The Politics of Anticolonial Resistance: Violence, Nonviolence, and the Erosion of the British Empire

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Abstract

How did the British Empire respond to violent and nonviolent resistance within its colonies? I develop a theory explaining how and why the metropole becomes involved in and grants concessions to its colonies. In contrast to more recent work, I find that violence was more effective at coercing metropolitan concessions to the colonies in the British Empire than nonviolence. This theory is supported with a wide range of data, including yearly measures of anticolonial resistance, every colonial concession made by the British Empire after 1918, daily measures of metropolitan discussions of colonial issues from cabinet archives, and web-scraped casualty data from British death records. My findings show that the effectiveness of resistance is conditional on the political structure that it is embedded in and that non-state actors can impact the structure of the international system.

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1 Introduction

The fall of the European empires in the 20th century transformed the international system. The International Relations literature explains this change by referencing Cold War dynamics or the restructuring of the global economy. Less emphasis is placed on the role of anticolonial resistance within the colonies. This is puzzling, since anticolonial resistance was a near constant response to imperial rule, occupied an important role in metropolitan politics, and shaped colonial policy. Both violent and nonviolent forms of anticolonial resistance mobilized populations all around the globe, and the leaders of these movements at the time of independence came to rule their states for decades. Yet there is little political science research on how the European empires responded to resistance, what the relative effects of violent and nonviolent anticolonial resistance were, and how resistance in imperial structures may differ from the more commonly studied context of the nation-state.

This paper studies the effects of violent and nonviolent anticolonial resistance on metropolitan policy in the British Empire during the 20th century. To do this, I present a model of imperial response. Empires, unlike nation-states, are political structures that are segmented into the metropole and its peripheral units. Peripheral units are directly administered by the local governors, but the metropole is in charge of large-scale changes in policy and other imperial relations. Metropolitan involvement in the colonies varies spatially and temporally. I theorize that anticolonial resistance can induce concessions from the metropole when the resistance is better able to command metropolitan involvement. Violent resistance is more effective at coercing metropolitan concessions because it threatens the metropole's core interests and garners the attention of the metropole. While disruptive to governance, nonviolent resistance is much less likely to be debated and discussed by metropolitan policymakers. Nonviolence, because it does not threaten the core interests of the metropole, remains the province of the colonial governor.

I test this theory in the context of the largest polity in history, the British Empire (Taagepera, 1978). I collected original data on measures of violent and nonviolent anticolonial resistance in every British colony from 1918 to independence, every concession granted by the metropole to the colony, and daily measures of metropolitan discussion of each colony using British Cabinet archives.

In addition, I provide daily casualty data using web-scraped death records of British Army officials who were killed in these conflicts to validate the measures of anticolonial resistance.

This paper presents a number of important findings. The main result is that violence is overwhelmingly more effective at coercing concessions from the metropole than nonviolence. In a wide range of statistical models, the effect of nonviolent resistance on a concession is null. This is partly because the metropole could ignore nonviolence: debates in the House of Commons were much more likely to focus on violent than nonviolent anticolonial activity, and cabinet discussions were more likely to discuss colonies experiencing violent, rather than nonviolent, resistance. These concessions were substantially quite important. Among other outcomes, metropolitan concessions led directly to an increase in the suffrage level in each colony, a key goal of anticolonial activists (Duong, 2021).

The finding that violence is more effective at coercing concessions is at odds with results from work by Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) showing that nonviolent campaigns are more successful than violent campaigns. I offer two explanations for this discrepancy. The first explanation is that the nature of imperial rule in the 20th century could successfully contain nonviolent resistance but violence threatened the core interest of imperialism by overwhelming local resources and creating instability. The more general explanation is that a research design comparing campaigns may not fully uncover the independent effect of the type of resistance. While the research design I use is not immune from selection effects and endogeneity, using smaller units of analysis (months and years) along with a more granular dependent variable helps protect against many threats to inference.

These findings are also relevant to the debate about the causes of decolonization. Decolonization was "the most important change in word politics" (Jervis, 1989: 34) during the 20th century, but the causes of this change have been understudied by IR scholars (for an exception, see (Crawford, 2002)). By showing that concessions—which increased suffrage to the colonies and facilitated self-determination—were a response to violent unrest, this work highlights the role that resistance within the colonies played in increasing the level of colonial autonomy. By studying low-level acts of resistance rather than just the maximalist campaigns of Gandhi or the Mau Mau, I am able to show that anticolonial resistance mattered more than previously thought.

2 Violence, Nonviolence, and Inferences

This work builds on existing research on the relative effects of violent and nonviolent resistance. The majority of these works focus on characteristics of resistance campaigns or the variety of strategies used by those doing the resistance (Cunningham, Dahl and Frugé, 2017). While government responses are an important outcome variable of these works, very often the interests of the targeted government are left unexplored. The literature on mass violent and nonviolent campaigns, for example, only examines variation in effectiveness against democracies and autocracies (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008; Griffiths and Wasser, 2018), as does the literature on the effectiveness of terrorism (Pape, 2006; Stanton, 2013; Fortna, 2015). In the civil war and self-determination literature, explanations for why states grant concessions are located in divisions within a movement (Cunningham, 2011) or their short-term use of violence (Thomas, 2014*a*). In contrast, this work focuses more on the structure of the targeted government and offers a theory designed to explain government responses.

Recent works have assessed the effectiveness of violence and nonviolence by comparing the success rate of maximalist campaigns (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008; Griffiths and Wasser, 2018). This approach suffers from a number of inferential problems, especially when applied to decolonization. Applying such an approach to the British Empire would not tell us much because decolonization and independence were overdetermined. Indeed, a striking feature of Griffiths and Wasser's data is that all anticolonial secessionist movements—regardless of the strategy of resistance they use—are coded as successful. Similarly, in Stephan and Chenoweth's dataset, all anticolonial campaigns that are active at the time of independence are coded as successful campaigns while those that petered out before independence is declared are deemed unsuccessful campaigns. Furthermore, there are inferential problems arising from the endogeneity between British reluctance to grant a colony independence and the likelihood that a violent campaign arises at all or that a nonviolent campaign turns violent. For some colonies, de facto independence occurred well before de jure independence, which placated more aggressive nationalists. Moreover, anticolonial resistance occurred in widely different contexts. The Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, for example, was largely a civil war among the Kikuyu ethnic group that resulted in the deaths of about two dozen settlers (Bennett, 2013;

Anderson, 2005). The British spent many lives and resources to combat the Mau Mau rebellion, but in Ceylon, the British were unwilling to pay those costs. Once there was the specter of violence in Ceylon in 1948, the British withdrew (Thomas, 2014*b*: 110).

It is possible that the difference in results between this study and the work of Stephan and Chenoweth is due to the different historical periods. Resistance against British imperialism undoubtedly differs from, say, the Arab Spring. However, when using their same data, comparing anticolonial resistance campaigns against the British Empire in the 20th century shows that primarily nonviolent campaigns are more effective than violent ones. The average value of the ordinal variable ranging from 3-5, with higher values measuring more success, for nonviolent campaigns is 4.7. For violent campaigns it is 3.66. By peeking into the dynamics of resistance and concessions within a campaign, we can understand the potential short-term benefits of both violent and nonviolent resistance. Below I provide a brief overview of these dynamics in the British Empire.

3 Resistance & Concessions in the British Empire

Throughout the 20th century the British Empire routinely granted concessions to the colonies. The main reason these concessions occurred was due to unrest within the colonies (Smith, 1978). Concessions were either a response to past unrest or an attempt to stave off future unrest (Rathbone, 1992: xxxvii). In the era of anticolonial nationalism, colonial officials engaged in a policy of "making reasonable concessions [to the colonies] without conceding any points which are genuinely essential" (Heinlein, 2013: 24). The goal was the gradual advance to self-government and the empowerment of native elites that ensured favorable relations with Britain in the post-independence period. For example, in 1946 the Governor of Burma quickly conceded demands to the Anti-Fascist PFL in order to defuse the situation after a series of strikes threatened to paralyze the colony (Heinlein, 2013: 43). During the late 1940s, the strategy of granting concessions to quell unrest was also used in Malaya alongside conventional counterinsurgency tactics (Heinlein, 2013: 52).

London granted concessions to the colonies mostly by reforming the constitution or expanding the legislative council. Constitutional reforms often expanded suffrage, increased internal self-government, and established institutions with native control. Expanding the legislative council (the primary legislative body within a colony) was an easy concession to make that increased local

representation without requiring the process of a constitutional amendment. In the vast majority of cases, the seats added to the legislative council were seats earmarked for native, and not European, elites. This helped dilute the power of the European seats. In theory and in practice, expanding the legislative council increased the representation of the non-European population.

While the Colonial Office was mostly in charge of implementing concessions, they did so under metropolitan pressure. The Colonial Office focused their involvement on the implementation of labor legislation reforms in the wake of the West Indian disturbances of 1937-1938 due to criticism from the Labour Party in Parliament (Brown and Louis, 1999: 608). Lord Moyne, then the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1941 proposed a constitutional reform for Jamaica and an increase in suffrage to the Jamaican Governor (Wallace, 1977: 56). For the reform of the Gold Coast constitution in 1954, the Colonial Office drafted recommendations which were then formally accepted by those in Whitehall (Rathbone, 1992: lx). In 1950 the Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed a board to review the constitutions of British colonies in the Caribbean (Wallace, 1977: 75). Ultimately the decision to grant independence was a metropolitan one. Before Ceylon became fully self-governing, the House of Commons passed the Ceylon Independence Bill in November of 1947 (Heinlein, 2013: 50). To help understand the interaction between metropolitan involvement, resistance, and concessions, I present my theory of imperial response below.

4 Theory of Imperial Response

The theory of imperial response posits that the structure of imperial rule matters for understanding the differential effects of violent and nonviolent resistance on the probability of a concession. I argue that, unlike federally structured nation-states, the distance (in terms of geographic but also in terms of information and control) between the metropole and its colonies meant that policymakers in the metropole were much less frequently concerned with the goings on in each individual colony. In order for subjects to do something that led to a change in policy, they needed to get the attention and involvement of the metropole. Since the amount of attention devoted to each colony was low and the default position in most cases was to delegate authority and control to local-level officials, metropolitan policymakers were quite happy to not discuss a colony and let colonial governors administer the colony and perform other, non-imperial tasks.

Resistance had the potential to disrupt this equilibrium. Resistance could overwhelm the capacity of the local colonial state to repress, contain, or defuse the resistance. The main goal of local colonial governments was to extract resources and maintain access to military bases at the lowest possible cost. Local colonial governments were small—twenty thousand British famously ruled over 300 million Indians—and colonial police forces were often staffed by young and inexperienced Britons looking for steady employment. If colonial subjects overcame their collective action problems they could threaten colonial control.

Resistance in the colonies injected colonial issues into metropolitan politics. Since resistance signaled that local colonial officials were unable to maintain order in their colonies, the metropole responded by discussing the situation in the colony. For the British Empire, important discussions of colonial unrest occurred in the House of Commons and the Cabinet. Both institutions routinely conversed with local officials in the Colonial and Foreign Offices. It was in these institutions where the appropriate metropolitan response was discussed and debated.

Metropolitan governments preferred no resistance in their colonies. Resistance inhibited tax collection, the building of the colonial state, the extension of colonial investments, and perhaps most importantly, entangled empires in colonial wars. At the same time, metropoles would prefer not to devote extra-institutional metropolitan attention to colonies. European empires consisted of local governors and colonial officials whose job it was to oversee and administer the colonies. As in any principal-agent relationship, the principal (the metropole) preferred that the agent (colonial officials) do what the principal delegated the agent to do with as minimal oversight and interference as possible. The default state of the metropole was thus to spend as little attention and hope for as little resistance as possible in their colonies.

Disrupting this equilibrium invited a metropolitan response and possible policy change. The hierarchical structure of imperial systems provides local level governors with sufficient powers and resources to run colonies with limited metropolitan intervention and only occasional or regular oversight. Large-scale policy changes become more likely when the metropole becomes involved in colonial affairs simply because the metropole controls the resources and means in order to make these changes. When anticolonial resistance occurs in a colony, policymakers in the metropole may

discuss the colony more to figure out the proper way to address the colonial unrest.

Once resistance disrupted this equilibrium, how could the metropole respond? The metropole could respond to anticolonial resistance by conceding, repressing, or effectively do nothing by delegating to the colonial government.

I first consider concessions. I define a concession as a substantive policy change by the metropole that favored the colony. This definition excludes smaller favorable actions and larger repressive actions. The revocation of a constitution or the declaration of an emergency was a substantive policy change, but did not favor the colony. Other colonial acts did favor colonial subjects, for example the reduction of taxes collected or the distribution of investments to specific regions. These types of changes were often made at the local level by colonial or district governors and did not require metropolitan input. In my theoretical model, concessions are enacted by the metropole in order to provide some benefit to the colonies. Concretely, these benefits usually resulted in the granting of rights, increased representation, or increased suffrage. Within the colonial empires, concessions were not a tactic used only by the metropole. Colonial governors and even district governors used concessions as well. However, these were more often smaller concessions that related to the day-to-day governance of a colony, namely tax relief and colonial investments. Local level officials could accede to the demands of colonial subjects by distributing investments or by selectively choosing not to collect legally mandated taxes. This, however, required no change in colonial policy and was determined by local and colonial governors, not metropolitan politicians.

I focus on the metropole's decision to grant a concession. This is for two reasons. One is that this was a much more frequent occurrence than metropolitan repression. Repression was, of course, a daily occurrence *within* a colonial state. However, repression was coordinated, executed, and administered by the local colonial state with sporadic involvement by the metropole. The second reason why the focus is on concessions is because, in practice, the metropole did not face choosing between repression and concession but could simultaneously repress *and* concede. The frequency of colonial concessions during a large-scale colonial conflict provides evidence for this general claim.

The metropole could also repress. The metropole could dispatch military forces to a colony in order to crush pockets of rebellion while also reforming the constitution to increase suffrage. This

occurred during 1936-1939 Palestinian Revolt where London acceded to the demands of the rebels and curtailed Jewish immigration while also supplying metropolitan troops to violently repress the rural guerrillas (Hughes, 2020). In India during the 1920s colonial legislation both increased representation and provided the state with wide latitude to repress terrorism (Ghosh, 2017). Since local-level repression is a possible confounder, many of the models estimated control for the level of repression in a colony.

Metropolitan repression, however, was exceedingly costly and thus relatively rare. One of the main benefits of having an empire in the early 20th century was tapping into colonial resources to fight conventional wars with other states. Metropolitan repression reversed this dynamic and diverted troops from the metropole and strategic bases to colonial outposts. Moreover, with few exceptions (the British repression of the Palestinian revolt during the 1930s), large-scale metropolitan repression occurred immediately prior to independence. In the British Empire during the 20th century, the metropole engaged in five large scale instances of metropolitan repression in Palestine, Cyprus, Malaya, Kenya, and Aden (Grob-Fitzgibbon, 2016; French, 2011).

If the theorized overall effect of resistance is to increase metropolitan involvement, why does the difference between violence and nonviolence resistance matter? Violence is effective against imperial rule for two reasons. Violence was better able to increase metropolitan involvement in the colonies. This involvement made it possible for the metropole to respond by offering colonial concessions. Violence is more effective at garnering metropolitan involvement because violence made it very difficult to maintain colonial rule. Colonial police simply did not have the resources of skills to defuse a riot or to effectively combat a small band of violent bandits. Nonviolent resistance simply did not invite involvement from the metropole because strikes, protests, and boycotts could be easily dealt with using traditional colonial methods of concessions made by the local colonial government. In response to nonviolence, the metropole could choose to remain uninvolved and let the local officials response do the unrest. Increasing wages, for one, was a tried and true tactic of officials in colonial Africa. It is not that nonviolent resistance was futile or ineffective—indeed, nonviolent resistance by colonial subjects likely had a serious impact on the development of the colonial state and patterns of taxation and investments. The fiscal state of a colony was, of course, important

and affected the lives of colonial subjects. However, the metropole controlled the most important political features of the colonial state: its constitution, level of suffrage, political representation, etc. Nonviolence may grant a wage increase but could not bring about a reformed constitution or self-government.

To be sure, the interaction between the metropole and colonial subjects was strategic. The metropole granted concessions as a way to defuse future unrest. Colonial nationalists—or simply colonial subjects who were fed up with exploitation—actively resisted colonialism. It is possible that nonviolent resistance failed to increase metropolitan involvement but nevertheless led the metropole to preemptively grant a concession as a way to avoid an escalation into violence, as many works on authoritarian politics have theorized (Dower et al., 2018). However, often the reasons that smaller-scale riots, strikes, protests, and insurgent attacks occurred were unrelated to decisions made by the metropole. In Palestine, for example, the strength of the Palestinian leadership determined whether the nationalist movement was primarily violent or nonviolent (Pearlman, 2011). Lawrence (2010) argues that competition and strife within a nationalist movement explains variation in anticolonial violence in the French Empire. Outbidding and competition between groups also helps explain tactical choice and the escalation of violence, especially in Mandate Palestine (Kydd and Walter, 2006). Similar patterns help explain nonviolence as well (Cunningham, Dahl and Frugé, 2017). In the British Caribbean, intra-union squabbles led to more frequent strikes and protests (Wallace, 1977: 74).

Nonviolence did not encourage preemptive metropolitan concessions. Preemptive concessions in response to nonviolence was a strategy adopted by the colonial state. For example, the result of the 1929 protests in Nigeria resulted in lower taxation rates which were administered by the colonial state (Zukas, 2009). In French West Africa, nonviolent resistance by chiefs resulted in lower district-level taxation (Huillery, 2009). The literature on authoritarian politics adequately captures the dynamics of contention, repression and concession within a colonial state. However, what is left out of these theories, and what my theory includes, is the role of the metropole. The metropole's preference is to delegate authority to the colonial state and only intervene in colonial affairs when the colonial state was unable to effectively rule. Violence signaled to the metropole that this was indeed

the case, which prompted the colonial state to intervene. Preemptive metropolitan concessions in response to nonviolence did not occur because nonviolence did not disrupt the equilibrium.

The strategic nature of the interaction does not just affect metropolitan decisions, but decisions by colonial subjects as well. Theoretically, how does metropolitan behavior affect the choice of colonial subjects to adopt violent or nonviolent resistance? In general, colonial subjects are less able to anticipate and ascertain metropolitan intentions than they are for the colonial state. This is due to the geographic distance and the low frequency of interactions. Many colonial subjects experienced daily interactions with local colonial officials and knew them personally. Interactions with officials in the metropole were rare. Regular interactions (in the form of negotiations) with the metropole occurred during two phases: the period immediately prior to independence and during any large-scale repressive campaign (in practice, these were overlapping time periods). Theoretically we would expect that anticolonial resistance would be higher in these periods and that the type of resistance would be driven by anticolonial leader's anticipation of what would most effective.

While repressive campaigns and the time immediate prior to decolonization are included in my empirical analysis, main results are robust to their inclusion/exclusion, they do not play an important role in my theoretical framework. The haphazard and improvisational nature of decolonization has frustrated historians trying to find general pattern of behavior within an empire. Violence hardened British resolve for control during the Cyprus emergency, until it did not, and then the British hastily withdrew. The same pattern happened in Palestine. The British crushed the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, but retained formal control for three years after the revolt ended (Grob-Fitzgibbon, 2016). Independence negotiations with the Ceylonese elite were facilitated by the elite's efforts to suppress any attempts at spoiling the peace process (Thomas, 2012). The relevant theoretical point here is that negotiations disrupt the system of delegation between the metropole and periphery. At the same time, independence for each colony was overdetermined and affected by a wide variety of countervailing forces (from within the colony and also from the larger international system).

I use the above theory to generate testable hypotheses. The fundamental difference between violence and nonviolence in my theory, and in most other definitions, is that violence is destructive,

either by harming or killing people, or by destroying infrastructure. Nonviolence, however, makes it difficult for the empire to rule its colonies, engage in resource extraction, and maintain international legitimacy. If the metropole is more concerned with the destructive effects of activity by subjects, then we would expect the metropolitan response to this activity to respond with concessions in an attempt to stave off future unrest. If protests, strikes, and boycotts threaten imperial rule, then the metropole should respond to these actions with concessions. This generates Hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively.

Hypothesis 1 (H1)**.** *Violent anticolonial resistance within a colony should lead to concessions by the metropole to the colonial state.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2)**.** *Nonviolent anticolonial resistance within a colony should lead to concessions by the metropole to the colonial state.*

Before the metropole responds to unrest with concessions metropolitan policymakers must discuss the colony in order to formulate a policy. The effectiveness of a type of resistance can in part be assessed by its ability to garner metropolitan involvement. My theory predicts that violence will have a positive effect on metropolitan involvement because violence directly threatens the core interest of the metropole, whereas nonviolent activity can safely be handled by the local colonial government. This theory generates hypotheses 3 and 4.

Hypothesis 3 (H3)**.** *Violent anticolonial resistance should increase metropolitan involvement to a colony.*

Hypothesis 4 (H4)**.** *Nonviolent anticolonial resistance should increase metropolitan involvement to a colony.*

5 Research Design

To test my theory, I run a number of statistical models to analyze the relationship between variables. Since concessions were relatively infrequent events that were not immediate reactions to anticolonial resistance, I use colony-years as the unit of analysis when the dependent variable is whether a colony receives a concession from the metropole. However, metropolitan attention was more frequent

and also responded quicker to events in the colonies. For this reason, and to limit the threat of unobserved heterogeneity that may bias my inferences, I use a colony-month as the unit of analysis when estimating the effect of unrest on metropolitan attention. Since the choice to use violence or nonviolence by imperial subjects was a strategic one, it is unlikely that there exists a scenario where there is as-if random variation in violence and nonviolence, and it is even more unlikely that such a design examining this hypothetical scenario would have any meaningful external validity. Using a granular unit of analysis such as the colony-month (while not equivalent to complete randomization of the independent variables) aids inference by ensuring that similar units of analysis are being compared. Furthermore, the private nature of metropolitan discussion as measured by cabinet archives helps limit reverse causality as one potential threat to inference. While endogeneity is present in nearly all observational studies—and especially those involving the dissolution of centuries-old international phenomena involving dozens of countries around the globe—this approach helps increase the likelihood that the effects uncovered in the statistical models reflect a causal relationship.

Temporally, my study is limited to the so-called 'Second' British Empire, which began after World War I (Parsons, 2014). I chose this cutoff for three reasons. One is that there is better quantitative and qualitative data available after World War I. The other is that, after the fall of the Ottomans, the British acquired some of its former possessions, including Palestine. These territories were the last important colonies acquired by the British Empire, which simplifies the analysis by not having units enter into the sample. Colonies are removed from the sample after they are formally granted independence. The third, and perhaps most important reason for this temporal cutoff, is that this time period is commonly believe to be one where the British Empire started declining (Hyam, 2007). This is important for understanding the scope conditions of my theory. Concessions must be a reasonable policy option; in the era of imperial expansion, the usual response to unrest was the consolidation of imperial rule, not retrenchment (Gopal, 2019). I include territories formally administered by the Colonial Office and the India Office, and exclude the Dominions, since there was almost no variation in either the independent or dependent variable.[1]

[1]The obvious exception to a Dominion that experienced resistance is Ireland. Given Ireland's proximity and geographic contiguity with the United Kingdom, it is excluded from the sample. The colonies in the study are: Aden,

6 Data

To construct a measure of violent and nonviolent resistance I perform a textual search of the entire Times of London newspaper corpus using select keywords. This results in a more granular independence variable that also includes smaller-scale acts of resistance. First, I select all news articles where the colony name is in the subject or keyword of the article in the Times. Then, I filter the articles to ones that include words from a selected list that refer to violent and nonviolent activity.[2] To convert these articles into a quantitative measure, I adopt two separate approaches. The main approach is to sum the number of articles containing each word for every year. This results in two colony-year variables measuring violent and nonviolent activity in the colonies. In addition, I use this corpus to create an ordinal measure of violent and nonviolent resistance ranging from 0-2, which is used in additional models. Results and details are in the Appendix. The raw data showing the number of articles related to violence and nonviolence for each colony over time are presented in Figure 1. Two important items stand out from this plot. The first is that there was considerable nonviolent resistance even during the counterinsurgency campaigns. An example of this phenomenon is that, during the war in Cyprus, over 1,000 Cypriots organized a hunger strike to protest British policies (Correspondent, 1957). The second is that the data are able to discriminate between episodes of violence and nonviolence: there is a spike in nonviolence for Palestine in 1936, when the Palestinian revolt was most nonviolent, and a subsequent spike in violence for 1937-1939, when the revolt was almost exclusively violent (Hughes, 2020).

Barbados, Bechuanaland, British Guiana, Burma, Ceylon, Cyprus, Gambia, Gold Coast, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaya, Malta, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Palestine, Sudan, Southern Rhodesia, Tanganyika, Trinidad, and Uganda.

[2]Words related to nonviolence are: boycott, protest and strike. Words related to violence are: terrorism, riots and insurgency. In choosing these words, the main goal was to use words that would be more likely to describe actions by the colonized rather than the colonizer. For example, "massacre" or "atrocity" could refer to colonial or anticolonial activity. Words with a pejorative meaning would be more likely to be applied to activity by the colonized. To avoid ambiguity about whether the act is violent or nonviolent, common words like "unrest", "disturbance", and "revolt" were excluded.

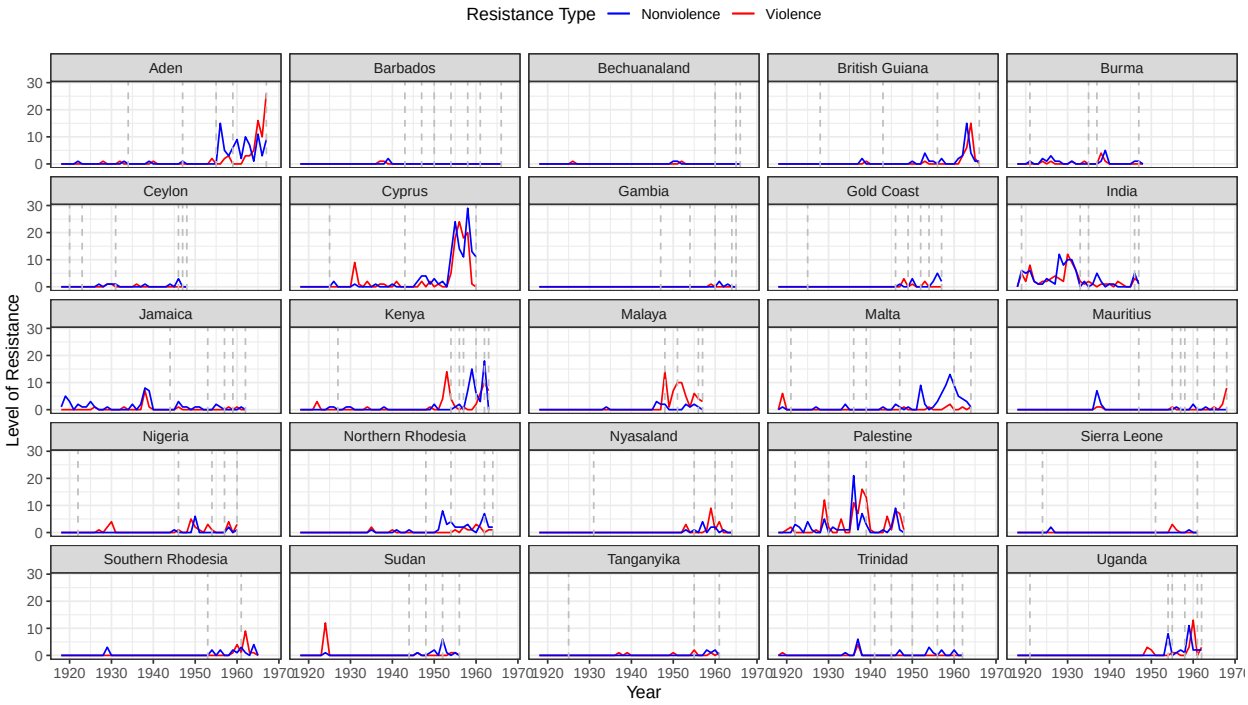

Figure 1: This plot shows the yearly level of violent and nonviolent activity in the colonies. Vertical lines indicate years in which a concession was granted. Blue lines indicate nonviolent resistance, red lines indicate violent resistance.

The dependent variable in my study is whether the colonial government grants a concession to those in the colony. To reiterate, I define a concession as any formal substantive change in colonial policy that favored colonial subjects. In almost all cases, a concession was a reform that devolved autonomy, usually through increased representation, to colonial subjects. Data on concessions were hand-coded at the year level through examining historical dictionaries, encyclopedias, and the vast secondary literature on British imperialism. The variable used in the analysis is simply a binary variable indicating if a concession was granted in that year. In addition, I also use a ordinal measure of concessions. This variable ranges from 0-3 and rates constitutional changes (coded as 3) as being larger concessions than those related to expanding the legislative council (coded as 2). All other concessions are coded 1, and these include policies such as recognizing a nationalist leadership in a constitutional conference, facilitating self-government at the local level, or other policies.

I also use a number of time-varying controls. To control for the level of repression in a colony,

I use two measures. One is the government censorship effort, which captures the government's attempt to censor print or broadcast media. Censorship was a common tactic by the British to repress nationalist dissent in the colonies. The other variable is the physical violence index. This measures the freedom from political killings and torture by the government. Repression can affect the prevalence of different types of resistance and may also affect the rate of concessions. Other controls intended to capture variation in the political and economic development of a colony include the number of political parties that have national organizations, whether a political party has unified control over the government, the distribution of power across social groups, the suffrage level, the urbanization rate, and educational equality. These measures come from Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge, 2018).

To construct a measure of metropolitan attention by the cabinet, I use the cabinet archives containing the conclusions of each cabinet meeting during the time period studied. These documents contain brief information on each cabinet meeting, including what issues were discussed and the conclusions reached. An example document is presented in Section A5 in the appendix. The prime minister had discretion over the topics discussed at a cabinet meetings, while the departmental ministers could request an issue for discussion. These documents were circulated to all those present at the meeting, and on occasion the Cabinet Secretary would send them to the heads of the Treasury, Foreign Office and Chiefs of Staff (Thurston, 1998). For each document, I note what colonies were discussed and the date of the discussion.[3] Since the data are right-skewed, I take the log of the total discussions. These data are presented in Figure 2.

[3]The reference groups for these documents is: CAB 23, CAB 24, CAB 65, CAB 66, CAB 67, CAB 68, CAB 128, CAB 129, CAB 181, and CAB 195.

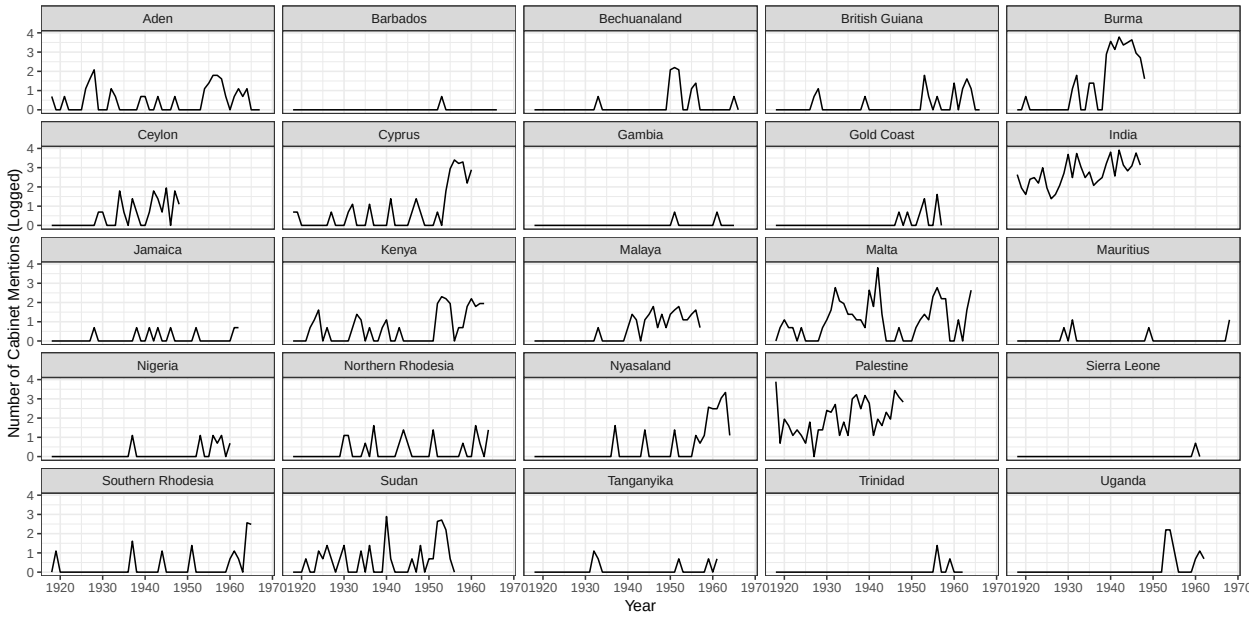

Figure 2: This plot shows the log of the number of times per year that each colony is discussed by the British Cabinet.

7 Model, Estimation and Results

To estimate the effects of my independent variables on my dependent variables, I begin by estimating a number of models with the following baseline form:

$$Concession_{i_t} = \alpha + \beta_1 Violence_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 Nonviolence_{i,t-1} + \zeta \boldsymbol{X_{i,t-1}} + \epsilon_i \tag{1}$$

Where $\boldsymbol{X}$ is a matrix of control variables and ζ is a corresponding vector of coefficients. The main parameters of interest are β_1 and β_2, which represent the marginal effect of an increase in violence and nonviolence in the previous year on a concession, respectively. Violence and nonviolence are lagged one year because concessions required metropolitan deliberation and the formation of policy, and were rarely granted immediately after resistance occurred. Standard errors are clustered at the colony.

I begin by estimating four models: a logit model, a normal linear model with colony fixed effects where the dependent variable is a binary indicator for whether any concession occurred, a normal

linear model with an ordinal dependent variable measuring the size of a concession, and an ordinal logit model with the same dependent variable. Later, I estimate a Bayesian hierarchical model with observations grouped by the colony to account for dependence between observations within a colony and to explore heterogeneous effects. Whenever the dependent variable is a concession, cubic polynomials are included to control for temporal dependence (Carter and Signorino, 2010). The unit of analysis for all models is the colony-year.

These results are presented in Table 1. Across models, specifications, and measures of the dependent variable, violence is a statistically significant positive predictor of a concession, while nonviolence is not. This provides evidence for Hypothesis 1 but does not provide evidence for Hypothesis 2.

	Dependent variable:			
	Concession (Binary)		Concession (Ordered)	Concession (Ordered)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Violence	0.390**	0.061**	0.131**	0.406**
	(0.181)	(0.027)	(0.060)	(0.166)
Nonviolence	−0.034	0.008	0.009	−0.016
	(0.174)	(0.027)	(0.068)	(0.163)
Physical Violence Index	0.747	0.665*	1.707**	0.744***
	(0.490)	(0.325)	(0.683)	(0.012)
Freedom of Expression	−0.006	0.076	0.175	0.021
	(0.113)	(0.062)	(0.126)	(0.103)
Educational Equality	0.069	0.071	0.172	0.033
	(0.115)	(0.047)	(0.114)	(0.114)
Model	Logit	OLS	OLS	Ordered Logit
Observations	1,058	1,058	1,058	1,058
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 1: This table shows the results of logit, OLS, and ordered logit models where the dependent variable captures whether a colony receives a concession, and its size. The main independent variables measure the level of violence and nonviolence in the colony. Standard errors are clustered at the colony.

To understand the size of the effect of violence on a concession, Figure 3 presents the predicted probabilities for Model 1 in Table 1.

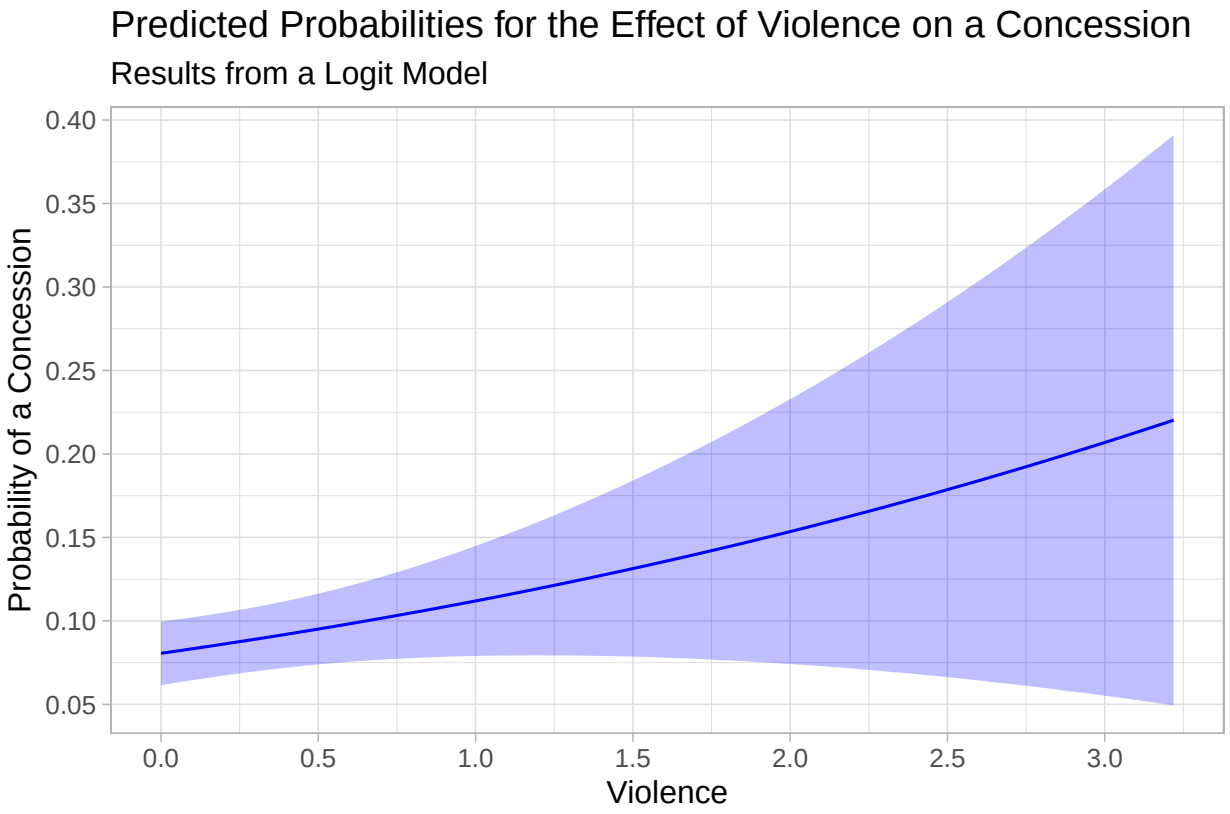

Figure 3: This plot shows the probability of a concession occurring in the following year as a function of violence. When violence is low, there is about a 7.5% chance of a concession occurring. When violence increases from 0 to 2, the chance of a concession doubles.

My specified theoretical mechanism linking resistance to concessions is metropolitan involvement. The theorized causal process is that resistance in the colonies leads the metropole to discuss events in those colonies, and when the metropole is more likely to discuss colonial issues, they are more likely to respond to this issues with concessions. This also enables the analysis of data that is more fine-grained than the colony-year.

Table 2 shows the results of models estimating the effect of violence and nonviolence on the amount of discussion of that colony by the cabinet. Both the independent and dependent variables are logged to account for skewness. The unit of analysis is the colony-month. The results show that violence in the previous month predicts the level of cabinet discussion in the subsequent month, while no such effect is present for nonviolence. This pattern holds when the variable measuring levels of violence and nonviolence are lagged by two months. Year fixed effects ensure that the

comparisons are made within the same year. These results provides evidence for Hypothesis 3 but does not provide evidence for Hypothesis 4. Additional results are presented in the appendix. In Section A3, I explore how the effect of resistance changes over time. Those results show that the effect of violent resistance increases steadily over time.

	Dependent variable:	
	Cabinet Discussion	
	(1)	(2)
Violence (t-1)	0.188***	0.157***
	(0.055)	(0.040)
Nonviolence (t-1)	0.094	0.071
	(0.069)	(0.050)
Violence (t-2)		0.072**
		(0.032)
Nonviolence (t-2)		0.075
		(0.065)
Observations	13,286	13,262
R^2	0.130	0.138
Adjusted R^2	0.124	0.132
Residual Std. Error	0.172 (df = 13198)	0.171 (df = 13172)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 2: This table shows the results of models where the independent variables are measures of violent and nonviolent activity within a colony and the dependent variable is the level of discussion in the British Cabinet about the colony. The unit of analysis is the colony-month. Measures of activity are lagged by one (t-1) and two (t-2) months. Both models include colony and year fixed effects with standard errors clustered at the colony.

7.1 Exploring Heterogeneity Across Colonies

Britain's relationship to its colonies varied. To explore the heterogeneity in the effect of violence on a concession, I estimate a Bayesian hierarchical logit model where the independent variables are allowed to vary by colony. This also accounts for within-colony dependence between observations, rather than treat each observation independently. The main parameters of interest is the general

and colony-specific effects of violence on a concession. These parameters are jointly estimated, with the population parameter being an mixture of all the colony-specific parameters. The results of this model are presented in Figure 4.

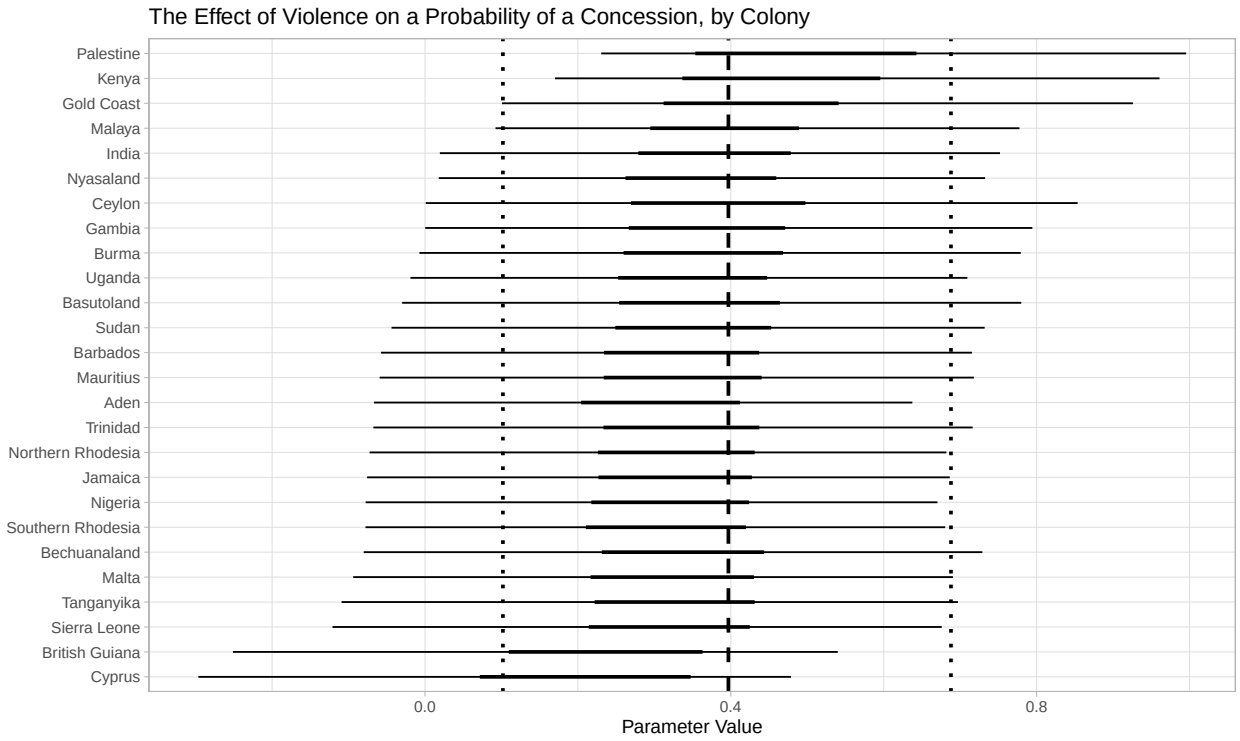

Figure 4: This caterpillar plot shows the results of a Bayesian hierarchical logit model where the observations are clustered within each colony. The plot shows the colony-specific coefficient estimate of the effect of violence on a concession. The horizontal bold line indicates the 50% posterior density interval while the thinner line indicates the 95% posterior density interval. We see that violence was most effective in Palestine, Kenya, and the Gold Coast, while violence had little effect in Cyprus and British Guiana.

The left-hand side lists the colonies in deceasing order of the parameter values, with Palestine at the top, indicating that violence in Palestine predicted a concession more than in any other colony. At the bottom is Cyprus. The dashed vertical line indicates the mode of the posterior distribution of the population level effect of violence on a concession, while the dotted lines indicate the 95% bounds of the posterior interval. These effects are in line with the frequentist logit models estimated in Table 1.

These results show that there was important heterogeneity in the effects of violence on conces-

sions, especially for colonies that experienced a sustained violent conflict, like Cyprus and Palestine. These findings are consistent with the historiographical literature detailing Britain's hasty abandonment of Palestine in the face of a violent insurgency (Hoffman, 2016) and Britain's unwillingness to grant concessions in the face of violence in Cyprus due to the island's perceived strategic importance (Rappas, 2014).

8 Robustness Checks

In the Appendix I present models, showing similar results, using alternative measures of violence and nonviolence constructed from the British parliamentary debates. In addition, use the corpus of newspaper articles on anticolonial resistance to manually code the level of resistance in each colony. For this measure, I create an ordinal variable ranging from 0-2, with 0 indicating no resistance, 1 indicating sporadic resistance (a single strike or riot in a colony during a given year) and 2 indicating mass resistance. These results also show that violence is a significant predictor of concessions. These models are presented in Section A1 in the Appendix. Below, I detail additional robustness checks.

8.1 Measurement Error Models

The data used to construct the measures of anticolonial resistance rely on newspaper reporting. This creates a number of biases that may affect the inferences made from the statistical models. This is a common problem. More contemporary event data using newspaper reports often suffers from undercounting bias (Hendrix and Salehyan, 2015). In other words, there are events that occur that do not get reported on, and thus never enter into the datasets used by researchers. Not all events that do not get reported are the same. A mass demonstration with tens of thousands of participants will likely get some coverage, but more routine and smaller events will get ignored.

One of the advantages of using newspaper data is that the biases are generally well known (Weidmann, 2015). This enables the use of statistical models that account for these different biases and to see how the main effect behaves as these biases change. Standard regression models assume that there is no measurement error in the independent variable. This is almost always a naive assumption. In this section, I present the results of Bayesian measurement error models that relax

this assumption in ways that account for the likely biases of newspaper reporting about the British Empire.

Bayesian measurement error models replace variables where no data exists with probability distributions. The most basic measurement error model replaces the mismeasured independent variable with a normally distributed variable centered around the true value with some added noise. Equation 2 presents this formally:

$$X_{meas} \rightarrow \mathcal{N}(X_{real}, \sigma^2) \tag{2}$$

This simple model can be extended to account for more complex bias patterns. For the current application, research on reporting bias sheds light on the type of bias present in the models. The most probable source of bias is differential reporting of violent and nonviolent resistance. This bias occurs when nonviolent resistance is more likely to be underreport and ignored by the Times of London than violent resistance.

I create a Bayesian measurement error model that accounts for underreporting and estimate it using the Stan language (Stan Development Team, 2018). The code for the model is included in Section A6. I first examine how the general tendency to underreport nonviolence more than violence affects affects parameter estimates in the baseline logit model.[4] To do this, I introduce an additional parameter into the measurement error model in Equation 2, γ, which represents the degree of undercounting the true distribution of resistance.

$$X_{meas} \rightarrow \mathcal{N}(\gamma X_{real}, \sigma^2) \tag{3}$$

When $\gamma = 1$, there is no underreporting, and when $\gamma = 0$, underreporting is so severe that no events get recorded at all. When $\gamma = 0.5$, half the true events are reported and entered into the dataset. The parameter σ^2, is the standard deviation of the measurement model. This can more intuitively be interpreted as "random noise". I set this at 0.125. I then vary the value of γ to see how the parameter estimates change for different levels of undercounting.

[4]To facilitate the distribution of the posterior distribution, I scale and standardize all variables.

The estimated effect of violent and nonviolent resistance at different values of γ are presented in Figure 5. The x-axis is the , or γ. When γ is one, there is no undercounting. An interesting exercise is to examine the relative parameter values across different values of γ for each independent variable. For example, the effect of violent resistance on a concession is about 1.125 when $\gamma = 0.50$, which is still higher than the effect of nonviolent resistance when there is no undercounting at all ($\gamma = 1.0$). This provides evidence that different rates of undercounting the different independent variables are not driving the main results.

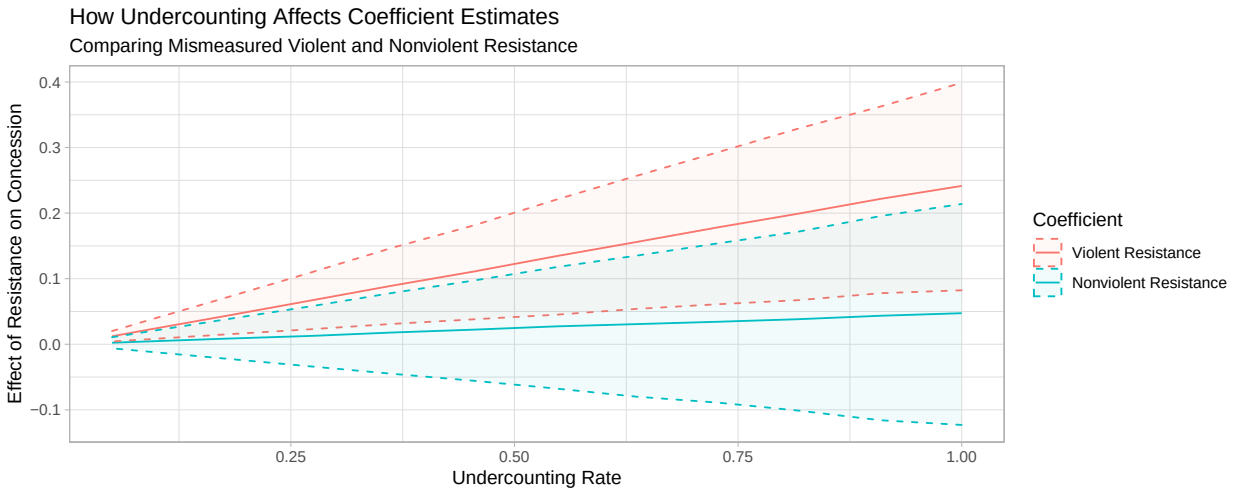

Figure 5: The plot shows how the coefficient for violent and nonviolent resistance changes as a function of the undercounting rate parameter γ. The shaded area indicates the 95% posterior density interval. When γ is 1, there is no undercounting and when γ is 0 no acts of resistance get reported at all. The effect of both violence and nonviolence on a concession attenuates as undercounting increases. Violence has a positive effect on a concession even if half of the violent events that occur enter into the dataset.

Bias driven by newspaper reporting likely varies across colonies and time. In times when there is more interest in the events of a colony, measurement error should decrease. To account for this, I create a colony-year measurement of newspaper coverage using the Times of London database. This is created by performing a search of all newspaper articles with the colony name listed as a keyword and then extracting the number of news articles with that keyword per year. I then scale this measure to make it range from 0 to 1. This data is then multiplied by the discount rate, γ. In effect this means that γ varies by the colony-year, and undercounting is higher when there is

lower newspaper reporting. I then estimate this model with varying values for σ^2 to see how the parameter values change when γ is driven by colony-year variation in newspaper reporting and to see how increased random measurement error affects the estimate of the effect of violence on a concession.

The results are presented in Figure 6. As σ^2 increases, the uncertainty bands increase as well along with the effect size. This is as expected, since measurement error induces attenuation bias. The main takeaway is that even if random measurement error is quite high, and even if the tendency to undercount violence varies from year-to-year in each colony as newspaper coverage increases, the effect of violence on a concession remains positive and statistically distinguishable from zero.

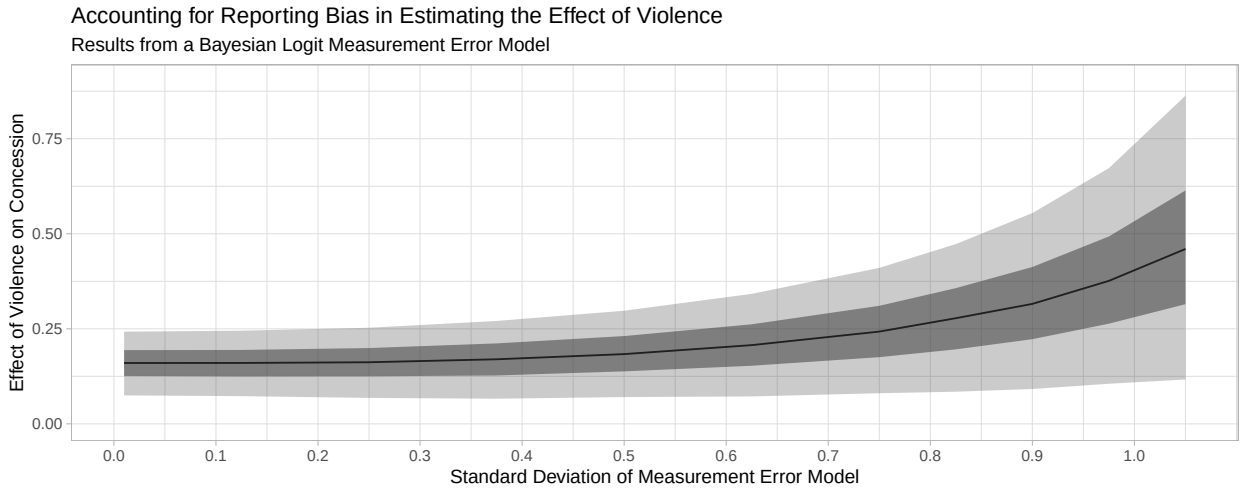

Figure 6: This plot shows the posterior distribution of the coefficient for the effect of violent resistance on a concession in a Bayesian logit measurement error model. The light shaded area indicates the 95% posterior density interval while the darker shaded area indicates the 50% posterior density interval. The measurement error varies at the colony-year with the number of newspaper reports of a colony by the Times of London. More newspaper reports capture lower measurement error. The x-axis indicates the standard deviation of the measurement error (akin to 'random noise'). Accounting for varying newspaper coverage, the effect of violence on a concession remains positive and statistically distinguishable from zero.

8.2 Verification with Casualty Data

To further support my claim that the newspaper data accurately reflects the level of violence and nonviolence in a colony, I validate these measures with administrative data on British Army deaths. I webscraped the Gro Army Death Indices from *https://www.findmypast.co.uk/*. The death indices

include the year, name, and location of death for every individual British Army member who died from 1881 to 1955. I aggregated each death to the year level to create a dataset on the number of casualties in each year for each colony. The data are presented in Figure A2 in the Appendix.

The casualty data is not affected by reporting bias at all since it is collected from administrative records. This enables us to validate the measures of violence and nonviolence driven by newspaper reporting. If the casualty data are correlated with the measures of violence, and not correlated with the measures of nonviolence, then this should increase confidence in the data and resulting model estimates, with a caveat: the data do not measure the same underlying concept. Violent anticolonial resistance includes acts that result in property damage and deaths of settlers, British colonial officials who are not members of the military, and deaths of other native colonial officials. The British casualty data includes all army servicemen who die while serving abroad—including those who die of disease or accidentally (automobile accidents were quite common, especially in Palestine). The relevant point here is that if both data sources are completely free of error, we should not expect a perfect correlation between the two.

Regressing violence and nonviolence on the log of the number of casualties shows that violence and casualties rates are positively correlated, while nonviolence and casualty rates are not. The result of these models are presented in Table 3.

	Dependent variable:	
	Violence	Nonviolence
	(1)	(2)
Army Deaths	0.151***	0.021
	(0.020)	(0.021)
Nonviolence	0.349***	
	(0.032)	
Violence		0.365***
		(0.033)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 3: This table shows the marginal effect of an increase in a British casualty during a colonial conflict on the measure of anticolonial violence coded from newspapers. Because they are right-skewed, all measures are logged. Colony fixed effects are included. Higher casualties are positively associated with the measure on violence. No effect exists when nonviolence is the dependent variable. This provides evidence that the newspaper data is able to discriminate between anticolonial violence and nonviolence.

9 Conclusion

I have argued that violent resistance in the British colonies during the 20th century encouraged the colonial state to grant concessions to the colonies. The results here show that violence is more effective at resisting imperialism. There is a consistent null effect of nonviolent resistance on the probability of a metropolitan concession to a colony. The mechanism linking resistance to concessions is metropolitan discussion and involvement, which reacted more to violent resistance than nonviolent resistance.

My theoretical framework attempts to make sense of how the British Empire actually functioned, and how activity in the colonies led to metropolitan involvement. Understanding metropolitan involvement is important because the metropole was in charge of concessions that reformed the constitution or increased native representation. Smaller-scale concessions, such as wage increases or tax relief, remained the province of the colonial governor. Overseas empires have a common structure where local officials manage the day-to-day operations of the colonies and metropolitan involvement in local governance varies spatially and temporally. This matters for understanding how and when resistance by colonial subjects shapes policy.

What are the scope conditions of this theory? To answer this question it is important to

decouple the dynamics of imperial expansion and contraction (Abernethy, 2000). Briefly, this theory only applies to an era of imperial decline. That is, when imperial retrenchment and withdrawal are realistic policy options and the goal of metropolitan policymakers is to reduce their colonial commitments. When empires are seeking to expand, anticolonial resistance can be used a pretext to more aggressive repression and the formalization of control over colonial subjects. This pattern occurred in the British Empire during the 19th century after the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica and the Indian Mutiny. In both cases, these rebellions resulted in significant metropolitan discussion (Gopal, 2019). Metropolitan policy, however, did not result in concessions, but resulted in making Jamaica a Crown Colony and assuming control from the British East India company.

While the focus has been on the British Empire, similar dynamics apply to other imperial projects. In the French Empire, nonviolence was often futile. When the Algerians practiced nonviolence, the French responded with repression (Clayton, 2014). Violence both threatened the core interests of the French in Algeria and catapulted the FLN onto the world stage (Connelly, 2002). Not all empires shared a clear division between the metropole and periphery as there was in the modern European overseas empires. The land-based Russian Empire, for example, lacked any clear metropole and the various nationalities in the periphery made up the ruling class (Kumar, 2019).

This study has a number of limitations that can be addressed in future work. The data on violent and nonviolent resistance is culled from British newspapers. One advantage of this approach is that it ensures that the metropole is aware, or at least could be aware of unrest within the colonies. In addition, data on unrest from colonial archives would suffer from other reporting biases since many reports containing information on resistance were compiled by subordinates and sent up the chain of command. Too much reported unrest suggests a poor performing colonial official. Of course, not every act of resistance was covered in the press. Many of the foreign correspondents were located in the colony's capital or other large cities. Presumably, acts of resistance in the hinterlands were less likely to be reported by these correspondents, thus making it less likely for these acts to be discussed by the metropole and to have a meaningful effect on policy. A full model of what types of unrest were reported by the press and by colonial officials could significantly advance our understanding of when resistance is effective and the inner workings of colonial empires.

The finding that violence was more effective than nonviolence at coercing concessions raises important implications for understanding the fall of the European empires during the 20th century. Explanations abound for the global transition from empire to the nation (Emerson, 1962). Much of this work has focused on variation in the timing of independence for colonies within and across empires (Spruyt, 2005). This work shows that the transition from colony to nation was not a rupture in hierarchical relations between states, rather it was a process where autonomy was slowly granted in response to violence. For many British colonies, independence was a formality, although this applies less to colonies engaged in a sustained campaign against colonial rule. The results here suggest that decolonization spanned the 20th century, accelerated after the end of World War II, and that violent anticolonial resistance played an important role in the decolonization process. The effectiveness of violence was not driven by the more commonly studied large-scale colonial conflicts, rather, concessions were also a response to low-level riots and unrest.

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