).

*Erasmus*

# The grievance-based approach

- Gurr (1970): feelings of relative deprivation, defined as the gap between expectations and achievement, increase the likelihood of rebellion.
- Grievance-based approach to violent uprisings (e.g. Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Cederman, Weidmann & Gleditsch, 2011)
- Chenoweth and Ulfelder (2017): Grievances and non-violent uprisings.
  - Grievances proxied with objective indicators, including infant mortality, GDP growth and inflation, and political prisoners.
  - No systematic evidence for grievances driving uprisings.

# Why subjective data can complement objective data in uprisings models

- Grievances refer to perceptions and are thus inherently subjective.
- Objective measures of grievances are noisy proxies for these perceptions.
  - Progress on objective indicators tends to rise expectations and aspirations which in turn reduces subjective wellbeing .
  - Objective indicators indicate the conditions for a good life, while subjective wellbeing provide indicate outcomes of a good life (Veenhoven, 2000).
- Measures of subjective wellbeing might complement objective measures of grievances in models of uprisings.

# Data and methodology

- 118 countries for the period 2007-2014
- Model:

$$\text{Non - Violent Uprisings}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{SWB}_{it} + \beta_2 X_{it} + \mu_i + \mu_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

$X_{it}$ : time-varying conditions that might confound the relationship between civil resistance and subjective wellbeing

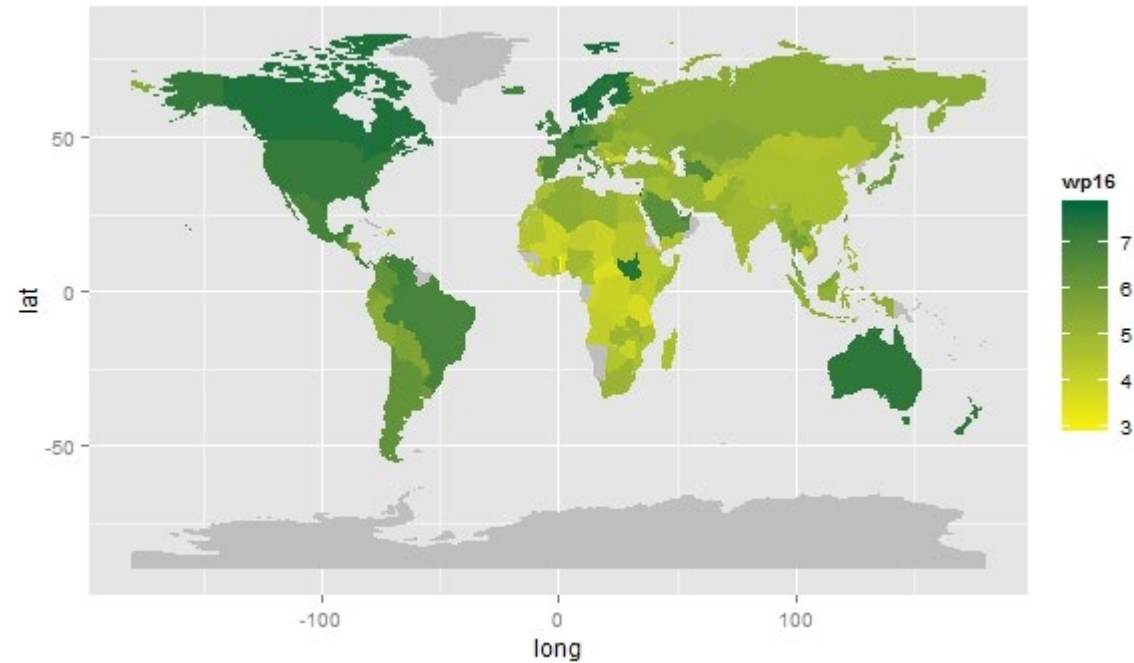
$\mu_i$ : a set of country dummies for time-invariant country characteristics

$\mu_t$ : a vector of time dummies for global shocks

# Subjective Wellbeing: Human Suffering

- Gallup: Cantril Ladder (Cantril, 1965)
  - Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time (and in 5 years from now)?
  - Non-continuous 11-item scale
  - Correlates highly with income (Deaton, 2008)
- Classification into three groups:
  - Thriving: current life  $\geq 7$  and future life  $\geq 8$
  - Struggling:  $5 \geq$  current life  $\geq 6$  and  $5 \geq$  future life  $\geq 7$
  - **Suffering: current life  $\leq 4$ , future life  $\leq 4$**

# Subjective Wellbeing: Map



Source: Gallup World Poll data, based on the Question WP16: *Please imagine a ladder, with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?*

# Subjective Wellbeing: Rankings

Countries with lowest suffering index	
Country	Suffering
New Zealand	0.01
Canada	0.01
Turkmenistan	0.01
Finland	0.02
Denmark	0.02
Netherlands	0.02
Belgium	0.02
Switzerland	0.02
Singapore	0.02
Uzbekistan	0.02
Norway	0.02
Thailand	0.02

Countries with highest suffering index	
Country	Suffering
Haiti	0.44
Yemen	0.41
Rwanda	0.36
Ukraine	0.36
Liberia	0.34
Georgia	0.32
Syria	0.32
Armenia	0.32
South Sudan	0.32
Afghanistan	0.31
Bulgaria	0.29
Zimbabwe	0.29



# Dependent variable: non-violent uprisings

- Number of street protests & riots (CNTS, 2015)
  - Demonstrations: (1) peaceful public gathering, (2) with at least 100 participants, (3) that have the primary purpose of voicing opposition to government policies, (4) and do not have a distinctly anti-foreign nature such as anti-globalization protests.
  - Strikes are included if 1,000 or more industrial or service workers participate, they involve more than one employer and are aimed at national government policies or authority.
  - Demonstrations are transformed using a hyperbolic inverse sine transformation.

# Control variables: Hybrid model

Control variables capture the most salient features of the grievance, resource mobilization and political opportunities model

- GDP
- GDP Growth (%)
- Inflation (%)
- Oil Rents (% of GDP)
- Infant Mortality
- Autocracy
- Corruption
- Political Terror
- Mobile Phones
- Urban population (% of total)

# Results (1)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Suffering (%)		0.034*** (0.009)	0.032*** (0.009)
Struggling (%)		0.017* (0.008)	0.017** (0.007)
GDP (ln)	-0.341 (0.329)		-0.054 (0.303)
GDP Growth (%)	-0.032*** (0.011)		-0.026** (0.010)
Inflation (%)	0.000 (0.009)		-0.006 (0.009)
Oil Rents (% of GDP)	0.024* (0.012)		0.028** (0.013)
Infant Mortality	0.004 (0.023)		0.006 (0.022)
Autocracy	0.034 (0.071)		0.046 (0.069)
Corruption	-0.012 (0.010)		-0.009 (0.009)
Political Terror Scale	0.004 (0.023)		0.006* (0.022)
Mobile phones	0.033 (0.071)		0.046 (0.069)
Urban population (% of total)	-0.012 (0.010)		-0.009 (0.009)
Constant	2.143 (4.616)	-1.105** (0.558)	-2.810 (4.505)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	890	890	890
Number of Countries	119	119	119
R <sup>2</sup> overall	0.004	0.098	0.079
R <sup>2</sup> within	0.256	0.260	0.281
R <sup>2</sup> between	0.008	0.019	0.050

Note: The dependent variable is the number of anti-government demonstrations and strikes transformed using the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation. Robust standard errors in parentheses  
 \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \* $p < 0.1$

## Results (2)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Suffering (%)		0.035*** (0.009)	0.032*** (0.009)
Struggling (%)		0.018* (0.008)	0.017* (0.007)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	862	862	862
Number of Countries	118	118	118
R <sup>2</sup> overall	0.003	0.096	0.068
R <sup>2</sup> within	0.258	0.260	0.285
R <sup>2</sup> between	0.009	0.017	0.042

# Addressing endogeneity concerns

	(1) 2SLS	(2) 2SLS	(3) 1-step System GMM	(4) 1-step System GMM	(5) 2-step System GMM	(6) 2-step System GMM
Suffering	0.069 <sup>+</sup> (0.041)	0.118 <sup>+</sup> (0.070)	0.019* (0.009)	0.019* (0.009)	0.021* (0.010)	0.021* (0.010)
Struggling		0.041* (0.002)		0.007 (0.008)		0.008 (0.009)
Nonviolent Conflict <sub>t-1</sub>			0.269*** (0.059)	0.263*** (0.058)	0.238*** (0.055)	0.228*** (0.056)
Constant			-3.347** (1.066)	-3.821*** (1.140)	-3.296** (1.170)	-4.015** (1.223)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Var	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	859	859	862	862	862	862
Countries	115	115	118	118	118	118
Instruments	17	17	99	107	99	107
Kleibergen-Paap LM statistic	4.505*	3.444 <sup>†</sup>				
Weak identification F-statistic	7.187	4.601				
Sargan test			90.49	96.65	90.49	96.65
Hansen J statistic			74.94	77.16	74.94	77.16
AR1 test			-6.430***	-6.393***	-4.869***	-4.853***
AR2 test			0.192	0.211	0.065	0.048

The instrument is the number of deaths due to infectious diseases (per 1.000 inhabitants), complemented with the lag of difference of the independent variables for the GMM models. Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, <sup>†</sup> p<0.10

# Alternative measures of uprisings

	(1) Ongoing uprisings (MEC)	(2) Riots (CNTS)	(3) Violent conflict (UCDP/PRIO)	(4) Battle-related deaths (UCDP/PRIO)
Suffering (%)	0.125** (0.064)	0.013† (0.007)	0.025 (0.104)	-0.012 (0.011)
Struggling (%)	0.113* (0.065)	0.008 (0.006)	0.114 (0.12)	0.008 (0.008)
Constant	-122.665*** (41.705)	-0.686 (4.749)	30.467 (30.469)	9.964 (8.605)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control Var	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.402	0.307	0.380	0.063
Observations	152	862	178	882
Countries	23	118	22	121

Note: R-squared refers to pseudo R-squared for the logit models in Column 1 and Column 3. Estimates are obtained with an OLS model. Cluster robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05, † p<0.10

# Additional robustness checks

- Alternative estimation techniques: count data models, LSDVC, random effects
- Excluded outliers
- Difference between high and middle- and low-income countries:
  - Effect *suffering* on the number of nonviolent events of civil resistance in high-income countries is not statistically different from that in low- and middle-income countries
  - Struggling has a stronger effect on nonviolent resistance in high-income nations
- Interactions with the main factors associated with the political opportunities (i.e. democracy and political terror) and the resource mobilization approach (i.e. mobile phones and urbanization)

# Drivers of the relationship

- Subjective well-being includes several life domains (e.g. income, freedom), without putting explicit fixed weights on these domains.
- Disadvantage: unclear how subjective well-being affects protests.
- Focus on three sets of variables: (1) individual capabilities, (2) perceived standards of living, and (3) the provision of community basics



Table 9 The effect of other subjective indicators on the number of protests and strikes

	(1) Incl. Freedom of life	(2) Incl. Get ahead	(3) Incl. SoL	(4) Incl. Sol getting better	(5) Incl. FS index	(6) Incl. CB index	(7) Incl. all variables
Freedom of life (%)	-0.018*** (0.006)						0.002 (0.005)
Get ahead (%)		-0.017** (0.007)					-0.011 (0.007)
Standard of living (SoL) (%)			-0.015** (0.007)				-0.005 (0.008)
SoL getting better (%)				-0.012** (0.006)			0.014 (0.607)
Food and Shelter (FS) Index					0.007 (0.006)		0.017** (0.008)
Community Basics (CB) Index						-0.016 (0.010)	-0.008 (0.010)
Suffering (%)							0.025** (0.010)
Struggling (%)							0.013* (0.007)
Constant	4.593 (4.373)	4.248 (4.519)	1.917 (4.291)	0.925 (4.508)	4.382 (4.462)	4.939 (4.159)	1.291 (4.419)
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.270	0.267	0.265	0.260	0.258	0.260	0.285
Observations	851	859	863	834	858	850	792
Countries	119	119	119	119	119	119	119

Note: Results are estimated with an OLS model with robust standard errors (in parentheses). The dependent variable is the number of anti-government demonstrations and strikes, transformed using the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation. The number of observations varies across the different models, because of survey items not having been covered in some country-years. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.10

# Conclusion

- We find evidence of an effect of grievances, measured using subjective wellbeing data, on nonviolent uprisings.
- A preliminary analysis suggests that this effect is not present for its violent counterpart.
- Contributes to literature asserting that subjective wellbeing also has a place as an independent variable in our political economy models

# Implications

- Including subjective well-being in addition to financial indicators provides useful information about collective action and political instability.
- Underscores the importance of assessing the effect of policies on subjective well-being, next to other outcome indicators.
- Our results shed light not only on *whether* conflicts occur, but also *when*.