

# AFRO BAROMETER

*Working Paper No. 90*

## **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

by Ravi Bhavnani and David Backer

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The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)  
6 Spin Street, Church Square  
Cape Town 8001, South Africa  
27 21 461 2559 • fax: 27 21 461 2589  
Mattes (bob@idasact.org.za)

Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)  
14 West Airport Residential Area  
P.O. Box 404, Legon-Accra, Ghana  
233 21 776 142 • fax: 233 21 763 028  
Gyimah-Boadi (cdd@ghana.com)

Michigan State University (MSU)  
Department of Political Science  
East Lansing, Michigan 48824  
517 353 3377 • fax: 517 432 1091  
Bratton (mbratton@msu.edu)

[afrobarometer.org](http://afrobarometer.org)

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**December 2007**

Ravi Bhavnani is assistant professor of Political Science at Michigan State University.

David Backer is assistant professor of Government at the College of William and Mary.

## AFROBAROMETER WORKING PAPERS

Editors: Michael Bratton, E. Gyimah-Boadi, and Robert Mattes

Managing Editor: Carolyn Logan

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## Social Capital and Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa

### *Abstract*

This article uses data from the Afrobarometer—an individual-level survey that has been conducted in 18 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa—to explore the nature of social capital and its relationship to political violence. Building on and extending this prior literature, we seek to assess whether different aspects of social capital influence the nature and prevalence of political violence, and their potential precursors and enabling conditions, in the African context. Multivariate estimations, of note, yield two counter-intuitive results: membership in professional and business associations is consistently linked with greater levels of political violence, whereas membership in religious groups seems to lessen such conflict. The authors find that the lack of social capital—or forms of social capital with potential down sides such as intra-group bonding—can presumably have negative consequences for development. Section 6, in turn, concludes with a discussion of the significance of our findings, and reflections about future extensions to this research.

## INTRODUCTION

Based on data collected in six Indian cities, Varshney (2003) concludes that pre-existing local networks—cadre-base parties, business and professional groups, trade unions, festival organizations, sports, reading and film clubs—which integrate Hindus and Muslims “stand out as the single most proximate cause” explaining the difference between peace and violence across different Indian cities (p. 9). A key feature of these networks is the fact that their membership spans multiple ethnic groups, in contrast to communal organizations that are limited to individuals of a single group. Cross-cutting membership is vital, he reasons, because it yields a form of social capital that contains or dampens conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Prior work by Widner & Mundt (1998) on how social capital influences state-building in Africa raises some questions about the validity of Varshney’s claims, or at least of their generalizability to other parts of the world. This analysis of survey data from Botswana and Uganda reveals that participation in voluntary associations does not increase social capital. Instead, the direction of causality appears to be reversed: higher levels of social capital lead to greater associational life. By implication, cross-cutting associations are not capable of generating the social capital necessary to keep conflict in check. In so far as such associations materialize as a result of social capital that is already present,<sup>2</sup> they can only function as intermediate mechanisms, rather than root sources, of conflict prevention. Widner & Mundt also find that there is no clear relationship between social capital and governmental effectiveness. To the extent that the latter affects the prevalence of conflict (e.g., bad governance can engender discord), this result undermines at least one possible theoretical notion of how higher levels of social capital might be linked (indirectly) with lower rates of political violence.

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of Studies**

		<i>Associational Life</i>	
		HIGH	LOW
<u>India</u> (Varshney 2003)	<i>Trust</i>	HIGH	Dampens Violence
		LOW	
<u>Sub-Saharan Africa</u> (Widner & Mundt 1998)	<i>Trust</i>	HIGH	
		LOW	Dampens Violence
	<i>Trust</i>	HIGH	
		LOW	Increases violence

<sup>1</sup> Chhibber (1999) argues that the dearth of civic associations in India has caused political parties to mobilize people on the basis of caste, sect, ethnicity, or linguistic group, with the result that the politicization of these ascriptive identities further shrinks the space for non-partisan civil society.

<sup>2</sup> Widner & Mundt (1998) also find, contrary to expectation, that elements of social capital—trust and other indicators such as voluntarism, cross-cutting social contact, optimism and religiosity—fail to cohere as expected.

The juxtaposition of these two studies (Table 1) highlights a pair of related issues that remain the subject of considerable debate among social scientists. First, does associational membership generate social capital? Second, does social capital reduce political violence? Existing evidence suggests that at the very least, these relationships do not prevail universally. As Varshney contends, however, each—and the tandem effect between them—could hold under certain restrictive conditions, i.e., particular types of inter-personal networks may produce the right form of social capital that is required to mitigate conflict.

This article, in turn, uses data from the Afrobarometer—an individual-level survey that has been conducted in 18 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa—to explore the nature of social capital and its relationship to political violence. In Section 2, we review relevant literature on this subject. Section 3 develops our theoretical model, namely that political violence is a function of the existence or non-existence of various components of social capital as well as the extent of equality, plus individual attributes. In Section 4, we provide an overview of the design of the Afrobarometer and describe the variables we use in our analyses. As we observe, these data afford both direct and indirect indicators of the prevalence of political violence, as well as extensive information on measures of social capital, including different types of associational membership. Section 5 presents the results of our analysis. To preview our findings, the relationships among the commission of violence, behavioral dispositions towards violence, and attitudes about the acceptability of violence vary across countries. We also find that the correlations among the components of social capital are modest in strength and inconsistent in both their direction and significance. Multivariate estimations, of note, yield two counter-intuitive results: membership in professional and business associations is consistently linked with greater levels of political violence, whereas membership in religious groups seems to lessen such conflict. Section 6, in turn, concludes with a discussion of the significance of our findings, and reflections about future extensions to this research.

## **Background**

### ***Defining and Measuring Social Capital***

In the abstract, social capital is generally understood to refer to the internal coherence of a community of people. Scholars have proposed many possible empirical indicators of this phenomenon. For example, in his seminal study Putnam (1993) defines social capital in terms of structures of cooperation, civic engagement, political equality, trust, and tolerance. Other suggested measures include the frequency of social contact, reciprocity, voluntarism and optimism (Widner & Mundt 1998). Some scholars have also distinguished different varieties of social capital on the basis of the orientation of relationships (vertical vs. horizontal), sources (structural vs. cognitive), and functions (bridging vs. bonding). The fact that the concept has become so broad and fluid has raised many concerns about proper measurement, as well as comparability across both theoretical and empirical studies.

### ***The Implications of Social Capital***

Such issues are particularly germane to conducting research on the consequences of social capital (e.g., Coleman 1988; Brehm & Rahn 1997; Paxton 1999). This burgeoning cottage industry is thanks in no small part to the high visibility in both policy and popular circles of work like Putnam (1993), as well as the value that is often attributed to having or developing higher levels of social capital. Among other things, it is thought to result in the following related outcomes:

- \*Greater availability and improved circulation of information, which enhances knowledge and sophistication.
- \*Higher levels of political participation.

- \*Higher levels of collective action.
- \*Increased institutional efficiency.
- \*Lower levels of free riding.

As with other types of capital, these outcomes are assumed to outlast the interactions that originally caused them.

The effects of social capital, in turn, have important consequences for phenomena such as democratic transitions (Barkan, et al. 1991; Di Palma 1991; Bernhard 1993; Muller & Seligson 1994; Kapil 1995; Kotze & Du Toit 1995; Monga 1995; Boyle 1996; Weinbaum 1996; Glaser 1997; Kim 1997; Rice & Feldman 1997; Booth & Richard 1998), economic development (Collier 1999, 2000, 2003) the success of non-governmental organizations (Reilly 1995; Sullivan 1996), clientelism (Roniger 1994), squatters (Oxhorn 1995), urban development (McKay 1996), political rebellion (Tamari 1990), environmental activism (Wapner 1995), and ethnic conflict (Bond, et al. 1997; Varshney 2001, 2003).

As we observed at the outset of the paper, empirical studies of the relationship between social capital and these intermediate outcomes and/or phenomena have not always yielded consistent results. One explanation, alluded to earlier, may be the fact that numerous definitions, features and variants have been associated with the concept of social capital, which limits the ability to appraise empirical studies on equal footing. Given the wide range of research in this area, we opt to center our review around two studies that explore the link between social capital and violence, one in the Indian context (Varshney 2003), the other concerning notable cases in Africa and Southeast Asia (Coletta & Cullen 2000). In addition, we include a brief discussion of the broader literatures that have addressed social capital and/or political violence in Africa.

### ***Civic Life and Ethnic Conflict in India***

To reiterate, Varshney (2003) finds that trust based on inter- not intra-ethnic networks is critical to understanding why some communities remain peaceful while others experience frequent and/or serious episodes of violence. Networks that cut across ethnic groups, he argues cultivate inter-group trust and affording mechanisms of inter-group awareness, communication and cooperation. By contrast, ethnically homogenous organizations can foster trust among the members of a single group, although they are typically incapable of preventing—and in certain cases, may even intensify—violence. Furthermore, these networks can be divided into more formal and organized engagement and informal or everyday forms of engagement. Whereas both forms of engagement promote peace, Varshney suggests that formal inter-ethnic associations are necessary to promote peace in large urban settings. In short, where networks of inter-ethnic engagement exist, they effectively contain or dampen violence, whereas their absence leads to widespread violence.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Social Cohesion and Violent Conflict in Africa and Southeast Asia***

Coletta & Cullen (2000) conceptualize social capital as a subset of social cohesion, which they define as the absence of latent social conflict along economic, ethnic, or political lines and the presence of strong social bonds as measured by high levels of interpersonal trust, norms of reciprocity, membership in cross-cutting associations, and effective and responsive institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> A basic component of the argument that needs to be clarified is whether the civic associations being referred to are elite based or mass based. If they are elite based, then the presumption is that Hindus and Muslims, as groups, are cohesive and follow their leaders. If these associations are mass based, then evidence needs to be provided to demonstrate the same. A second component of the argument in need of clarification concerns membership in formal associations that cut across ethnic lines. In Bombay, most of the neighborhood or *mohalla* committees came into existence after the riots of 1992-93, and membership in these committees is disproportionately Muslim. This presents a problem given that the majority community needs to be represented, at least proportionally if not equally, in these bodies for them to be effective.

According to the logic of their argument, social cohesion links social capital and violent conflict: the more likely that vertical and horizontal aspects of social capital exist in tandem, the greater the level of social cohesion, and the likelihood that social conflict will be effectively mediated. In the absence of social capital that bridges cleavages, weak social cohesion increases the risk of social fragmentation, exclusion and oppression, and the associated risk of violence. Focusing on the cases of Cambodia and Rwanda, the authors document in the first instance how genocidal violence destroyed social cohesion, whereas the second case demonstrates how violence between Hutu and Tutsi in 1994 both unraveled the country's social fabric, while strengthening intra-Hutu bonds by manipulating individuals' sense of collective work (*umuganda*) and boosting membership in the *interhamwe*. Also notable is the observation that while violence can destroy social bonds, it also creates opportunities for new (cross-cutting) linkages to form.

### ***Political Violence and Social Capital in Africa***

While an extensive literature exists about the dynamics of political violence in the African context (e.g., Richards 1996; Reno 1998; Azam 2001; Craft, Cassady, & Smaldone 2002), examples of individual-level survey research on this topic are rare (Weinstein & Humphreys 2004, 2006). Instead, studies either focus on the macro level and phenomena like civil wars (Collier & Hoeffler 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005; Fearon & Latin 2003; Ross 2006) and rebellions (Lustick, et al. 2004; Buhaug 2006) often in broader cross-national investigations—or even when they concentrate their attention at the micro-level (Dunning 2005; Snyder and Bhavnani 2005; Bhavnani et al 2007; Gates 2002)—they rely upon different types of empirical information. Likewise, until recently individual-level studies on social capital are limited (Widner & Mundt 1998). Part of the reason has been the political, logistical and other difficulties of engaging in primary data collection in Africa, which has resulted in comparatively infrequent survey research. The Afrobarometer, which was initiated in the mid-1990s, have helped to address this shortage of information. Although the survey questionnaires address social capital and political violence in considerable depth, to date few scholars have sought to analyze these data. A couple of papers have focused on the former topic (e.g., Cho 2003; Kuenzi 2004). Meanwhile, the only notable publication specifically devoted to the latter topic is a briefing paper on social conflict in Nigeria (Afrobarometer 2002).<sup>4</sup> As such, evident gaps remain, both in examining each of these topics as well as in considering their potential relationship.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Building on and extending this prior literature, we seek to assess whether different aspects of social capital influence the nature and prevalence of political violence, and their potential precursors and enabling conditions, in the African context. At the outset, we chose to adopt a conception of social capital that is relatively expansive, encompassing five distinct dimensions: associational membership, civic engagement, trust, social cohesion and equality. The initial decision to consider associational membership as a component, rather than an exogenous source of social capital takes account of the uncertainty we described earlier about whether the former is a cause or a consequence of the latter.<sup>5</sup> One means of gauging the appropriateness of our decision is examine the correlations among the different dimensions of social capital, which therefore represents an important aspect of our analysis. If we find that the relationship between

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<sup>4</sup> This statement is based on a review of all of the Afrobarometer briefing papers (47) and working papers (67) released through April 2007, as well as a list of publications that utilize the raw data (46), which was compiled by the Afrobarometer staff and is current as of October 19, 2006.

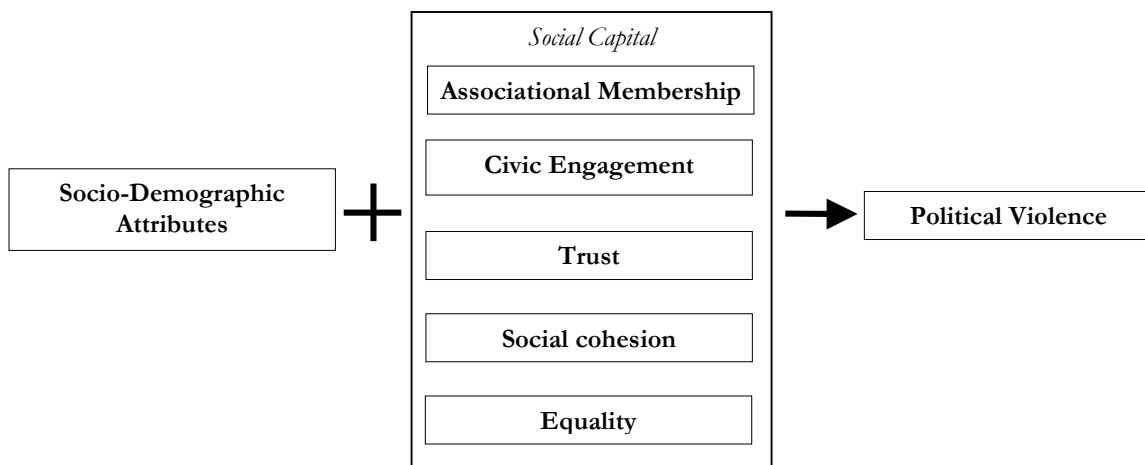
<sup>5</sup> It also bears noting that while multiple rounds of the Afrobarometer have been conducted in 16 countries, none of the surveys are designed as panel studies. Establishing causal relationships among variables is far more difficult with cross-sectional or non-panel longitudinal data.



associational membership and any of the other dimensions is especially strong, this result would provide a rationale for treating the former in a different manner than we have proposed.

With that caveat, our basic theoretical framework represents political violence as a function of the five dimensions of social capital, plus a standard set of socio-demographic attributes that are included as controls (Figure 1). Some might argue that we have overlooked at least two important factors. The first is mobilization: a conventional wisdom has emerged that the existence of motivation (e.g., a grievance) and opportunity is insufficient to explain the patterns of violence that are observed at the individual or collective level (Coleman 1989; Olzak 1992; Hardin 1995; Fearon & Laitin 1996; Dion 1997; Gould 1999). Instead, violence entails a transition from perceptions and ideas to actions, a step that is often induced by influences upon the individual rather than ensuing from a natural and inevitable progression of steps. The second is entrepreneurial leadership: the standard argument here is that key individuals with authority, charisma, initiative, etc. can frame an agenda and thereby persuade individuals to act (Brass 1973, 1997; Gagnon 1995). While neither of these factors is explicitly captured in our framework, they are effectively embedded in associational membership, which involves mobilization and more directly exposes those who join to other people—including those in a leadership capacity—with concrete objectives and the capability to pursue their goals.

**Figure 1**  
**Analytical Framework**



### Data & Variables

To evaluate the theoretical framework that we specified in the previous section, we employ data from the second round of the Afrobarometer. This survey was conducted with a total of 24,248 respondents in 16 countries between 2002 and 2004.<sup>6</sup> Below, we describe the variables that we use in our analysis. The specific questions and complete answer options associated with this list of variables is provided in an Appendix. In addition, Table 3 reports the descriptive statistics.

<sup>6</sup> The Round Two surveys were conducted in Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Analysis**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
<i>Political Violence</i>					
Behavior	23,866	0.2048	0.6261	0	4
Attitudes	22,595	1.8468	0.9257	1	4
<i>Associational Membership</i>					
Religious	23,079	1.3435	0.9271	0	3
Union/farm	22,824	0.3744	0.7691	0	3
Professional/business	22,723	0.2335	0.6374	0	3
Community/self-help	22,757	0.4879	0.8670	0	3
<i>Civic Engagement</i>					
Interest in public affairs	23,787	1.2176	0.7375	0	2
Discuss politics	24,049	2.0185	1.4414	0	4
Media consumption	23,868	2.1093	1.1841	0	4
Understanding of politics	21,846	2.2626	1.2048	1	5
Contacted local government	23,331	0.5602	0.9745	0	3
Contacted government officials	24,037	0.2589	0.6871	0	3
<i>Trust</i>					
Relative trust in current government	21,379	3.2662	1.2159	1	5
Trust in local government body	22,078	1.4984	1.3929	0	7
Trust in police	23,570	1.3661	0.9956	0	3
Party competition → conflict	22,855	1.6990	0.9640	0	3
Government resolving conflict	20,453	2.6267	0.8632	1	4
Corruption in government	20,369	1.3803	0.8214	0	3
<i>Social Cohesion</i>					
Group vs. national identity	19,034	0.3881	0.4873	0	1
Individual vs. community interest	22,179	2.5144	1.0931	1	4
Tolerance of difference	22,159	2.4611	1.1123	1	4
Conflict in community	22,755	1.2882	1.0988	0	4
Break up vs. unity	23,802	1.5273	0.8091	1	5
<i>Equality</i>					
Unequal treatment under law	21,728	1.4586	1.0195	0	3
Group economic conditions worse	19,181	3.1547	1.1143	1	5
Group treated unfairly	18,531	1.1507	1.0037	0	3
<i>Socio-Demographic Attributes</i>					
Age	23,616	36.2947	14.7620	18	105
Education	24,178	3.1500	2.0019	0	9
Gender	24,248	1.4992	0.5000	1	2

**Dependent Variables**

To examine the relationship between violence and social capital, we utilize two different outcome measures. The first measure captures behavior and behavioral dispositions. The Afrobarometer question used for this purpose (Q25e) asks whether the respondent has personally engaged in

force or violence for political means during the previous year. The answer options are structured to capture the frequency of such actions (often, several times, once or twice). In addition, those who have not engaged in such behavior can respond that they would do so if they had the chance.<sup>7</sup>

The second measure captures attitudes. Here, we employ a question (Q76) that asks respondents whether they believe political violence is acceptable under certain circumstances or is never justified. The answer options capture the extent of agreement with one or the other of these propositions. This second outcome measure, unlike the first, does not directly consider actual or prospective behavior. Those who approve of political violence could conceivably be more inclined than those who are disapproving to engage in violence themselves; however, there is not a necessary, direct relationship between an individual respondent's attitudes and actions in this regard. Instead, the significance of the second outcome measure derives from the manifest potential for the collective attitudes of a society to discourage certain types of behavior via the operation of norms that people internalize and observe. Alternatively, the absence of such social standards—or the habituation to a lack of constraints upon actions—may enable behavior. The second outcome measure, therefore, permits us to examine a more indirect pathway between variation in social capital and the incidence of political violence, which could be mediated by acceptance of violence.

### **Independent Variables**

As was described in Section 3, our theoretical model includes six explanatory factors: the four dimensions of social capital—associational membership, civic engagement, trust and social cohesion—plus equality and socio-demographic attributes. For purposes of the statistical analysis, we utilize relevant sets of questions from the Afrobarometer as measures of each of these distinct explanatory factors.

#### ***Associational Membership***

Respondents were asked about the nature of their involvement in four types of organizations: religious associations (Q24a); trade unions or farmers' associations (Q24b); professional or business associations (Q24c); and community development or self-help associations (Q24d).<sup>8</sup> The answer options include official leader, active member, inactive member and non-member. For the purposes of our analysis, we transform these items into dichotomous variables, distinguishing between those respondents who are official leaders or active members and those who are inactive members or non-members.<sup>9</sup> Our logic is that associational membership is only likely to have an effect on individuals—whether positive or negative—if their involvement in an organization is meaningful. Those people who belong to an organization but whose participation in its activities has lapsed are not consistently subject to its ongoing influence.

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<sup>7</sup> In a future analysis, we intend to differentiate those who have engaged in violence and those who would merely do so if they had the chance.

<sup>8</sup> Of note, respondents were not asked whether or not belong to a political party.

<sup>9</sup> As a future extension, we intend to distinguish between official leaders and active members as a means of testing the proposition that political violence is in part a function of actions taken by influential people in society. If this argument is valid, one might expect to observe a greater disposition towards violence, if not a higher rate of participation in violence, among such individuals.

Unfortunately, the Round Two data lacks evidence about the composition of these organizations, i.e., whether or not they include individuals from different social groups.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, our ability to test the arguments about the differential impact of bonding as versus bridging social capital is constrained. Among the four types of organizations, religious groups are the only ones that have a clear element of cultural homogeneity. This homogeneity, however, does not imply an absence of social diversity, e.g., a religious group could include members of different ethnicities. While imperfect, the religious membership variable nonetheless represents the best available measure of bonding social capital, which as discussed earlier is more prone to contribute to political violence than bridging social capital.

**Hypothesis 1a Leaders and active members of religious groups are more likely to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence than inactive members and non-members of these groups.**<sup>11</sup>

The other three types of organizations, meanwhile, are nominally defined on an economic or substantive basis. Because they have no essential connection to social groups, it seems reasonable to assume that their membership is more likely to be cross cutting than socially homogenous and to treat the corresponding variables as measures of bridging social capital.<sup>12</sup>

**Hypothesis 1b Leaders and active members of unions and farmers' associations are less likely to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence than inactive members and non-members of these associations.**

**Hypothesis 1c Leaders and active members of professional and business associations are less likely to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence than inactive members and non-members of these associations.**

**Hypothesis 1d Leaders and active members of community development and self-help associations are less likely to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence than inactive members and non-members of these associations.**

### *Civic Engagement*

The Afrobarometer questionnaires include numerous standard measures related to civic engagement. We employ a selection of these indicators in our analysis. The first indicator is a respondent's level of interest in public affairs (Q27). The second indicator is how regularly a respondent discuss politics with family and friends (Q25a). In addition, we create a media consumption variable based on the average of how often a respondent obtains news from radio (Q26a), television (Q26b) and newspapers (Q26c). In theory, each of these factors is positively associated with their level of knowledge and sense of attachment and efficacy, which should be negatively associated with violence.

**Hypothesis 2a The greater an individual's interest in public affairs, the less likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.**

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<sup>10</sup> The Round Two Afrobarometer survey in Nigeria asked respondents a follow-up question along these lines, about whether the organizations in which they were involved also had members of other religions and ethnic groups. This information, however, was not collected in the other study countries.

<sup>11</sup> In future extensions, we intend to distinguish between different types of religious groups.

<sup>12</sup> These types of associations could obviously be homogenous in other respects, e.g., their membership may be confined to people of the same economic stratum. The conventional argument, however, is that such associations are not defined—unlike social groups—by ascriptive characteristics that severely limit individual choice and mobility: one can choose to be a farmer or trader far more easily than one can become a member of another religion, ethnicity or race. An obvious rebuttal is that in certain societies (e.g., India under the caste system), not to mention specific families (with inherited professions and businesses), the nature of an individual's economic activity can be strongly influenced, if not regulated, by the conditions of their birth. Associations can also be established that restrict membership on both economic and social criteria (e.g., an organization of Asian bankers). Whether these sorts of intersections between the two spheres manifest in discrete instances or are more systemic, the resulting social capital may be bonding rather than bridging.

**Hypothesis 2b** The more often an individual discusses politics with family and friends, the less likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

**Hypothesis 2c** The more often an individual follows news on the radio or TV or in newspapers, the less likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The fourth indicator of civic engagement captures respondents' perceptions of how well they understand politics in their country (Q28a). The question is worded in a negative manner, asking whether politics is too difficult to grasp, a sentiment that may result in the sort of disillusionment and estrangement that can be a precursor to anti-system behavior.

**Hypothesis 2d** The more complicated an individual perceives politics to be, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The fifth and sixth indicators of civic engagement are the extent of contact the respondent has had over the past year with local government councilors (Q29a) and officials in government ministries (Q29c). A standard assumption is that people who engage in this sort of activity tend to feel a greater sense of efficacy and make use of legal outlets for representing their interests and addressing grievances, rather than resorting to force.

**Hypothesis 2e** The more regular the contact between an individual and local government councilors, the less likely that individual is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

**Hypothesis 2f** The more regular the contact between an individual and officials in government ministries, the less likely that individual is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

### *Trust*

Our analysis also considers a number of measures of political trust. All of the questions we utilize concern governmental performance. Several of these items ask for respondents' broad evaluations of the trustworthiness of the current government relative to its predecessor (Q53d), as well as of the local representative council (Q43e) and the police (Q43i).<sup>13</sup> As we noted earlier, conflict can emerge as a response to bad governance. In addition, individuals may resort to violence in the event they feel the people in power have no authority or cannot provide security.

**Hypothesis 3a** The greater an individual's level of trust in government relative to its predecessor, the less likely he/she is to engage/be disposed towards/approve of in political violence.

**Hypothesis 3b** The greater an individual's level of trust in the local representative council, the less likely he/she is to engage/be disposed towards/approve of in political violence.

**Hypothesis 3c** The greater an individual's level of trust in the police, the less likely he/she is to engage/be disposed towards/approve of in political violence.

The other three items we employ entail more specific performance assessments—of the relationship between inter-party competition and conflict (Q41b), the job the government is doing in resolving conflict (Q45k), and the extent of corruption among government officials (Q51c). The first of these indicators affords a gauge of the extent to which a respondent views violence as an inherent, inevitable and potentially necessary aspect of formal politics.

**Hypothesis 3d** The stronger a respondent's belief that party competition leads to conflict, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The second indicator, by contrast, allows for the possibility that something is being done to mitigate conflict and alleviate the anxieties and threats facing respondents.

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<sup>13</sup> Round Three of the Afrobarometer survey also inquired into the extent to which respondents trust most people (Q83), as well as relatives (Q84a), neighbors (Q84b), people of the same ethnic group (Q84c) and people of other ethnic groups (Q84d).

**Hypothesis 3e** The higher an individual's level of satisfaction with the job the government is doing in resolving conflict, the less likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The last of these indicators, in turn, directly implicates bad governance.

**Hypothesis 3f** The greater the extent of corruption an individual's perceives in government, the more likely he/she is to engage/be disposed towards/approve of in political violence.

#### *Social Cohesion*

We draw upon five Afrobarometer questions as indicators of social cohesion. The first question asks whether a respondent prioritizes their group identity or national identity (Q57), which relates directly to the matter of bonding as versus bridging social capital.

**Hypothesis 4a** The greater the priority an individual gives to group as versus national identity, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The second question asks the respondents whether they favor their own interests and well-being or those of the community (Q62), which again relates to bonding social capital.

**Hypothesis 4b** The greater the priority an individual gives to individual as versus community interests, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The third question concerns tolerance of differences of opinion (Q64). As an indicator of social consensus, this measure is less clear-cut than the others, since respondents are given a choice between accepting disagreement and favoring consensus. In general, the former orientation is viewed as beneficial because these differences are respected and are not, therefore, the basis of conflictual divisions. The latter orientation, meanwhile, could be relatively benign or even desirable, in so far as it merely reflects an interest in having everyone on the same page politically so that a society can proceed effectively. Yet this desire might alternatively be associated with an insistence upon conformity and the denial of freedoms to those with competing views, with violence as a potential mechanism of coercive regulation.

**Hypothesis 4c** The more willing an individual is to accept differences of opinion within the community, the less likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The fourth question captures a respondents' sense of the frequency of violent conflict within the areas where they live (Q71b).<sup>14</sup> As a result, they may feel vulnerable to such violence or view it as normal practice, thus providing a rationale for following suit.

**Hypothesis 4d** The greater the extent of violent conflict an individual perceives within their community, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The fifth question asks respondents whether they prefer for their country to break up or remain united in response to conflict between groups (Q77). The latter is evidence of a willingness to preserve the structure of society, whereas the former is tantamount to accepting, if not (forcibly) advocating, division.

**Hypothesis 4e** The more than an individual approves of their country breaking up in response to inter-group conflict, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

#### *Equality*

As indicators of the final component of social capital, we use three questions about perceptions of inequality and relative deprivation. The first question is a more general inquiry about whether

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<sup>14</sup> Respondents were also asked about their perceptions of the extent of inter-group conflict (Q71c).

people are treated unequally under the law (Q41d). The second and third questions both pertain to the respondent's identity group—whether they are better or worse off economically than other groups (Q55), and whether the government subjects them to unfair treatment (Q4561d). All of these items capture grievances that could motivate a respondent to consider, if not commit, violence.

**Hypothesis 5a** The stronger an individual's belief that people are treated unequally under the law, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

**Hypothesis 5b** The stronger an individual's belief that his/her group's economic conditions are worse than those of other groups, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

**Hypothesis 5c** The stronger an individual's belief that his/her group is treated unfairly, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

### *Socio-Demographic Attributes*

Further, we follow conventions in the analysis of individual-level survey data and include several socio-demographic attributes as controls. One is the respondent's age (Q80). Another is their gender (Q96). Research conducted in other settings indicates that orientations toward political violence are negatively related to age, and that men are generally more prone to support political violence than women.

**Hypothesis 6a** The younger an individual, the more likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

**Hypothesis 6b** Men are more likely than women to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

The last of the socio-demographic control variables that we employ in the models is respondent's highest level of education (Q84). The expectation is that this factor should have an effect that is similar to some of the dimensions of social capital, as education tends to promote greater awareness and civic engagement.

**Hypothesis 6c** The higher the individual's level of education, the less likely he/she is to engage in/be disposed towards/approve of political violence.

## **RESULTS**

Our analysis is comprised of three aspects. First, we examine the correlations among the different elements of social capital. Second, we summarize the patterns in violent behavior, dispositions and attitudes across the 16 countries represented in the second round of the Afrobarometer. Third, we evaluate the relationship between the various elements of social capital and the two measures of political violence.

### **Dimensions of Social Capital**

In evaluating whether social capital mitigates political violence, the relationship among the dimensions of social capital—not least between associational membership and trust—is a key consideration. As we described earlier, scholars have come to divergent conclusions on this subject based upon empirical research conducted in different settings. Some have found that formal associations can bridge ethnic divisions, increase levels of inter-group trust and reduce the incidence of violence (Varshney 2003). Yet elsewhere levels of inter-personal trust do not appear to be related to associational membership (Widner & Mundt 1998). To provide another input into these debates, with the benefit of survey data from 16 countries, we assess the correlations among the various indicators of associational membership, civic engagement, trust, social cohesion, and equality (Tables 3a-d).

**Table 3a**  
**Correlations Among Measures of Associational Membership and Other Measures of Social Capital**  
*Measures of Associational Membership*

	<b>Religious Group</b>	<b>Union or Farmers' Association</b>	<b>Professional/ Business Association</b>	<b>Community Development or Self-Help Organization</b>
<i>Measures of Associational Membership</i>				
Religious	1.0000			
Union/farmers'	0.1867 ***	1.0000		
Professional/business	0.1138 ***	0.3259 ***	1.0000	
Community/self-help	0.1868 ***	0.3380 ***	0.3201 ***	1.0000
<i>Measures of Civic Engagement</i>				
Interest in public affairs	0.0655 ***	0.0620 ***	0.0435 ***	0.1116 ***
Discuss politics	0.0285 ***	0.0710 ***	0.0622 ***	0.1126 ***
Media consumption	0.0268 ***	0.0183 ***	0.0374 ***	0.0081 ***
Politics too complex	-			
Politics too complex	0.0199 **	0.0186 ***	0.0104 ***	0.0101 ***
Contacted local government	0.0993 ***	0.1500 ***	0.1123 ***	0.1867 ***
Contacted government officials	0.0888 ***	0.1307 ***	0.1405 ***	0.1734 ***
<i>Measures of Trust</i>				
Relative trust in current government	-			
Relative trust in current government	0.0032	0.0221 ***	-0.0104	0.0657 ***
Trust in local government body	-			
Trust in local government body	0.0284 **	0.0390	0.0132 **	0.0575 *
Trust in police	-			
Trust in police	0.0408 ***	0.0418 ***	-0.0096 ***	0.0602 ***
Party competition → conflict	-			
Party competition → conflict	0.0033	-0.0090	0.0034	0.0048
Government job in resolving conflict	0.0041	0.0041 ***	0.0115	0.0520 ***
Corruption in government	-			
Corruption in government	0.0133	0.0046 ***	0.0236 ***	-0.0061 **
<i>Measures of Social Cohesion</i>				
Group vs. national identity	0.0133 *	0.0572 ***	0.0225 ***	0.0369 ***
Individual vs. community interest	-			
Individual vs. community interest	0.0075 ***	-0.0090 **	0.0092 *	-0.0289 ***
Tolerance of difference	0.0329 ***	-0.0259	0.0320 ***	-0.0163
Conflict in community	0.0129 ***	0.0123 ***	0.0355 ***	0.0480 ***
Break up vs. unity	-			
Break up vs. unity	0.0553 ***	-0.0240 **	-0.0029	-0.0450 ***
<i>Measures of Equality</i>				
Unequal treatment under law	-			
Unequal treatment under law	0.0178 **	0.0021 *	0.0127 ***	0.0243 ***
Group economic conditions worse	-			
Group economic conditions worse	0.0111 *	0.0047	-0.0268 ***	0.0323 ***
Group treated unfairly	0.0416 ***	0.0462 ***	0.0129 ***	0.0420 ***



**Table 3b**  
**Correlations Among Measures of Civic Engagement and Other Measures of Social Capital**

	<i>Measures of Civic Engagement</i>					
	Interest in Public Affairs	Discuss Politics with Friends and Family	Media Consumption	Politics Too Complex	Contacted Local Government	Contacted Officials in Ministry Government
<i>Measures of Civic Engagement</i>						
Interest in public affairs	1.0000					
Discuss politics	0.2874***	1.0000				
Media consumption	0.0954***	0.1181***	1.0000			
Politics too complex	0.0428***	0.0366***	0.0089	1.0000		
Contacted local government	0.1251***	0.1858***	0.0290***	0.0578***	1.0000	
Contacted government officials	0.1175***	0.1348***	0.0409***	0.0628***	0.3587***	1.0000
<i>Measures of Trust</i>						
Relative trust in current government	0.0579***	0.0344***	0.0090	0.0480***	0.0360***	0.0277***
Trust in local government body	0.0296***	-0.0239***	0.0042	0.0546***	0.1784***	0.0166**
Trust in police	0.0500***	-0.0617***	-0.0486***	0.0313***	0.0561***	0.0049
Party competition → conflict	-0.0211***	0.0318***	0.0027	-0.0752***	0.0299***	0.0045
Government job in resolving conflict	0.0444***	0.0139**	0.0166**	0.0310***	0.0453***	0.0475***
Corruption in government	-0.0322***	0.0749***	0.0296***	-0.0337***	0.0336***	0.0095
<i>Measures of Social Cohesion</i>						
Group vs. national identity	-0.0061	-0.0299***	-0.0161**	-0.0144*	-0.0487***	-0.0157**
Individual vs. community interest	-0.0059	-0.0185***	0.0234***	-0.0339***	-0.0188***	-0.0142**
Tolerance of difference	0.0218***	0.0524***	0.0266***	-0.0212***	0.0276***	0.0307***
Conflict in community	0.0690***	0.1003***	0.0331***	-0.0395***	0.1033***	0.0499***
Break up vs. unity	-0.0854***	-0.0537***	-0.0063	0.0446***	-0.0777***	-0.0179***
<i>Measures of Equality</i>						
Unequal treatment under law	-0.0148**	0.0406***	0.0129*	-0.0639***	0.0145**	0.0131*
Group economic conditions worse	-0.0236***	-0.0101	-0.0540***	-0.0184**	0.0409***	-0.0154**
Group treated unfairly	0.0204***	0.0645***	0.0191***	-0.0505***	0.0444***	0.0346***

**Table 3c**  
**Correlations Among Measures Trust and Other Measures of Social Capital**

*Measures of Trust*

	<b>Trustworthiness of Current vs. Prior Government</b>	<b>Trust in Local Government Body</b>	<b>Trust in Police</b>	<b>Party Competition → Conflict</b>	<b>Government Job in Resolving Conflict</b>	<b>Corruption Among Government Officials</b>
<i>Measures of Trust</i>						
Relative trust in current government	1.0000					
Trust in local government body	0.1941 ***	1.0000				
Trust in police	0.1500 ***	0.2880 ***	1.0000			
Party competition → conflict	-0.1090 ***	-0.1069 ***	-0.0974 ***	1.0000		
Government job in resolving conflict	0.2613 ***	0.1599 ***	0.1972 ***	-0.1275 ***	1.0000	
Corruption in government	-0.1558 ***	-0.1312 ***	-0.1608 ***	0.1189 ***	-0.1416 ***	1.0000
<i>Measures of Social Cohesion</i>						
Group vs. national identity	-0.0659 ***	-0.0780 ***	-0.0529 ***	0.0433 ***	-0.0576 ***	0.0560 ***
Individual vs. community interest	-0.0525 ***	-0.0240 ***	-0.0725 ***	0.0276 ***	-0.0438 ***	0.0020
Tolerance of difference	-0.0191 ***	-0.0071	-0.0635	0.0134 *	-0.0054	0.0290 ***
Conflict in community	-0.0271 ***	-0.0294 ***	0.0236 ***	0.1555 ***	-0.0353 ***	0.0843 ***
Break up vs. unity	-0.0728 ***	-0.0503 ***	0.0236 ***	0.0258 ***	-0.1066 ***	0.0267 ***
<i>Measures of Equality</i>						
Unequal treatment under law	-0.1685 ***	-0.2089 ***	-0.1405 ***	0.3354 ***	-0.1613 ***	0.1847 ***
Group economic conditions worse	-0.0447 ***	-0.0531 ***	-0.0181 **	-0.0221 ***	-0.0307 ***	0.0443 ***
Group treated unfairly	-0.1624 ***	-0.1186 ***	-0.1568 ***	0.0744 ***	-0.1799 ***	0.1556 ***

**Table 3d**  
**Correlations Among Measures of Social Cohesion and Equality**

	<i>Measures of Social Cohesion</i>					<i>Measures of Equality</i>		
	<b>Group vs. National Identity</b>	<b>Community vs. Individual Interest</b>	<b>Tolerance of Differences in Opinion</b>	<b>Perceptions of Extent of Conflict in Community</b>	<b>Break Up vs. Unity in Response to Conflict</b>	<b>Unequal Treatment under Law</b>	<b>Group Economic Conditions Worse</b>	<b>Group Treated Unfairly</b>
<i>Measures of Social Cohesion</i>								
Group vs. national identity	1.0000							
Individual vs. community interest	-0.0146*	1.0000						
Tolerance of difference	-0.0516***	0.1196***	1.0000					
Conflict in community	0.0040	0.0363***	0.0357***	1.0000				
Break up vs. unity	-0.0097***	0.0464***	0.0284***	-0.0262***	1.0000			
<i>Measures of Equality</i>								
Unequal treatment under law	0.0385***	0.0756***	0.0104	0.0098	0.1001*	1.0000		
Group economic conditions	-0.0332***	-0.0736***	-0.0148**	-0.0047	-0.0045	0.0554***	1.0000	
Group treated unfairly	0.0572***	0.0186**	0.0559***	0.0753***	0.1017*	0.1690***	0.1857*	0.1017***

### ***Associational Membership***

First, the four types of associational membership display significant positive correlations with one another. As might be expected, the relationship is strongest among the types (union/farmer, professional/business, community/self-help) that concern economic interests. By contrast, membership in religious groups, the only one that is social in nature, is more weakly associated with the others. These four measures also exhibit significant positive correlations with measures of civic engagement. In particular, associational membership is most closely related to the frequency with which respondents contact local and national government officials. To a somewhat lesser degree, associational membership is linked to interest in and discussion of politics, especially among those who belong to community development and self-help organizations.

The correlations between associational membership and measures of trust are conspicuously mixed. Individuals in religious groups are actually somewhat less trusting than others of both the local government body and the police; the rest of their correlations with indicators of trust are insignificant, but generally negative. The remaining measures of associational life largely have the opposite effect—a significant positive relationship to trust—with two notable exceptions. First, membership in professional/business associations has a modest negative relationship to trust in the police, perhaps because of a sense that the latter interfere in economic activity. Second, membership in community development and self-help organizations has an even more modest negative relationship to perceptions of corruption in government, which may either motivate or reflect such mobilization.

Meanwhile, associational membership is significantly correlated with some indicators of social cohesion, but not others. All four types have a positive bivariate relationship with prioritizing group identity over national identity. Of note, the weakest correlation among this set is actually for members of religious groups, which is somewhat unexpected. In addition, participation in associations is also linked to perceptions of greater levels of violent conflict in the community. Yet the results also suggest that people who belong to associations more often tend to favor unity over division, support community over individual interests (with the exception of members of professional/business associations, who not surprisingly exhibit a self-interested streak), and accept differences of opinion.

Finally, associational membership also has a mixed relationship with measures of equality. The one consistent set of correlations pertains to those who belong to community development and self-help organizations, who are more likely to perceive inequality and relative deprivation across the board. Members of unions and farmers' associations are similar, albeit less consistent in this regard. By contrast, those who belong to both religious groups and professional or business associations tend to view their group's economic conditions as being better than those of other groups. Likewise, members of religious groups are less likely to perceive unequal treatment under the law. Otherwise, associational membership is linked to a sense of inequality or relative deprivation.

### ***Civic Engagement***

Not surprisingly, the correlations among the indicators of civic engagement are almost always positive and significant. The one interesting exception concerns the sense that politics is too complex. Although the relationships are generally weaker, other forms of civic engagement actually appear to be linked to reduced, rather than increased, understanding.

In general, civic engagement is also significantly correlated with the indicators of trust, albeit with varying consistency. Among the group of measures, interest in public affairs is regularly associated with higher levels of trust. In addition, almost every form of engagement is linked to higher levels of trust in the new government. By contrast, certain forms of engagement are actually associated with mistrust. Most notable, discussing politics with friends and family is linked to lower levels of trust in both the local

government body and the police, as well as stronger perceptions of corruption among government officials. This result involving corruption is observed with respect to both media consumption and contacting local government—the former presumably because of publicity, the latter perhaps due to first-hand experience. Media consumption is also linked to negative views of the police, which again may be a function of increased awareness of transgressions.

Meanwhile, the indicators of civic engagement are regularly correlated with higher levels of social cohesion. The lone exception concerns perceptions of conflict in the community, which once again could be attributed to an information effect. The correlations between civic engagement and equality, however, are mixed. The one consistent relationship concerns perceptions of unfair group treatment, which is always negatively associated with indicators of civic engagement. Otherwise, the various forms of civic engagement are linked only selectively to a sense of inequality and relative deprivation.

### ***Trust***

All of the indicators of trust are positively correlated with one another. Of note, one of the strongest associations is between the relative trustworthiness of the current government and the evaluation of its job in resolving conflict. In this regard, the latter seems to rate as more important than both trust in the police and perceptions of corruption. This result is evidence of the salience of conflict to variation in levels of social capital.

For the most part, trust is associated with higher levels of social cohesion. Yet trust rarely seems to be linked to greater tolerance of different opinions, which suggests that people may only be prepared to put their faith in others when they share similar orientations. At the same time, the two indicators of mistrust—the perceptions that party competition leads to conflict and that government officials are corrupt—both tend to be associated with lower levels of social cohesion, with the exception of a greater inclination to accept differences of opinion).

### ***Social Cohesion***

Surprisingly, the indicators of social cohesion do not consistently correlate with one another in the expected manner. For example, those who prioritize group identity over national identity are still more likely to prefer that the country remains unified rather than breaking up in response to conflict. The relationship between social cohesion and equality is also erratic. None of the measures of the former have a consistent positive relationship to the latter.

### **Patterns of Violence – Behavior, Dispositions & Attitudes**

Table 4 reports the distribution of responses concerning recent engagement in political violence, as well as the disposition to do so if circumstances present themselves in the future. A possible consideration in this regard is whether people might be prone to underreport such violent acts and tendencies, due to their presumed social undesirability. The results from the surveys, however, do not offer any obvious evidence that respondents were unwilling to be forthcoming about this subject matter. Out of nearly 24,000 valid responses, over 4 percent of individuals indicate that they engaged in political violence within the last year.<sup>15</sup> In addition, almost 9 percent of respondents admit they are prepared to commit violence. These values are generally consistent with our *a priori* expectations. Moreover, while small in absolute terms, the proportions are hardly trivial.<sup>16</sup> The former proportion implies that out of the total population of approximately 170 million people in the 16 countries where the second round of Afrobarometer was conducted, nearly seven million individuals committed acts of political force or violence during the

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<sup>15</sup> Presumably the values would only be higher if the time frame was extended beyond the prior year.

<sup>16</sup> It also bears noting that a number of Sub-Saharan African countries with infamous records of violent conflict (e.g., Burundi, Angola, DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone) were not represented in the sample.

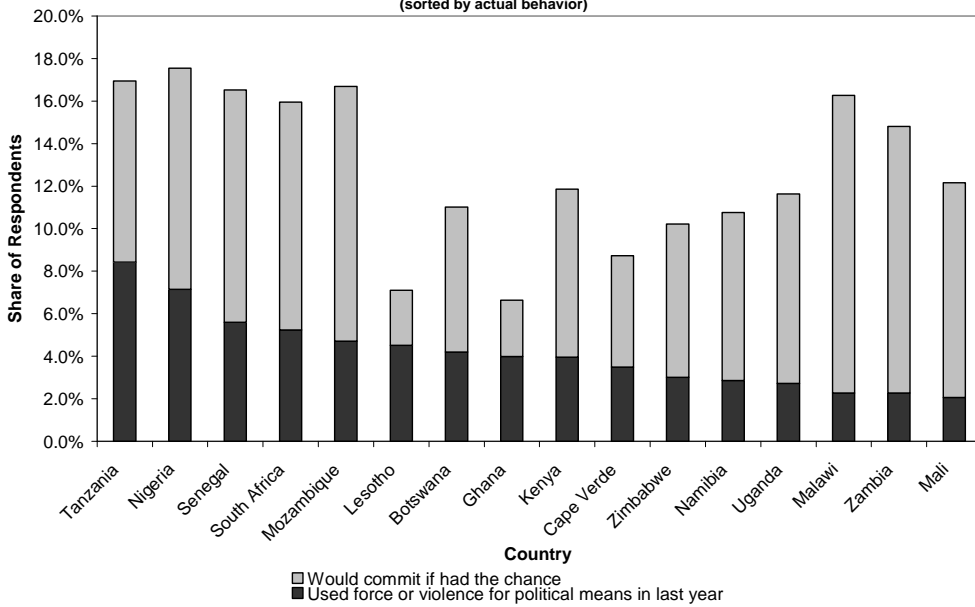
previous year alone. It also equates to roughly one million recent perpetrators of such acts in a country with an adult population of 25 million (e.g., South Africa). The latter proportion, meanwhile, implies that a further 15 million people across the 16 countries are ready to engage in violence.

**Table 4**  
**Political Violence - Behavior and Behavioral Dispositions**

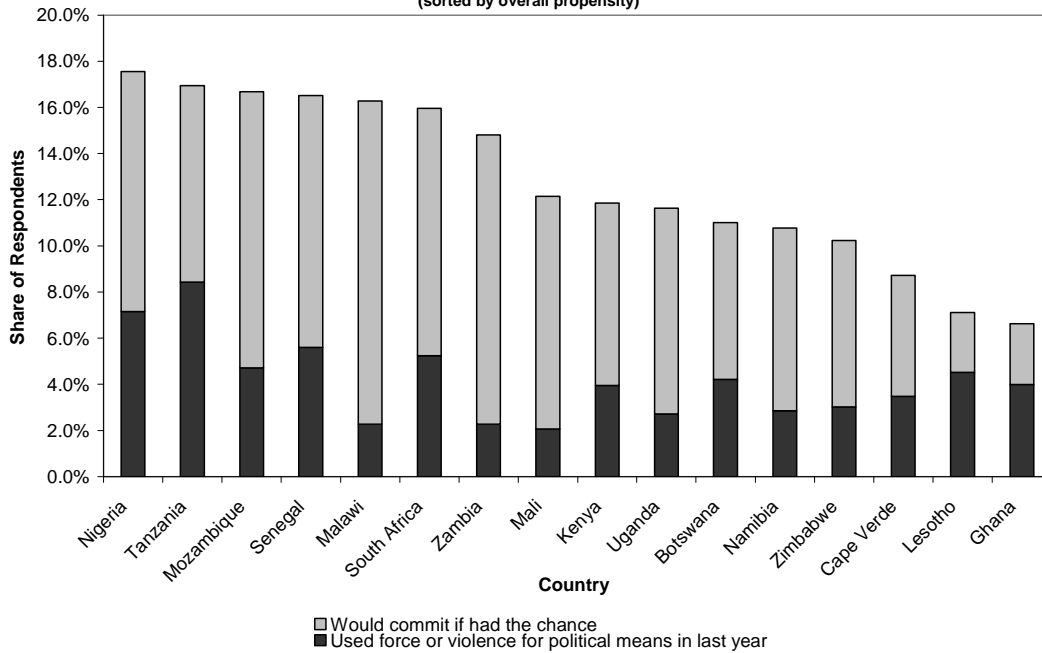
<b>Country</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Several</b>	<b>Once or Twice</b>	<b>Would Do</b>	<b>Would Never</b>
Botswana	1.9%	0.9%	1.3%	6.8%	89.0%
Cape Verde	0.5%	0.6%	2.5%	5.2%	91.3%
Ghana	1.4%	0.9%	1.8%	2.6%	93.4%
Kenya	0.6%	1.3%	2.0%	7.9%	88.1%
Lesotho	0.8%	1.2%	2.6%	2.6%	92.9%
Malawi	0.5%	0.6%	1.2%	14.0%	83.7%
Mali	0.6%	0.9%	0.6%	10.1%	87.8%
Mozambique	0.9%	1.4%	2.4%	12.0%	83.3%
Namibia	0.3%	0.4%	2.2%	7.9%	89.2%
Nigeria	0.7%	2.5%	4.0%	10.4%	82.5%
Senegal	2.5%	1.0%	2.1%	10.9%	83.5%
South Africa	0.9%	1.1%	3.2%	10.7%	84.0%
Tanzania	3.2%	2.5%	2.7%	8.5%	83.1%
Uganda	0.5%	0.8%	1.4%	8.9%	88.4%
Zambia	0.5%	0.5%	1.3%	12.5%	85.2%
Zimbabwe	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	7.2%	89.8%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>86.9%</b>

Afrobarometer Round Two - Question 25e: *Please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: used force or violence for a political cause?*

**Figure 2a**  
**Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa**  
 (sorted by actual behavior)



**Figure 2b**  
**Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa**  
 (sorted by overall propensity)



Looking at the individual countries, one observes considerable variation in both behavior and behavioral dispositions, with these two aspects not always closely related (Figures 2a-b). Engagement in political violence ranges from a low of 2.1 percent (Mali) to a high of 8.4 percent (Tanzania) of respondents. In some places, such behavior is more often habitual (e.g., Botswana, Senegal, Tanzania), whereas elsewhere it is typically an infrequent phenomenon (e.g., Cape Verde, Namibia). The dispositions toward violence vary even more widely across countries, from a minimum of 2.6 percent (Ghana, Lesotho) to a maximum of 14 percent (Malawi) of respondents. Another interesting aspect of these results is the ratio of behavior to dispositions. Certain countries exhibit a relatively modest level of violence, yet this circumstance effectively masks a serious latent potential for such activity. The most extreme example is Malawi: while only 2.3 percent of respondents report having engaged in political violence during the previous year, over six times this number would commit such acts if they had the chance. The ratios for both Zambia (5.5:1) and Mali (4.9:1) are nearly as high as Malawi's. Again, these results suggest the possibility of more severe rates of violent behavior manifesting under particular conditions. In Ghana and Lesotho, by contrast, the perpetrators of violence exceed those who are disposed to violence. Consequently, even though the level of political violence in these countries is around the overall mean for the survey sample, the prospect that they might ever exhibit much higher rates of such behavior would seem to be low.

**Table 5**  
**Attitudes toward Political Violence**

Country	Round Two			
	Sometimes Necessary		Never Justified	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Botswana	6.5%	5.3%	33.9%	54.3%
Cape Verde	6.5%	28.0%	36.4%	29.1%
Ghana	4.1%	7.5%	35.7%	52.7%
Kenya	7.4%	10.5%	33.8%	48.3%
Lesotho	5.6%	10.8%	37.5%	46.1%
Malawi	9.1%	4.9%	20.8%	65.2%
Mali	11.5%	13.5%	37.1%	37.9%
Mozambique	13.2%	20.2%	40.1%	26.4%
Namibia	6.5%	21.6%	40.0%	31.9%
Nigeria	6.5%	17.1%	44.1%	32.2%
Senegal	7.8%	9.9%	34.8%	47.5%
South Africa	5.0%	12.1%	46.5%	36.4%
Tanzania	8.9%	14.6%	26.3%	50.1%
Uganda	9.8%	15.5%	29.4%	45.2%
Zambia	8.4%	10.0%	30.7%	50.9%
Zimbabwe	8.4%	6.5%	24.6%	60.5%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>13.1%</b>	<b>35.2%</b>	<b>43.9%</b>

*Afrobarometer Round Two - Question 76: The use of violence is never justified in [country] politics vs. In this country, it is sometimes necessary to use violence in support of a just cause.*



Our second outcome variable affords another perspective on this subject. Overall, almost 21 percent of the respondents in Round Two agreed that violence is sometimes necessary in support of a just cause (Table 5). The fact that these results indicate a higher level of acceptance of political violence than before is not surprising given the nature of the proposition: presumably more people would accept such behavior when it is an occasional event that appears warranted, as opposed to opportunistic. Moreover, to reiterate a point we raised earlier, the question concerns respondents' attitudes, rather than actions they have engaged in or would consider doing personally.

### **Social Capital & Political Violence**

In order to evaluate the relationship between these outcome measures and the dimensions of social capital, we estimated two sets of multivariate ordered logit models with country fixed effects. Table 6 reports the results of the estimations with violent behavior and behavioral dispositions as the dependent variable; Table 7 reports the corresponding results substituting attitudes towards political violence as the dependent variable.

**Table 6 Models of Political Violence–Behavior & Behavioral Dispositions (ordered logit with country fixed effects)**

Independent Variable	Full		Reduced	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
<i>Associational Membership</i>				
Religious	-0.0723**	0.0343	-0.0752**	0.0312
Union/farm	0.0391	0.0370		
Professional/business	0.1969***	0.0403	0.2343***	0.0350
Community/self-help	0.0291	0.0340		
<i>Civic Engagement</i>				
Interest in public affairs	0.0680	0.0450		
Discuss politics	0.2459***	0.0242	0.2736***	0.0217
Media consumption	0.0047	0.0323		
Politics too complex	0.0464**	0.0228	0.0480**	0.0213
Contacted local government	0.0383	0.0332		
Contacted government officials	0.0420	0.0419		
<i>Trust</i>				
Relative trust in current government	-0.0071	0.0248		
Trust in local government body	0.0317	0.0337		
Trust in police	0.0550	0.0349		
Party competition → conflict	-0.1068***	0.0336	-0.1092***	0.0311
Government resolving conflict	-0.0793**	0.0357	-0.0583*	0.0323
Corruption in government	0.0834**	0.0371	0.0517	0.0342
<i>Social Cohesion</i>				
Group vs. national identity	0.1452**	0.0609	0.1575***	0.0567
Individual vs. community interest	-0.0288	0.0267		
Tolerance of difference	-0.0452	0.0262		
Conflict in community	0.0545**	0.0274	0.0739***	0.0253
Break up vs. unity	0.2464***	0.0345	0.2268***	0.0308
<i>Equality</i>				
Unequal treatment under law	0.1063***	0.0315	0.1094***	0.0292
Group economic conditions worse	-0.0850***	0.0261	-0.0956***	0.0244
Group treated unfairly	0.1267***	0.0314	0.1149***	0.0288
<i>Socio-Demographic Attributes</i>				
Age	-0.0142***	0.0024	-0.0136***	0.0022
Education	-0.0356*	0.0185	-0.0388**	0.0154
Gender	-0.1438**	0.0602	-0.2045***	0.0552
N	10,021		12,067	
Log likelihood	-5557.98		-6392.00	
LR chi2	515.75		627.03	
Pseudo R2	0.0443		0.0468	

**Table 7 Models of Attitudes Towards Political Violence** (ordered logit with country fixed effects)

Independent Variable	Full		Reduced	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
<i>Associational Membership</i>				
Religious	-0.0170	0.0228		
Union/farm	-0.0159	0.0258		
Professional/business	0.0882***	0.0301	0.0937***	0.0262
Community/self-help	-0.0016	0.0233		
<i>Civic Engagement</i>				
Interest in public affairs	-0.0479*	0.0292	-0.0408	0.0253
Discuss politics	-0.0077	0.0150		
Media consumption	-0.0203	0.0215		
Politics too complex	0.0113	0.0159		
Contacted local government	-0.0435*	0.0230	-0.0260	0.0194
Contacted government officials	0.0476	0.0295		
<i>Trust</i>				
Relative trust in current government	-0.0550***	0.0172	-0.0540***	0.0156
Trust in local government body	-0.0723***	0.0225	-0.0629***	0.0203
Trust in police	-0.0428*	0.0234	-0.0496**	0.0211
Party competition → conflict	-0.0002	0.0221		
Government resolving conflict	-0.0636***	0.0245	-0.0524**	0.0222
Corruption in government	0.0077	0.0250		
<i>Social Cohesion</i>				
Group vs. national identity	0.1415***	0.0408	0.1168***	0.0372
Individual vs. community interest	0.1298***	0.0185	0.1255***	0.0167
Tolerance of difference	0.0252	0.0181		
Conflict in community	0.0464**	0.0185	0.0456***	0.0168
Break up vs. unity	0.5198***	0.0265	0.5453***	0.0240
<i>Equality</i>				
Unequal treatment under law	0.0203	0.0208		
Group economic conditions worse	-0.0074	0.0179		
Group treated unfairly	0.0647***	0.0212	0.0733***	0.0189
<i>Socio-Demographic Attributes</i>				
Age	-0.0060***	0.0015	-0.0063***	0.0013
Education	-0.0222*	0.0123	-0.0202**	0.0100
Gender	-0.0502	0.0395		
N	9,994		12,056	
Log likelihood	-11648.13		-13888.90	
LR chi2	970.60		1224.19	
Pseudo R2	0.0400		0.0422	

***Violent Behavior & Behavioral Dispositions***

First, we find that members in religious groups are *less* likely than non-members to have engaged in political violence, whereas membership in professional and business associations has the opposite effect.

Both of these results are in marked contrast to our expectations for these variables. One possibility is that in Sub-Saharan Africa, religion cuts across ethnic group lines—unlike in a place like India, where it essentially defines social or communal categories—and may therefore not constitute the most salient cleavage as far as its potential for violence is concerned (outside of select contexts like Nigeria, and other countries in Africa where the Afrobarometer was not conducted). At the same time, it may be that professional/business associations are more ethnically homogenous than is seemingly the case in India, and that this form of membership is more likely to perform a bonding as opposed to bridging function.<sup>17</sup> Second, with respect to civic engagement, we find that discussing politics is associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in political violence, as does the perception that politics is too complicated. While the latter finding validates the expectations outlined in Hypothesis 2d, the finding that political discussion increases violence is curious. One explanation could be that committing an act of political violence effectively requires that an individual care about politics in the first place. By contrast, a disinclination to discuss politics with friends and neighbors is a sign of apathy. Alternatively, such activity may be indicative of a greater tendency to avoid utilizing established channels to voice grievances and frustration.<sup>18</sup>

Third, those who believe that government is doing an effective job in resolving conflict are less likely to have engaged in political violence, whereas the opposite is true among those who perceive that corruption among government officials is rampant.<sup>19</sup> These findings are consistent with the expectations we outlined in Hypotheses 3e and 3f, respectively. Meanwhile, the attitude that party competition leads to conflict is associated with a lower likelihood of engaging in political violence, contrary to our expectations in Hypothesis 3d. A possible reason for the counter-intuitive result might be that those who subscribe to this view have a more nuanced understanding of politics as involving conflict that can remain confined to the arena of formal political competition.

Three measures of social cohesion are significant in our analysis. The effects for two of these measures are in the expected direction. The view that the country should be broken apart in the event of inter-group conflict—an indicator of lower levels of social cohesion—is associated with a greater the likelihood of engaging in political violence, as is the perception that conflict within the respondent’s community is frequent. In addition, respondents who identify more closely with their group, as opposed to prioritizing national identity, were more likely to engage in violence. These results support Hypotheses 4a, d, and e. Fifth, we find that perceptions of unequal treatment under the law and unfair treatment of the respondent’s group by the government are associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in political violence, supporting Hypotheses 5a and 5c. However, the worse a respondent’s perceptions of his/her group’s relative economic situation, the lower their likelihood of engaging in political violence, contrary to Hypothesis 5b.

### ***Attitudes About the Acceptability of Political Violence***

The results for the model of attitudes about the acceptability of political violence indicate, as before, a negative association with membership in religious groups and a positive association with membership in business and professional associations. With respect to civic engagement, interest in public affairs and contact with a local government official are both significant and, as expected, associated with a lower level of acceptability of political violence; these variables, however, do not remain significant in the reduced model. Likewise, trust in the current government, local government, and police are all associated

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<sup>17</sup> Economic networks of ethnic minorities, including immigrant communities, are extensive both within and across countries on the continent. In that case, this form of membership is bonding as opposed to bridging.

<sup>18</sup> Another possibility is that the information people receive when talking to friends and neighbors is of low quality (e.g., gossip, rumors, innuendos, etc.), which creates a risk of misperceptions.

<sup>19</sup> Note that corruption is no longer significant in the reduced models we report in Table 6.

with a lack of approval of political violence, in marked contrast to the results reported earlier. The results for the indicators of social cohesion resemble those for the model of behavior, with the exception that respondent identification with the individual over communal interests, which is linked with greater acceptability of political violence. Only one measure of equality is significant and has the expected sign: unfair treatment of people under the law. Finally, age and education are associated with lower levels of approval for political violence; however, no gender gap exists in this regard, unlike the case with engagement in violence.

**Table 8 Summary of Results of Multivariate Models**

Independent Variable	Expected Relationship	Behavior & Behavioral Dispositions		Attitudes	
		Actual Relationship		Actual Relationship	
		Full	Reduced	Full	Reduced
<i>Associational Membership</i>					
Religious	+	-	-	n.s.	
Union/farm	-	n.s.		n.s.	
Professional/business	-	+	+	+	+
Community/self-help	-	n.s.		n.s.	
<i>Civic Engagement</i>					
Interest in public affairs	-	n.s.		-	n.s.
Discuss politics	-	+	+	n.s.	
Media consumption	-	n.s.		n.s.	
Politics too complex	-	+	+	n.s.	
Contacted local government	-	n.s.		-	n.s.
Contacted government officials	-	n.s.		n.s.	
<i>Trust</i>					
Relative trust in current government	-	n.s.		-	-
Trust in local government body	-	n.s.		-	-
Trust in police	-	n.s.		-	-
Party competition → conflict	+	-	-	n.s.	
Government resolving conflict	-	-	-	-	-
Corruption in government	+	+	n.s.	n.s.	
<i>Social Cohesion</i>					
Group vs. national identity	+	+	+	+	+
Individual vs. community interest	+	n.s.		+	+
Tolerance of difference	-	n.s.		n.s.	
Conflict in community	+	+	+	+	+
Break up vs. unity	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Equality</i>					
Unequal treatment under law	+	+	+	n.s.	
Economic condition	+	-	-	n.s.	
Group treated unfairly	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Socio-Demographic Attributes</i>					
Age	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	-	-	-	-
Gender	-	-	-	n.s.	

## CONCLUSION

This paper was motivated by a basic question: Does social capital reduce political violence? Previous empirical research conducted in different parts of the world has yielded contrasting answers to this question. We offer a unique perspective on these debates, relying on individual-level data from the Afrobarometer. This survey, conducted in 16 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, represents a valuable but underutilized resource for those who study this subject matter.

The results of our multivariate analysis, summarized in Table 8, finds that measures of each component of social capital are significantly associated—some negatively, others positively—with political violence. The most consistent factor in lowering such violence appears to be social cohesion. With some regularity, equality also seems to have beneficial effects, as do select forms of associational membership, civic engagement and trust.

Among the most surprising findings is that membership in religious groups is linked to a lower likelihood of engaging in political violence. This result is notable given the contemporary focus on religion as a preeminent source of political conflict, as well as the conclusions drawn by Varshney (2003), among others. Instead, the type of membership that relates positively to political violence is membership in professional and business associations. In addition to the fact that we find something different on this count than Varshney, the further significance is that it concerns associational membership in the economic sphere. Therefore, our results tie into the discussions about the relationship between social capital and economic outcomes. As is true in the political sphere, the lack of social capital—or forms of social capital with potential down sides such as intra-group bonding—can presumably have negative consequences for development.

While this study produced some interesting results, we left a number of important questions unaddressed, to be considered in future analyses. First, we need to determine whether membership in formal associations is mass or elite-based. If indeed membership is elite based, then a prerequisite for the argument that membership reduces or increases violence, is that groups are cohesive and follow their leaders. We also intend to explore the conditions that support the emergence of civil society, i.e., whether associational membership is more likely in stable, peaceful societies, or in societies characterized by past violence and/or instability. If associations that promote communication and build trust between members of rival ethnic groups also arise in the aftermath of violence, as they arguably did in the Indian context, then the possibility of endogeneity must be taken into account: violence may lead to the construction of civic associations that bridge the ethnic divide. A final question concerns rates of associational membership, or more specifically, their consistency across ethnic majorities and minorities. In the Indian context, for example, the fact that the Hindu majority is grossly underrepresented in peace or *mohalla* committees, which are intended to prevent communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, presents a problem. A number of these questions can be examined using additional data from the second and third rounds of the Afrobarometer.

## Appendix

### Variables Used from Round Two of the Afrobarometer Survey

Variable	Afrobarometer Question #	Question Text	Coding
<i>Violence</i>			
Engaged in political violence	Q25e	Please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: used force or violence for a political cause?	4: Yes, often 3: Yes, several times 2: Yes, once or twice 1: No, but would do if it had the chance 0: No, would never do this
Attitudes toward political violence	Q76	A. The use of violence is never justified in _____ politics vs. B. In this country, it is sometimes necessary to use violence in support of a just cause	4: Agree very strongly with B 3: Agree with B 2: Agree with A 1: Agree very strongly with A
<i>Associational membership</i>			
Religious association	Q24a	A religious group (e.g., church, mosque)	3: Official leader 2: Active member 1: Inactive member 0: Not a member
Union association	Q24b	A trade union or farmers association	3: Official leader 2: Active member 1: Inactive member 0: Not a member
Professional association	Q24c	A professional or business association	3: Official leader 2: Active member 1: Inactive member 0: Not a member
Community association	Q24d	A community development or self-help organization	3: Official leader

## Variables Used from Round Two of the Afrobarometer Survey

Variable	Afrobarometer Question #	Question Text	Coding
			2: Active member 1: Inactive member 0: Not a member
<i>Political Engagement</i>			
Interest in public affairs	Q27	How interested are you in public affairs?	2: Very interested 1: Somewhat interested 0: Not interested
Discuss politics	Q25a	Please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: discussed politics with friends or neighbors?	4: Yes, often 3: Yes, several times 2: Yes, once or twice 1: No, but would do if it had the chance 0: No, would never do this
Radio	Q26a	How often do you get news from the following sources: radio?	4: Every day 3: A few times a week 2: A few times a month 1: Less than once a month 0: Never
TV	Q26b	How often do you get news from the following sources: TV?	4: Every day 3: A few times a week 2: A few times a month 1: Less than once a month 0: Never
Newspaper	Q26c	How often do you get news from the following sources: newspapers?	4: Every day 3: A few times a week 2: A few times a month



### Variables Used from Round Two of the Afrobarometer Survey

Variable	Afrobarometer Question #	Question Text	Coding
Politics too complex	Q28a	Politics and government sometimes seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on.	1: Less than once a month 0: Never 5: Strongly disagree 4: Disagree 3: Neither agree nor disagree 2: Agree 1: Strongly agree
Contact local official	Q29a	During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views: a local government representative?	3: Often 2: A few times 1: Only once 0: Never
Contact government	Q29c	During the past year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons for help to solve a problem or to give them your views: an official of a government ministry?	3: Often 2: A few times 1: Only once 0: Never
<i>Trust</i>			
Relative trust in current government	Q53d	Comparing the current government with the former government, would you say that the one we have now is more or less trustworthy?	5: Much more 4: More 3: About the same 2: Less 1: Much less
Trust in local government body	Q43e	How much do you trust each of the following: your local government council?	3: A very great deal 2: A lot 1: A little bit 0: Not at all
Trust in police	Q43i	How much do you trust each of the following: the police?	3: A very great deal

### Variables Used from Round Two of the Afrobarometer Survey

Variable	Afrobarometer Question #	Question Text	Coding
Party competition → conflict	Q41b	In this country, how often does competition between political parties lead to conflict?	2: A lot 1: A little bit 0: Not at all 3: Always 2: Often 1: Rarely 0: Never
Government resolving conflict	Q45k	How well or badly you would say the current government is handling the following matters: resolving conflicts between communities?	4: Very well 3: Fairly well 2: Fairly badly 1: Very badly
Corruption in government	Q51c	How many of the following people do you believe are involved in corruption: government officials?	3: All of them 2: Most of them 1: Some of them 0: None
<i>Social Cohesion</i>			
Group vs. national identity	Q57	Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [national identity] and being a [group identity]. Which of these groups do you feel most strongly attached to?	2: group identity 1: national identity
Individual vs. community interest	Q62	A. Each person should put the well being of the community ahead of their own interests vs. B. Everybody should be free to pursue what is best for themselves as individuals.	4: Agree very strongly with B 3: Agree with B 2: Agree with A 1: Agree very strongly with A
Tolerance of difference	Q64	A. In order to make decisions in our community, we should talk until everyone agrees vs. B. Since we will never agree on anything, we must learn to accept differences of opinion within the community.	4: Agree very strongly with B 3: Agree with B 2: Agree with A 1: Agree very strongly with A

### Variables Used from Round Two of the Afrobarometer Survey

Variable	Afrobarometer Question #	Question Text	Coding
Frequency of community conflict	Q71b	In your experience, how often do conflicts arise between people within the community where you live?	4: Always 3: Often 2: Sometimes 1: Rarely 0: Never
Break up vs. unity	Q77	A. Even if there are conflicts between groups, [country] should remain united as one country vs. B. The differences among [people of country] are too strong; for the sake of peace, the country should be broken apart.	4: Agree very strongly with B 3: Agree with B 2: Agree with A 1: Agree very strongly with A
<i>Equality</i>			
Unequal treatment under law	Q41d	In this country, how often are people treated unequally under the law?	3: Always 2: Often 1: Rarely 0: Never
Group economic conditions	Q55	Are [group identity]'s economic conditions worse, the same as, or better than other groups in this country?	5: Much worse 4: Worse 3: About the same 2: Better 1: Much better
Group treatment	Q56	How often are [group identity] treated unfairly by the government?	3: Always 2: Often 1: Sometimes 0: Never
<i>Socio-Demographic Attributes</i>			
Age	Q80	How old were you at your last birthday?	
Education	Q84	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	9: Post-graduate

### Variables Used from Round Two of the Afrobarometer Survey

Variable	Afrobarometer Question #	Question Text	Coding
			8: University completed 7: Some university 6: Post-secondary qualifications, other than university e.g. a diploma or degree from a technical college 5: Secondary school completed / high school 4: Some secondary school / high school 3: Primary school completed 2: Some primary schooling 1: Informal schooling only (including Koranic schooling) 0: No formal schooling
Gender	Q96	Respondent's gender	2: female 1: male

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