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# Fight the Power

## The Effect of Post-Election Anti-Government Action upon the Probability of Incumbent Replacement

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Robert Andersson

*Affiliation*

M.A Peace and Conflict Studies  
Postgraduate of the Department of Peace and  
Conflict Research, Uppsala University

### Abstract

This article investigates whether post-election anti-government actions increase the probability that incumbents will be removed from office. The theoretical argument is that the anti-government groups can choose to use violent or non-violent methods to force the government to make concessions, such as replacement of the incumbent. Both violence and non-violence are argued to have a positive effect on the probability of this to happen, with the latter likely to be stronger. Thus, the first hypothesis argues that *anti-government violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced*. This is complemented by a second hypothesis, stating that *anti-government non-violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced more than anti-government violent action does*. Applying a logistic regression on 550 national elections in states with a democratization process or hybrid regime, compiled from the National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) and Electoral Contention And Violence (ECAV) datasets, the first hypothesis is not supported due to lack of statistical significance across the regression models. The second hypothesis is supported, as the independent variable *non-violent action* receives statistically significant results, but these do not hold in the robustness test. Considering the suggestions from previous literature, the results indicate that non-violence is the more successful option of action for anti-government actors, but it cannot be concluded with certainty.

**Key words:** *electoral violence, anti-government, opposition, post-election*



## Introduction

Democracy can be regarded as a relatively peaceful form of governance, as it essentially is a system for non-violent conflict management. The acceptance of different political views reduces the motivation to resolve conflicts by violent means. At the same time, the transition period to create a consolidated democracy is often violent and unstable. Democratic institutions are new and weak, while autocratic groups or personas might remain in power or strive for it (Mansfield & Snyder, 2009). The strength of a democratic system is commonly measured by how free and fair popular elections of leaders and parliaments are, but the process of democratization often carries a high risk of electoral fraud in different forms. With high stakes of influence, some groups can be ready to commit electoral fraud or violence to win (Birch et al., 2020; van Ham & Lindberg, 2015).

Electoral violence, as a subtype of political violence, is the use of threat, indirect or direct violence against individuals, voting material, candidates, or the electoral institutions, with the aim of influencing the electoral process or the electoral outcome. Electoral violence can occur before an election, on the election day, or after the election (Birch et al., 2020). In the pre-election phase, the incumbent or government is often the main perpetrator or instigator, with the aim to intimidate and deter the opposition from voting or sometimes to displace potential opposition voters. While increasing the incumbent's chances of short-term electoral victory, scholars emphasize that it also increases the risk of political backlash and anti-government action in the post-election phase (Andersson, 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016).

Election fraud and violence are a form of harassment against a large part of the population at a specific point in time, to be compared with other oppressive measures which more often target individuals or particular groups. As more people are affected simultaneously, the collective action problem is reduced and a greater part of the population may participate in anti-government actions (Tucker, 2007).

The participants of collective protest move-

ments have two main means of action to choose from, violent- or non-violent action, each of which can lead to different dynamics and outcomes. Some movements manage to attract large numbers of participants, sometimes resulting in international actors pressuring the government to make concessions. Other movements cripple under repression from the government, and in other situations, escalate into civil war (della Porta et al., 2018).

While all types of methods that a movement can choose to employ have a potential to force incumbents to give concessions of power, non-violent movements have been found to be more efficient in social movement protests. However, this insight does not address the post-election phase specifically (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). Furthermore, the existing literature is seldom able to discern in which circumstances the anti-government actions actually have an effect and which methods of violent or non-violent actions actually benefit the opposition (Andersson, 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008; Tucker, 2007).

In the post-election phase, it is still uncertain how the choice of violence or non-violence affects the prospect of various outcomes, leading to the research question: *Do post-election anti-government actions lead to increased probability of the incumbent being replaced?*

This question is analyzed using quantitative statistical regression using data on national elections from the National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021), and Electoral Contention and Violence (ECAV) (Daxecker et al., 2019a; 2019b) datasets. Within the analysis, anti-government and pro-government events are divided into violent and non-violent events. In addition, two indicators for fraud are added. The unit-of-analysis is *election*, upon which the number of violent and non-violent events are counted.

The analysis of the 550 post-election protests identified in the data provides results that are largely consistent with findings of the previous literature on general political protests and movements (Svensson et al., 2022; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). While anti-government vi-



olent action does not achieve statistical significance, non-violence does and thus seems to possibly have an impact on the incumbent's probability of being replaced. However, the significance does not pass the robustness test with log-transformed variables, whereby no strong credible conclusions can be drawn. Since the lack of statistical significance may be caused by multicollinearity in the data, further studies are needed to answer the research question with greater certainty.

## Theory

### *Literature Review*

#### *Electoral violence, fraud, and general consequences*

The aim of electoral violence is often political exclusion; from the candidacy, election information, electoral victory or even participation itself. The acts of violence can occur both before and at any point during an election, be perpetrated by any actor and include threats, direct and indirect violence against individuals, voting material, candidates, or the electoral institution (Birch et al., 2020). Electoral violence is particularly prevalent in countries undergoing democratic transition, where the electoral institutions and norms are still weak and where the outcome has high stakes (Anderson & Mendes, 2006; Birch et al., 2020; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016).

Election-related violence often results in compromised citizen participation in the electoral process, suppressed free speech, and eroded trust in the state (Birch et al., 2020). Paradoxically, pre-election violence appears to increase the likelihood that incumbents will win the election, despite the high costs of destruction and loss of life and the condemnation of voters. Often, the incumbent is the primary instigator of violence in the pre-election phase, aiming at gaining vote shares by directly demobilizing the opposition (Andersson, 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016).

However, the use of violence in elections is by no means the only method of electoral meddling. Non-violent institutional manipulation and vote-

buying are two examples of techniques that are used as well. As institutional strength increases, cheap alternatives such as institutional manipulation become more difficult to carry out, so in this case vote-buying is increasingly used instead (van Ham & Lindberg, 2015).

#### *The pre-election source of post-election violence and protest*

The use of illegitimate methods to win an election can trigger post-election dynamics that make it difficult for the incumbent to remain in power (Andersson 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016). Often, incumbents are focused on the short-term goal of securing electoral victory and underestimate the risk of potential voter backlash and protests, if they incite violence (Rosenzweig, 2021).

The opposition often does not engage in protests or violence in the pre-election phase, as there still exists a possibility for the government to conduct a free and fair election. It is usually only after the election has been held and the evidence of fraud or violence becomes evident that protests most often erupt, as this is seen as the only way to influence the electoral outcome at that point (Hafner-Burton et al., 2016). Often, the opposition seems to be more prone to protest when they lose the election, rather than when they win. Under those circumstances, the tables seem to turn and the losing incumbent's supporters become the protestors (Anderson & Mendes, 2006).

Daxecker (2012) found that the risk of post-election protests and violence increases when election observers report on pre-electoral fraud and violence instigated by incumbents. This is theorized to be due to observers being perceived as a trustworthy neutral party providing reliable information (Daxecker, 2012). When disaggregating the post-election violence data by perpetrator, more dynamic relations between pro-government forces and anti-government opposition groups become apparent. The use of military or police equipment, methods, and insignia by incumbent governments often leads to accusations of repressive violence by election observers. This increases the risk of international



condemnation. Therefore, the presence of non-fraudulent election observers reduces the repressive measures of the government. Opposition leaders, on the other hand, can more easily evade responsibility by blaming individual vigilantes.

However, when fraud is reported by the observers, both the government and the opposition are more likely to engage in violence (Smidt, 2016). It is important to note here that it does not seem that electoral fraud itself triggers protest and violence, but rather the certainty and prevalence of the belief that fraud has occurred (Tucker, 2007). This is supported by Savoca (2017), who emphasizes that trust in the democratic system and institutions reduces the risk of post-election violence (Savoca, 2017).

Post-election protests can force incumbents to make costly concessions, creating a signaling game of resolve between the government and opposition. This, in turn, may lead to the incumbent being challenged by other actors, for example through international pressure in the form of sanctions imposed by other states or facing the threat of military coups (Hafner-Burton et al., 2016). For instance, it has been noted that military coups in pluralistic political systems often take place in the post-election phase when the election results show that the winner does not receive sufficient support (Rozenas & Zeigler, 2019).

#### *Anti-government action: violence and non-violence*

Government harassment or violence in everyday life is usually directed against individuals or particular groups. Opposing the regime therefore holds great individual risks, while the chances of bringing about lasting and systematic change are low. In fraudulent elections, however, the entire population is simultaneously experiencing oppression. This can lead to many people demonstrating their dissent simultaneously, reducing the personal risk of punishment. Thereby, the collective action problem can be overcome (Tucker, 2007).

Within large protest movements, a decision on the method must be made. Most collective actions begin non-violently and may later

turn violent due to conflict dynamics. The outbreak of violence is fostered by background factors such as political destabilization and indiscriminate policing, followed by deterioration of security for the population. Thereafter, the activation of military networks, a spiral of revenge, and justifications of violence can emerge (della Porta et al., 2018, pp. 23-46).

It has furthermore been found that group composition can have an influence on the choice of method. In centralized groups, moderates in leadership positions can keep radicals on the side, thus controlling violent outbursts. In decentralized groups, there is a higher risk that radicals will take control, which in turn can increase the potential for violence (Daxecker, 2009).

#### *Success and failure of anti-governmental action*

Svensson, Schaftenaar and Allansson (2022) found that anti-governmental violent protest concerning the government, and not territorial issues, achieved their demands fully in 35.7% of cases, partially in 9.5% of cases and failed to gain any concessions in 54.8% of cases, controlling for effects occurring within twelve months after the protest event. However, the dataset uses a relatively high threshold for data inclusion, requiring 25 directly related deaths to occur within a conflict-dyad during one calendar year (Svensson et al., 2022). It is reasonable to assume that the dataset of violent political protest therefore excludes many cases of protests that were characterized by electoral violence but did not reach the mark of 25 direct deaths (Birch et al., 2020; Svensson et al., 2022).

Maria Stephen and Erica Chenoweth (2008) have found that non-violent social movements and protests, including election-related protests, can exert high pressure on governments to make concessions by disrupting societal functioning without threatening the physical well-being of government members. At the same time, the risk of domestic and international backlash increases if a government chooses to repress a non-violent movement by force, leading to reduced popular support and possibly sanctions. Violent campaigns can also force concessions, but are less



able to gain support among the general population and may even cause other states to support the government (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). Chenoweth further finds that half of all non-violent revolutions worldwide between 1900 and 2019 have been successful, while only 26% of violent campaigns resulted in success (Chenoweth, 2021, pp. 1-26).

### **Research Gap and Question**

Most research has so far focused on the pre-election phase and assumed the government to be the instigator, but new studies have nuanced this picture (Birch et al., 2020). The separation of instigators between pro-government and anti-government has made clear that while the incumbent is often the perpetrator of violence in the pre-election phase, the opposition may respond with mass protests or other actions in the post-election phase that might sometimes be violent (Andersson, 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016).

Several studies suggest that these protests or other actions, such as coups, are a cause for concern for incumbents who have committed fraud or violence, as they may be forced to make concessions or resign. However, these studies rarely identify the circumstances under which anti-government actions actually have an effect, and which method, violent or non-violent, actually benefits the opposition (Andersson, 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016; Tucker, 2007).

Other studies suggest that violent anti-governmental action in a general setting can cause the government to make full or partial concessions (Svensson et al., 2022). However, the effects of non-violent action are much stronger in reaching concessions while also reducing the risk of successful violent repression by the government (Chenoweth, 2021; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008).

However, these findings are made without situational context, and the specific post-electoral environment may provide specific circumstances that change the suggested dynamics. In summary, there is a gap in academic knowledge concerning the specific effects that anti-governmental action, violent and non-violent,

can have in the post-election phase. Therefore, the aim and contribution of this article is to fill this gap by answering the research question: *Do post-election anti-government actions lead to increased probability of the incumbent being replaced?*

### **Theoretical Argument**

#### *Key concepts*

The *post-election phase* does not have a specific time limit but begins immediately after the ballot offices have closed. Events related to the election outcome can occur over a long time span, but to separate it from general political events, there must be a direct link to the election rather than only a resentment towards the government. Thus, the post-election phase usually ends when it is no longer possible to prevent the election winner from taking office (Birch et al., 2020; Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021).

Previous literature has interchangeably used various phrasings to describe the pro-government side in a dichotomous division between actors in the electoral situation, using words such as incumbent, government, or electoral winner. In many articles, the incumbent tends to be described as the direct perpetrator or instigator of electoral violence. However, as Andersson (2023) points out, it is often far from certain that the incumbent is in control of the violence or other actions of his or her supporters, even if benefiting from it. Therefore, in this article, all actors who work towards the benefit of the government or the incumbent are labeled *pro-government*, regardless of how controlled or uncontrolled these actors are.

Similarly, all actors whose actions benefit the opposition are to be described as *anti-government*. It is often difficult to assign the role of instigator to specific parties, groups or leaders, especially as the actual decision-maker of violence or protest might keep their distance from the actions in order to avoid being credibly blamed for eventual damage (Smidt, 2016).

The term *violence* in this article is derived from the definition of electoral violence used by Birch, Daxecker and Höglund (2020), which in-



cludes all actions ranging from threats to direct and indirect violence against individuals, voting material, candidates, or the electoral institution. Thus, *non-violent* electoral action means all actions that do not use threats, direct or indirect violence, but still aim at influencing individuals, candidates, or the electoral institution. The most common and discussed type of

non-violent anti-government action is peaceful protest. However, all acts of public mobilization in the context of electoral competition to challenge or influence the election outcome are included (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008; della Porta et al., 2018; Daxecker et al., 2019a; Chenoweth, 2021, pp. 1-26).

**Table 1**  
*Illustration of Actors and Methods*

Method	Anti-government actor	Pro-government actor
<b>Violent method</b>	Anti-government violence	Pro-government violence
<b>Non-violent method</b>	Anti-government non-violence	Pro-government non-violence

The dependent variable of the research question is *probability of incumbent being replaced*. The use of the term *probability* is discussed in the chapter *Research Design*. But the use of the term *incumbent* instead of *pro-government* is of importance here. Pro-government, as mentioned above, refers to the entire spectrum of more or less controlled actors who are on the side of the government when committing their various actions. However, it is not these groups that the anti-government actions are often directed against. It is the incumbent whose replacement they seek, thus, the phrasing *incumbent* is necessary to use.

Lastly, the dependent variable aims to capture the chances that the anti-government actions lead to the incumbent being *replaced*. This article focuses on elections in which the incumbent won, therefore reasons of the normal procedure for a change of leadership are excluded. A change of leadership can be explained by a variety of statements; for example, the incumbent can claim to be voluntarily stepping down from power rather than as a result of demonstrations. It is not always possible to deduce the true reasons for the change of leadership. This article therefore aims to find a correlation between the occurrence of anti-government actions and the likelihood of a change of leadership in the post-election phase.

#### *Post-election dynamics and causal mechanism*

In a post-election setting, the anti-governmental actors can choose to express their

discontent either with violent or non-violent methods. Their decision depends on several different circumstances. Usually, it begins with non-violent protests, which may be suppressed by the government in the context of political destabilization. This causes the security to deteriorate and the anti-government actors can activate military networks with skills and equipment for acts of violence. Once the movement has achieved the potential for violence it can now gain motivation for violence by spiraling revenge. Previous traumas or current repression often justify violence as self-defense (della Porta et al., 2018, pp. 23-46).

Of course, the government may decide to provide the opposition with concessions before activating military networks. However, if a situation has arisen in which the anti-government actors can choose between the use of violence and non-violence, the government can also choose to violently repress the opposition which, if successful, can stop any further anti-governmental action, thus halting the continuation of the causal mechanism (della Porta et al., 2018, pp. 23-46; AFP, 2021). If the government fails in its goal of the repressive measures and the anti-government groups decide to use violence, there is an increased risk that other states may support either the government or the opposition. Internally, support for the government can persist and the opposition may struggle to achieve mass mobilization. However, the opposition may still be able to force the government to make concessions (Svensson et al., 2022; Stephan &



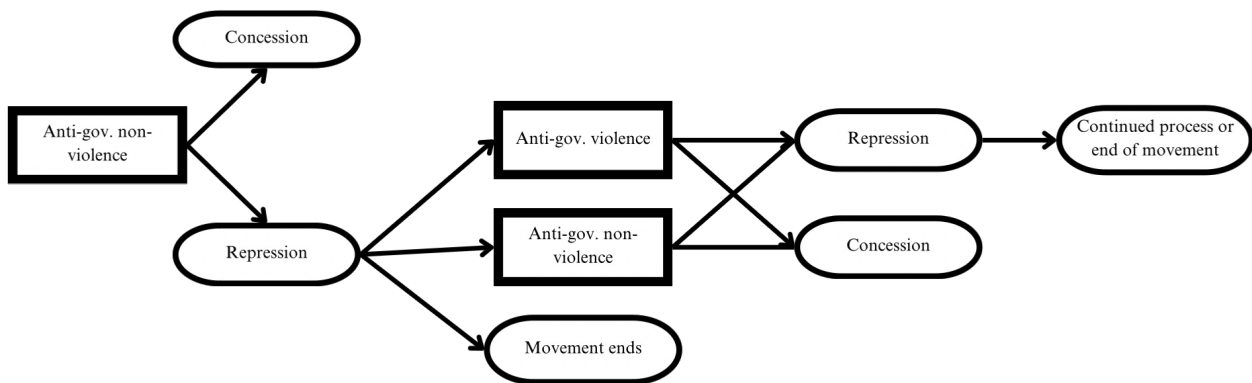
Chenoweth, 2008). Mass mobilization disrupts the functionality of society and often pushes the government to give concessions or abdicate from power (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008).

Schematically illustrated, a non-violent protest can arise and demand concessions. However, if the protests are suppressed, they can die out, remain non-violent, or turn into violent actions. If the protests remain non-violent, pre-

vious research suggests that concessions eventually can be granted (Chenoweth, 2021, pp. 1-26; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). But increased repression by the government can also cause the protest to fail (AFP, 2021). If the anti-government action turns violent, it can likewise be suppressed or force concessions.

**Figure 1**

*Schematic Map of Post-election Dynamics*

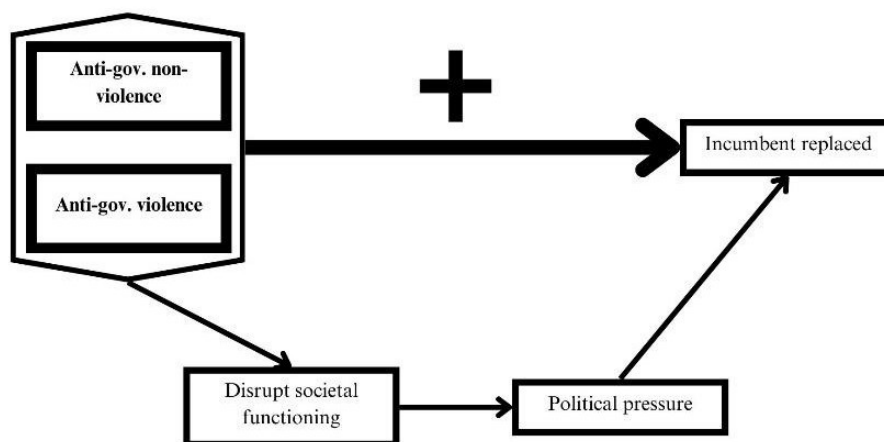


The final piece of the theoretical puzzle is how and through which causal mechanism anti-governmental actions force the government and incumbent to make concessions. Previous literature argues that non-violent protests can disrupt everyday functioning of society and create political awareness. This builds political pressure and attention on how the government reacts. Fur-

thermore, widespread protests demonstrate dissatisfaction and lack of support for the government. This, in turn, can increase the risk of military coups. Repression, especially of non-violent movements, can also lead to international pressure and condemnation (della Porta et al., 2018; Svensson et al., 2022; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008).

**Figure 2**

*Illustration of the Causal Mechanism*



*Concessions* is a broad concept that can include many different types of political measures

taken by the government to appease the opposing actor, in this case the anti-government side,



and end the political pressure and societal disruption (della Porta et al., 2018). Replacing the incumbent is only one type of concession, but it should not be taken for granted that this is always the goal of the anti-government groups. However, in the post-election phase after incumbent electoral victory, and in a situation where resentment has led people to participate in anti-government actions, it can often be assumed that at least one of the goals is to replace the incumbent. Thus, if the incumbent is replaced following anti-government action, it is considered that the goal has been achieved.

### *Main claim and hypotheses*

Following the theoretical argumentation above, the main claim of this article is that violent and non-violent anti-government actions in the post-election setting increase the probability of the incumbent being replaced despite formally winning the election. This follows from the dynamics of the overall electoral process, in which the incumbent can, under certain circumstances, win by using electoral violence in the pre-election phase (Andersson, 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016). Thereafter, in the post-election phase, the opposition may use violence or non-violence to prevent the incumbent from remaining in power (Svensson et al., 2022; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). As explained above, scholars assume that non-violent protest against the government can have a stronger influence on the probability of the incumbent being replaced than violent protest (Chenoweth, 2021; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). Combined, these findings lead to the formulation of the two hypotheses:

**H1:** *Anti-government violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced.*

**H2:** *Anti-government non-violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced more than anti-government violent action does.*

### *Scope condition*

This article focuses on national elections in countries undergoing a democratic transition

process or at least countries with hybrid governance. It excludes consolidated democracies and autocracies without competitive elections. Consolidated democracies are excluded as the prevalence of electoral violence is very rare and electoral institutions usually enjoy high public trust. The eventual outbreak of electoral violence in democracies should not lead to results comparable to the violence in countries undergoing democratic transition (Daxecker et al., 2019a; 2019b; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016).

Autocracies that do not hold competitive elections are excluded from the theoretical explanation as well. In political systems where no real anti-government forces exist and opposition individuals or groups have no realistic possibility of gaining political influence through elections, the election result is less significant than in contexts with actual political competition. Accordingly, post-electoral violence is less likely in such countries, since the electoral process itself does not exert a decisive influence on political power relations. Furthermore, some of the countries lack active opposition actors altogether, which is why they are not relevant for the scope of this article (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021).

Additionally, only national elections are included, and the results can only be generalized to these. Local elections generally do not have the same level of influence on political power distribution and may trigger different dynamics than national elections (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021).

Furthermore, the results of this article can only be generalized to cases where the incumbent won the election. If the incumbent loses, at least some of the groups that were anti-government before the election become pro-government, which changes the group constellations and power dynamics in the post-election phase. This could also lead to protests and violence with a different agenda and goal. Groups that were anti-government before may aim to protect the power of the newly elected leader instead of replacing the incumbent. Furthermore, the incumbent could incite more violence after the election to deny the newly elected leader the seat of power. Post-election situations with incumbent loss are still of importance to research,





but it is not possible to include those cases in the setup of this study.

## Research Design

### Research Method

The applied research method is a quantitative cross-sectional statistical analysis, which is suitable for testing hypotheses with large-N data from a global environment and finding generalizable results on the dependent variable (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 92-102). Cross-sectional models provide results that may explain patterns found across a variety of cultural, ethnical, and political settings (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 92-94).

The unit-of-analysis in this article is *election*. This allows for aggregating the amount of violent and non-violent events occurring in each specific post-electoral phase and is based on the data structure of the National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) dataset (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021).

In this paper, a logistic regression model is used because the dependent variable (*probability of incumbent being replaced*) is dichotomous. The regression produces odds ratios coefficients, whose direction of effect and statistical significance can be read directly from the regression and easily interpreted (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 277-280).

### Datasets and Sample

The National Elections across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) dataset contains all national elections with voters from the population in almost all states worldwide. Thus, it excludes local elections, referendums, or elections within assemblies. It covers the time period from 1945 to 2020 and provides detailed information on the type of the election with 58 different variables (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021). For this article, data on the dependent variable and the control variables of electoral fraud are taken from the NELDA dataset. All elections in which opposition was not allowed (variable nelda3) as well as all elections in which the incumbent party lost (variable nelda24) were excluded from the

analysis (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021).

The Electoral Contention And Violence (ECAV) dataset provides information on incidents of electoral violence or other forms of contention, collected from news reports. However, it only includes the time period from 1990 to 2012 and covers countries with unconsolidated regimes that held competitive elections (Daxecker et al., 2019a; 2019b). The data from ECAV provides information for the two independent variables through the aggregation of actor-and-method-specific event data at each election, as well as the pro-government violent and non-violent action control variables.

This article solely aims to cover post-election events in competitive national elections in non-consolidated regimes, as described in the *Scope condition* section. These events are filtered out by comparing variables for the election date and event dates in the ECAV dataset. The ECAV dataset does not include consolidated democracies, counted as those countries that were members of the OECD in 1990. The only exception to this rule is Turkey, which is included.

The combination of both datasets and the described case selection process provides 550 elections from the time period 1990 to 2012. Not all of the included elections experienced post-election violence or protests, but when violence happened, the instigator of the event or the violence is detectable.

### Operationalization of Variables

The final data matrix includes 550 elections. The variables nelda3, “was opposition allowed” and nelda24, “did the incumbent’s party lose”, are used for data collection purposes only. The variable nelda11, which asks whether there were significant concerns before the election that it would not be free and fair, and nelda49, asking whether monitors refused to go to the election because they believed it would not be free and fair, indicate electoral fraud and serve as control variables. These will henceforth be referred to as *Pre-election fraud concerns* and *Monitor refusal*. Neither of these indicators is a perfect measure of *actual* fraud committed, nor a measure of the belief that fraud *did* occur, but rather the pre-



election belief that fraud *may* occur. While these indicators are not perfectly aligned with the objectives of this article, they are still considered the best available in the data sets used to obtain a rough measure of electoral fraud (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021).

Nelda39 indicating “was the incumbent replaced”, constitutes the indicator for the dependent variable and is renamed as *Incumbent Replaced* in the tables. Anti-government violent and non-violent action captures the independent variables, while the pro-government violent and non-violent action represents the controls for all events not committed by anti-government groups (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021). Finally, the anti-government and pro-government variables are log-transformed to prepare for robustness checks.

The indicator of the dependent variable, *Incumbent replaced*, asks the question whether the incumbent is replaced or not. Since only cases in which the incumbent won the election are included in the data, a typical situation would yield a “No” response. If the answer is “Yes”, the incumbent was replaced in the seat of power despite winning the election. The designation of the election winner is based on the official results, regardless of whether the results were a product of fraud or pre-election violence. One potential problem with the variable *Incumbent replaced* is that the indicator has no specific time limit. Therefore, it is difficult to take into account the period of time after the election in which the incumbent was replaced (Hyde & Marinov, 2012; 2021).

The indicators for the independent variables and the control variables for pro-government violent and non-violent action are separated and aggregated step by step. First, if the action was violent, the variable *ViolenceInitiator* indicates the aggressor, as read from the variables *Actor* and *Target*. If the event was non-violent and the direction of the event is known, the instigator is found in the *Actor* variable. Cases with an unknown instigator were discarded. Secondly, the number of events by pro- and anti-government groups and methods of action that occurred in each specific election is aggregated and counted (Daxecker et al., 2019a; 2019b).

The two variables for pro-government action, violence and non-violence, are separated and aggregated using the same method as for the independent variables. The goal is to control for the countering actions that a government or its supporters might take, that could potentially affect both the occurrence of further anti-government action, the type of anti-government action, or ultimately the likelihood of the incumbent being replaced.

Electoral fraud is a possible confounding variable. Previous studies show how it can affect anti-government violent and non-violent action by increasing the likelihood of anti-government action in the post-election phase (Daxecker, 2012; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016; Smidt, 2016). Electoral fraud affects the incumbent’s position of power in two related ways. First, it increases the incumbent’s chances of winning the election (Andersson, 2023; Hafner-Burton et al., 2016). Second, electoral fraud increases the incumbent’s willingness to use all possible instruments to remain in power in the event of violent and non-violent actions against the government (Smidt, 2016).

### **Robustness Test**

To ensure that the results of the regression analysis are not only due to the specific method used, a robustness test using log-transformed anti-government and pro-government variables is provided. In the main regression, the number of events of each differentiated type is aggregated and counted for each election. Thereby, the change in value between one and two events occurring is given the same importance as a change in value from 51 to 52 events.

However, it is possible that whether there is a change from 51 to 52 events is less important for the dynamics between the anti-government and pro-government sides than whether there is a change from one to two events. By log-transforming the variables, the change of lower values is given greater importance than a change in higher values. Therefore, it is a useful tool to control that the results are robust (Gerring, 2012, pp. 319-321; Powner, 2015, p. 167).



## Analysis

### Descriptive Statistics

#### Summary of variables

In the 550 elections recorded in the final data matrix, the incumbent was replaced in only 94, or 17%, of the cases and remained in office in the other 456 cases. The high number of cases in which the incumbent remained in power is reasonable since the incumbent won the election in every case. The key question is what happened in the 17% of cases where the incumbent was replaced despite electoral victory.

There was a slightly higher prevalence of anti-government non-violent events than anti-government violent events. Anti-government non-violent events reached a mean of 1.8 and a maximum number of 90 events per single election, compared to a mean of 1 and maximum number of 68 events per single election for anti-government violent events. In total, there were 537 events of anti-government violent action and 997 events of non-violent action. The variance

of the standard deviation was also higher for the anti-government non-violent variable than for the violent variable, reaching 7.5 and 5.3 respectively.

In the post-election period, there were fewer pro-government actions than anti-government actions. Violence reached a mean of 0.6 with a standard deviation of 2.7 and a maximum number of events per election of 38. Contrary to the pattern on the anti-government side, there were fewer non-violent events on the pro-government side. With a maximum of 25 events per election, the mean was 5.6 and the standard deviation was 2.3.

The variables for fraud show that in the majority of cases, there were no significant pre-election concerns about freedom and fairness, and in 89% of elections the international monitors did not refuse to observe the election because of concerns about freedom and fairness. In 44% of the cases, there were explicit concerns about the election outcome in this regard, but in only 5% of the elections were the concerns so severe that monitors refused to be present.

**Table 2**  
*Summary Statistics of Variables*

Variable	N	Mean	Sd	Min	Max
Antigov Violence	550	1	5.3	0	68
Antigov Nonviolence	550	1.8	7.5	0	90
Progov Violence	550	0.6	2.7	0	38
Progov Nonviolence	550	0.56	2.3	0	25
Incumbent replaced	550	-	-	-	-
... no	456	83%	-	-	-
... yes	94	17%	-	-	-
Pre-election fraud concerns	550	-	-	-	-
... no	293	53%	-	-	-
... unclear	13	2%	-	-	-
... yes	244	44%	-	-	-
Monitor refusal	550	-	-	-	-
... N/A	9	2%	-	-	-
... no	489	89%	-	-	-
... unclear	24	4%	-	-	-
... yes	28	5%	-	-	-

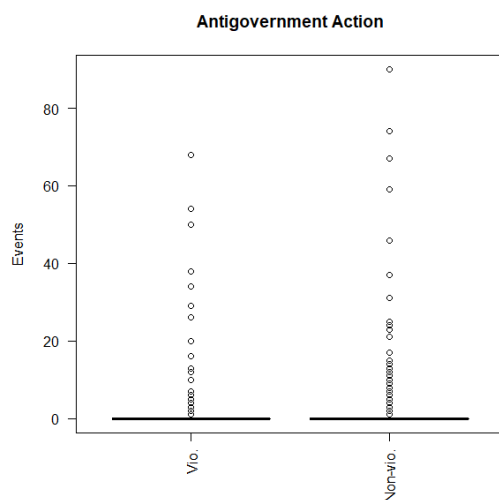


### *Covariation of the independent variables*

The independent variables of violent and non-violent anti-government action correlate to a certain extent. When non-violent actions occur and the pro-government forces use repression, it is not unlikely that at least parts of the anti-government groups may want to respond with violent measures (Birch et al., 2020; Svensson et al., 2022). The value distribution graphic below shows that in most elections there are no or only very few non-violent and violent events. Furthermore, there are only a few cases with more than 20 events. The distribution patterns of the two independent variables are also quite similar. A Pearson's correlation test between the variables shows a correlation value 0.26. This means that violence and non-violence display a certain positive correlation. When the value of one increases, the value of the other variable also increases. Thus, there might be a problem of multicollinearity in the regression, which can reduce the chances of achieving statistical significance because it is difficult to calculate which of the independent variables causes the effect on the dependent variable (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 263-270).

**Figure 3**

*Distribution Boxplot of Independent Variables*



### **Regression Analysis Results**

Three models are presented in the following regression analysis to illustrate the changes in

coefficients. The first model includes only the two independent variables to represent the overall correlation with the dependent variable. The second model includes the control variables of various violent and non-violent pro-government actions. The third model additionally includes the control variables for *fraud*, *pre-election fraud concerns* and *monitor refusal*.

Several important points should be noted regarding the independent variables. First, anti-government violent action does not reach statistical significance and should therefore not have a measurable and scientifically proven impact on the dependent variable of incumbent's probability to be replaced. Second, the sign of the anti-government violent action variable is inconsistent across the models, providing no clear evidence on the possible impact of violence. Thus, the first hypothesis, that anti-government violent action increases the probability of incumbent replacement, is not supported.

However, the independent variable of anti-government non-violent action achieves statistical significance at the 95% confidence level across all models. Since the coefficients are consistently above 1.0, the results suggest that non-violent actions by anti-government groups can have a positive impact on the probability that the incumbent will be replaced in the post-election phase: anti-government non-violent action thus seems to increase the incumbent's probability of being replaced compared to violent action. These results suggest that non-violent actions have a greater impact on the dependent variable than violent anti-government actions.

No statistical significance was reached for the control variables of pro-government action. It is therefore difficult to make suggestions about how pro-government violent or non-violent action might affect the political dynamics of the post-election phase. Two of the values of the control variables for fraud reached statistical significance and showed a negative sign. This suggests that concerns for fraud expressed before the election can reduce the likelihood of an incumbent to be replaced after election victory.



**Table 3**  
*Regression Table*

Variable	Probability incumbent replaced		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Intercept	0.194*** t = -13.778	0.199*** t = -13.412	0.618 t = -0.664
Antigov Violence	0.992 t = -0.342	1.010 t = 0.416	1.009 t = 0.341
Antigov Non-violence	1.032** t = 2.399	1.036** t = 2.227	1.040** t = 2.344
Progov Violence	- -	0.873 t = -1.249	0.889 t = -1.092
Progov Non-violence	- -	1.021 t = 0.291	1.020 t = 0.270
Pre-election fraud concerns - unclear	- -	-	1.256 t = 0.331
Pre-election fraud concerns - yes	- -	-	0.495*** t = -2.673
Monitor refusal - no	- -	-	0.414 t = -1.208
Monitor refusal - unclear	- -	-	0.085** t = -1.960
Monitor refusal - yes	- -	-	0.657 t = -0.470
Observations	550	550	550
Log Likelihood	-248.508	-247.161	-240.310
Akaike Inf. Crit.	503.016	504.322	500.619

\*p < 0.1, \*\*p < 0.05, \*\*\*p < 0.01

Note. Coefficients are odds ratios

### **Robustness Test - Log-transformed Variables**

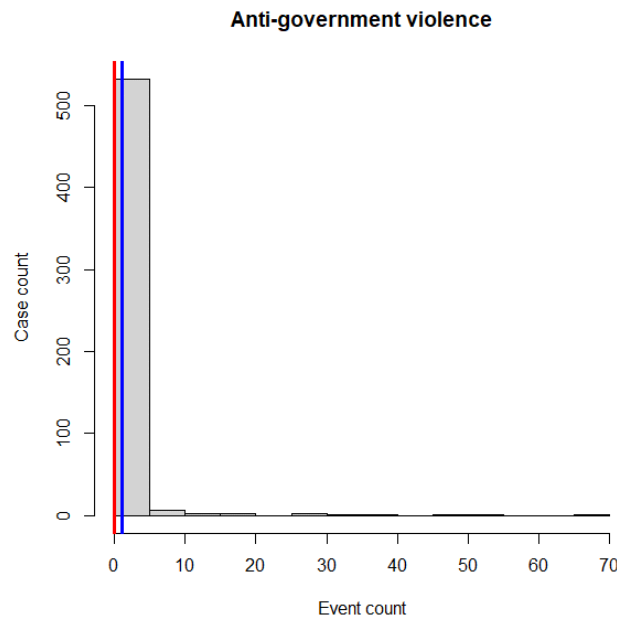
To ensure that the results of the main regression table are not only due to the specific method of measurement, a robustness test with log-transformed variables is conducted. The log-transformation of the variables *anti-government* and *pro-government action* follows the theoretical argument that the change in value from one event to two events is of more importance for the dependent variable than the change in value from higher numbers, such as from 51 to 52 (Ger-

ring, 2012, pp. 319-321; Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 277-280; Powner, 2015, p. 167). The data shows that the distribution of the variables of anti-government violent and non-violent action is skewed. Both show a high number of elections with no or very few events of each type. Only a handful of events exceed 20 events of each type. This is illustrated in the figures below, where the blue line represents the mean and the red line represents the median. This distribution pattern indicates that the change in low numbers

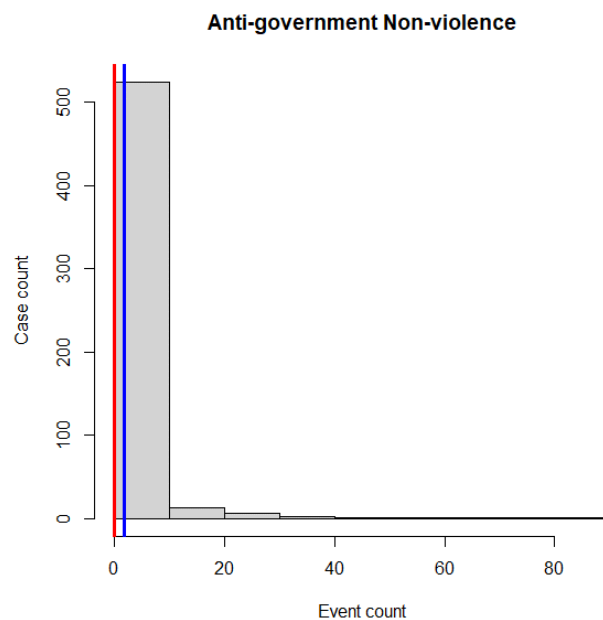


should be more important than the change in higher numbers. Therefore, log-transformation of the event variables is conducted in this robustness test.

**Figure 4**  
*Histogram Anti-government Violence*



**Figure 5**  
*Histogram Anti-government Non-violence*



When comparing the main regression table with the table from the log-transformed robustness test, several numbers are of great interest. While the signs of the independent anti-government variables are all positive, none of them achieve statistical significance at a confi-

dence level of 95% in any of the models. The only variable showing significance is *pre-election fraud concerns*, variable *nelda11*. Thus, according to this table, only concerns about election fraud negatively affects the incumbent’s probability of being replaced. The robustness test



shows that no certainty can be given that violent or non-violent events have an influence on the incumbent replacement.

**Table 4**  
*Robustness Test Regression Table*

Variable	Probability incumbent replaced		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Intercept	0.186*** t = -13.079	0.189*** t = -12.876	0.522 t = -0.885
Antigov Violence	1.289 t = 1.453	1.429* t = 1.813	1.408* t = 1.670
Antigov Non-violence	1.091 t = 0.591	1.154 t = 0.878	1.188 t = 1.035
Progov Violence	-	0.728 t = -1.088	0.773 t = -0.865
Progov Non-violence	-	0.993 t = -0.027	1.004 t = 0.014
Pre-election fraud concerns - unclear	-	-	1.240 t = 0.311
Pre-election fraud concerns - yes	-	-	0.495*** t = -2.698
Monitor refusal - no	-	-	0.463 t = -1.044
Monitor refusal - unclear	-	-	0.093* t = -1.875
Monitor refusal - yes	-	-	0.722 t = -0.362
Observations	550	550	550
Log Likelihood	-249.440	-248.722	-241.965
Akaike Inf. Crit.	504.880	507.443	503.931

\*p < 0.1, \*\*p < 0.05, \*\*\*p < 0.01

Note. Coefficients are odds ratios

### Limitations

The research method, the indicators, and theoretical assumptions lead to a number of limitations regarding the scientific certainty of this article.

First, due to the limited data available, the analysis only covers elections between 1990 and 2012. This relatively short time period could

have been marked by specific global or regional trends that have not been controlled for in this study.

Second, with the chosen research method, it is not possible to see a causal relationship between the independent and dependent variables, only a correlation. However, the suggested chronology of the events described in the *Theory* chapter



clearly suggests that the dependent variable of the incumbent being replaced should appear after the independent variables of anti-government violent and non-violent action. Furthermore, the causal mechanism presents a possible linkage between the variables. At the same time, the different parts of the mechanism are not measured with the chosen research method. Therefore, it cannot be answered whether the causal story presented is truly correct.

Third, although the logistic regression includes controlling for potentially confounding variables - pro-government action and electoral fraud - the results could be influenced by other unknown and uncontrolled variables. Further research and theoretical considerations are needed to clarify whether the results are biased by uncontrolled variables (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 60-69).

Fourth, the article is limited by the conceptualization of the anti-government side. While the pro-government side can credibly be assumed to support only a few parties with similar goals and ideologies, the same assumption cannot be made for the anti-government side. This is due to the large number of opposition parties with a wide variance of ideologies, each of which may benefit from the actions against the government. For example, if a leftist anti-government group commits an action, a right-wing anti-government group may also benefit from it against the pro-government side. Thus, if one group commits actions and another group benefits from it, the results may be spurious when measuring them together (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 285-288). The reason for using the anti-government conceptualization and operationalization in this article is that it is currently the most appropriate measure available. It is a crude measure, but it is a progress from not separating the actors of electoral violence when measuring (Andersson, 2023; Smidt, 2016).

A fifth issue of limitation is the potential multicollinearity between the independent variables of violent and non-violent anti-government action, which might have reduced the statistical significance. Violence and non-violence are two distinct forms of action and remain so as operationalized variables. However, they still had

a 0.26 correlation: the presence of non-violence can possibly influence the use of violence in the dynamic conflict setting between the pro-government and anti-government side (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 263-270).

## Discussion and Conclusion

### *Discussion of the Results*

This study examined the relationship between violent and non-violent anti-government action and the probability of incumbents being replaced in the post-election phase. Across 550 elections, incumbent replacement occurred in 94 cases, corresponding to 17%. There was a slightly higher prevalence of anti-government non-violent action than violent action, both in the average mean value and the maximum number of events per election. At the same time, the majority of elections did not experience any violent events, and very few elections were associated with more than 20 events of each type.

In the regression analysis, anti-government violent action did not achieve statistical significance in any of the models, providing no statistical support for the first hypothesis, that anti-government violent action increases the probability of incumbent replacement. Anti-government non-violent action, on the other hand, did reach statistical significance within a 95% confidence level across the models, supporting the second hypothesis.

However, the second hypothesis must be understood in relation to the first hypothesis. Therefore, by rejecting the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis cannot be fully confirmed either. Furthermore, when log-transforming the variables in the robustness test, none of the pro-government or anti-government violent and non-violent variables reach statistical significance within a 95% confidence interval. Therefore, it is important to interpret the results of the main regression with caution and not to overestimate the potential of different forms of action.

At the same time, the results suggest that non-violent measures can successfully replace an incumbent in the post-election phase, while violent measures cannot, at least not to the same





extent. This falls in line with previous research, which suggests that non-violent political activities have higher chances of achieving concessions from the government than violent activities (Chenoweth, 2021, pp. 1-26; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008).

Despite not reaching statistical significance, the results may still provide insights for practical implications. The article argued that both anti-government violent and non-violent actions have a positive impact on the probability of replacing an incumbent, but that the effect of the latter would be stronger. The regression results did not show a statistically significant effect for the use of anti-government violent action, however anti-government non-violent action did. Following the argument of previous studies, many violent anti-government actions appear to be unsuccessful due to strong backlash and a lack of domestic and international support. Non-violent anti-government actions, on the other hand, seem to be able to gain more domestic and foreign support, especially when there is a perception that the government is harshly suppressing peaceful protests. This leads to potentially greater chances of success for the movement to gain concessions (Chenoweth, 2021, pp. 1-26; Svensson et al., 2022; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). In other words, if the anti-government actors show patience and stick to a rigid belief in non-violent methods, their chances of replacing the incumbent may be higher than if they resort to violence.

### ***Suggestions for Further Research***

First, this article has only studied post-election phases in which the incumbent won the election. Further studies that include situations in which the incumbent lost the election would be equally important, as it would nuance the results presented herein and provide a deeper understanding of post-election behavior.

Second, the dichotomous division of the political spectrum into pro- and anti-government sides is a crude measure. While the pro-government side can credibly be assumed to be relatively united, the anti-government side cannot be given the same assumption without the

risk of spurious results, as have been discussed in this article (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018, pp. 285-288). Therefore, future studies should aim to use a more nuanced measurement that considers which specific actor is the source of the event and where those actors are to be found on a national political map.

Third, incumbent replacement is only one of many forms of concessions a government could make to satisfy the demands of the anti-government groups. Thus, future studies should consider measuring other forms of concessions to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the post-election dynamics.

Fourth, the scope condition of the article excludes consolidated democracies and autocracies without competitive elections for motivated reasons. However, there is a considerable spectrum of regime types remaining within the sample, with differences in areas such as ideology and political instability. The strength of the phenomenon discussed in this article may vary in correlation with the type of regime and measures of instability, which should be taken into account in further research.

Fifth, a mixed approach that includes a case study can help establish a stronger and more certain causal link. Additionally, it can be examined whether value changes in a small number of events have a greater impact than similar value changes in a larger number of events.

### ***Conclusion***

The existing literature and theoretical argument suggested that anti-government action in the post-election phase should increase the likelihood of replacing the incumbents, even if they have recently won the election. Furthermore, it is assumed that violent measures may be successful but face a higher risk than non-violent measures, as they could be met with violent repression by the pro-government side (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). To test the research question, it proved necessary to differentiate between the type of actions taken by anti-government groups. The division of anti-government action into violent and non-violent methods led to two hypotheses. The first one



stated that anti-government violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced. The second hypothesis claimed that anti-government non-violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced more than anti-government violent action does.

The results presented demonstrate that the first hypothesis, claiming that anti-government violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced, is not supported by the regression results, as it did not achieve statistical significance. Therefore, it cannot be said that violence from the opposition influences whether the incumbent is replaced in the post-election phase or not.

The indicators for the second hypothesis, stating that anti-government non-violent action increases the incumbent's probability of being replaced more than anti-government violent action does, did reach statistical significance in the main regression. This falls in line with previ-

ous research and suggests that anti-government non-violent action may influence the dependent variable and that this effect is greater than that of violent actions (Chenoweth, 2021, pp. 1-26; Svensson et al., 2022; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). However, statistical significance to support the second hypothesis was not achieved in the robustness test, which might be due to a problem of multicollinearity. Furthermore, the formulation of the second hypothesis is reliant on the first hypothesis, which, as stated above, could not be supported.

Returning to the research question: Do post-election anti-government actions lead to increased probability of incumbents being replaced? From the findings of this article, there cannot be a definitive answer. At the same time, taken together with previous studies, the results provide a cautious suggestion that anti-government groups may exert some post-election influence by using non-violent methods.

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