



IDS WORKING PAPER

Volume **2018** No **513**

Energy Protests in Fragile Settings: The Unruly Politics of Provisions in Egypt, Myanmar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe, 2007–2017

Naomi Hossain with Fatai Aremu, Andy Buschmann, Egidio Chaimite, Simbarashe Gukurume, Umair Javed, Edson da Luz (aka Azagaia), Ayobami Ojebode, Marjoke Oosterom, Olivia Marston, Alex Shankland, Mariz Tadros, and Kátia Taela

June 2018



Action for Empowerment and Accountability Research Programme

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IDS Working Paper 513

© Institute of Development Studies 2018

ISSN: 2040-0209 ISBN: 978-1-78118-449-3

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.



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Available from:

Communications and Engagement Unit, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK

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Charity Registration Number 306371

Charitable Company Number 877338

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Summary

How do popular protests about the basics of everyday life, specifically about energy, come about in settings where political authority is fragmented and conflict and repression common? How do state and political actors respond to protests which disrupt social and economic life, and undermine public authority? To what extent do such mass protests, often justified as inherently moral struggles over the basics of everyday life, empower the powerless or hold the powerful to account in such political settings? And how do external actors shape these events? These are the questions addressed in this paper, part of a research project under the UK Aid-funded Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA) programme at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. It is a preliminary effort to make sense of a specific category of popular protests, mass protests about the affordability or availability of fuel or energy, seen as among the contentious ‘politics of provisions’, or elite-mass struggles over policies governing the necessities of everyday life. The paper aims to: (a) contribute to theoretical debates about the kinds of social and political action that strengthen accountability and empower the marginalised in fragile and conflict-affected settings; (b) make an empirical contribution to the contentious politics literature with new evidence about the nature of energy-related protests (or ‘fuel riots’) in developing countries, to strengthen the political economy analysis of energy subsidy reforms and austerity programmes, shedding new light specifically on the tendencies of non-democratic regimes to maintain high fuel subsidies; and (c) generate knowledge about how the behaviour and practices of external actors shape how energy protests play out in these fragile political settings, in order to inform policy and practice.

The paper draws on: (a) an events catalogue built on a review of international media that was; (b) triangulated and refined further through a research workshop and discussions with participants, direct observers, and other scholars. These research activities were designed to investigate the phenomenon of energy-related protests (definitions and forms of which are discussed) in settings marked by fragile or fragmented political authority or where conflict is common or recurrent, what is known in development thinking as fragile, conflict, and violence-affected (FCVAS) settings. The focus is on the period 2007–17, a time of unusual turbulence in global commodity and financial markets, and of correspondingly intense national and transnational struggles over austerity regimes, financial shocks, and commodity price spikes in countries around the globe. The paper draws on the events catalogue and workshop contributions to develop preliminary analysis of how grievances about energy connected to other material and political grievances in the society. It sets out initial findings about the social and political alliances that emerged between the informal sector workers, youth, and urban working class groups that were on the frontline of most protests, and other actors such as business, political parties, trades unions, civil society organisations and broader social movements. It explores the repertoires, or the styles and forms taken by the protests, reflecting on how those were transformed over the episodes of contention, and specifically in counter-response to the state response. The paper presents the synthesis of these inquiries, which it situates within the limited relevant literature on energy protests and the political economy of development in fragile settings. It concludes with a discussion of knowledge gaps and potential research agendas on the contentious politics of energy provisioning.

Keywords: Egypt; Myanmar; Mozambique; Nigeria; Pakistan; Zimbabwe; accountability; authoritarianism; civil society; democratisation; empowerment; energy protests; FCVAS; food riots; fragile settings; fuel price protests; fuel riots; global energy prices; 'IMF riots'; oil prices; politics of provisions; structural adjustment protests; transport.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the following for their helpful support and suggestions: Mariah Cannon, John Gaventa, and Neil McCulloch. The paper draws on ESRC-DFID-funded research for conceptual framing and methodology, Grant Number: ES/J018317/1. Responsibility for any errors is the authors' own.

Acronyms and abbreviations

A4EA	Action for Empowerment and Accountability
ARC	Accountability Research Center
CERP	Center for Economic Research in Pakistan
CIO	Central Intelligence Officials
CNG	compressed natural gas
CRISE	Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity
CSSR	Collective for Social Science Research
DFID	Department for International Development
DVB	Democratic Voice of Burma (Myanmar)
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FCVAS	Fragile, Conflict and Violence Affected Settings
HUMA	Institute for Humanities in Africa
ICT	Information communications technology
IDEAS	Institute for Development and Economic Alternatives
IEA	International Energy Agency
IESE	Institute of Social and Economic Research
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDM	Mozambique Development Movement
NERA	National Electoral Reform Agenda
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PACFaH	Partnership for Advocacy in Child and Family Health
PASGR	Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
PMLN	Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz
PPP	Pakistan Peoples' Party
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
SADC	South African Development Community
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SMS	Short Message Service
UEM	Universidade Eduardo Mandlane

1 Introduction

How do popular protests about the basics of everyday life, specifically struggles over mass access to energy, come about in settings where political authority is fragmented and conflict and repression common? What forms and expressions do such protests take? How do state and political actors respond to such protests, which disrupt social and economic life, and undermine public authority? Do such mass protests, often justified as inherently moral struggles over the basics of everyday life, empower the powerless or hold the powerful to account in such political settings? And how do external actors shape these events? These are the questions addressed in this paper, part of a research project under the UK Aid-funded Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA) programme at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. It is a preliminary effort to make sense of a specific category of popular protest in recent history, namely episodes of mass or popular protest about the affordability or availability of fuel or energy in Egypt, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, in the decade following 2007, a period of widespread and recurrent global food, fuel and financial crises. It analyses these protests within a conceptual framework derived from theories of the contentious 'politics of provisions', or elite-mass struggles over policies governing the necessities of everyday life. This draws attention to the following elements of how contentious struggles 'work' to bring about political and policy change in the domains most relevant to mass patterns of everyday life: the identities of protestors and their grievances; modes or repertoires of protest and the responses they elicit from the state; the means by which protests are 'amplified' or undergo 'scale-shift', transforming from local or particularistic struggles to wider, more systemic political complaint; and the political alliances and political cultural effects to which these episodes contribute.

The paper explores these elements of energy protests in these settings in order to (a) contribute to theoretical debates about the kinds of social and political action that strengthen accountability and empower the marginalised in fragile and conflict-affected settings, by focusing on the informal and extra-institutional politics through which power is contested in such settings; (b) make an empirical contribution to the contentious politics literature with new evidence about the nature of energy-related protests (or 'fuel riots') in developing countries; this is important in particular because it should strengthen the political economy analysis of energy subsidy reforms and austerity programmes; and (c) generate knowledge about how the behaviour and practices of external actors shape how energy protests play out in these fragile political settings, in order to inform policy and practice.

Patterns of popular political contention and civic engagement are closely shaped by the nature of political power and the state in any context. While the unruly politics of provisions since 2007 have not been confined to FCVAS settings, there are good reasons to believe that such protests may have a particular significance in contexts where more formal or institutionalised forms of democratic and civic space have historically been restricted or repressed. The episodes studied here took place in countries featuring fragility and conflict in various degrees and forms; although the paper examines variations within that set, it does not compare them with protests in more stable and democratic settings. Building on Andresen's important 2008 analysis of the political mechanisms that safeguard fuel subsidies in authoritarian (far more than in democratic) settings, we aim for a closer exploration of the dynamics of contention in different kinds of fragile or conflict-affected settings, ranging from authoritarian and repressive through to more competitive and fragmented forms of power. We would expect state-society relations and civic and political institutions to differ in countries featuring relatively competitive, although conflictual and fragile (Pakistan, Nigeria) compared to more dominant (Mozambique; Myanmar, later in the decade) or outright authoritarian and repressive (Myanmar before 2011, Egypt and Zimbabwe through most of the decade) modes of political power. The analytical strategy is to attempt to draw out patterns specific to FCVAS settings, while also, where relevant,

drawing attention to how differences in political and civic space appear to be shaping the frequency, nature or form of energy protests.

There are sound grounds, framed well by the Sustainable Development Goal 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) for understanding the causes and effects of energy protests. These protests can be violent and disruptive, and loss of human life is common. While contention over energy is likely in any modern energy-dependent, urbanising economy, violence and disruption may not be an essential part of such struggles. However, if citizens' legitimate concerns lack effective 'civil' pathways to influencing policy, specific triggers (subsidy cuts, fiscal or monetary reforms that shift prices, corruption in the energy sector) seem likely to lead to unruly political contention, and in ways that attract state violence and elicit antagonistic counter-responses.

In a globalised energy economy, distinctions between 'external' and domestic influences on popular politics can be overdrawn. Nonetheless, groups not customarily seen as central to domestic political contention play several distinct roles in these protests. The international media frames these struggles for both internal and external consumption, and shaping the events themselves, the responses they engender, and the agendas for research (Hossain 2018). International aid donors create funding regimes for civil society that discourage or prevent grassroots mobilisation or responsiveness to 'messy' popular political concerns; this can mean that important, potentially disruptive, groups in society then make their voice heard in other, less 'civil' ways (de Brito, Chaimite and Shankland 2017). Austerity regimes under IMF packages feature in these protests, as does external investment in the energy sector by world powers.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 tours the limited relevant research on fuel or energy protests. Section 3 documents our conceptual thinking and its adaptation to a methodological framework to address preliminary questions about these types of protest episodes. Section 4 explores the causes (grievances, triggers and pre-existing networks for mobilisation) and effects (policy changes, coalition-building, organisational learning, public opinion shifts) of episodes of energy protests in six settings of fragility, in Egypt, Myanmar, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe, during the decade 2007–17. Section 5 discusses the role of external actors in these struggles, including of the framing by the international media. Section 6 concludes with some preliminary analysis of how these elements fit together, and with reflections on the need for and conceptual, methodological and practical challenges of further research into energy protests in such settings.

2 Energy protests/fuel riots: a literature review

Energy features in contemporary protest literature in a range of ways. A substantial body of literature explores resistance to energy investments in the global North. This includes analysis of 'green' resistance to fracking, pollution, fossil fuels and nuclear energy (Plows 2008), as well as on the locations of energy plant (van der Horst 2007). Protests by European farmers and hauliers in 2000 were in key respects the opposite of the customary ecological protest, as their activists demanded and to some extent extracted concessions over fuel pricing (Doherty *et al.* 2003). The literature on energy protests as these relate to the fragile and under-developed settings with which we are concerned is considerably more limited, however, perhaps reflecting the comparatively recent nature of these protests on any scale or spread to date. There is analysis connecting energy and protest through the influence of biofuel investments on the food riots of 2007–08 (Dauvergne and Neville 2010);

these protests draw attention to the globalised nature of contemporary protest struggles, but offer no insight into protests specifically about grievances relating to energy specifically, how these connect with subsistence grievances around, for instance, food, nor how these emerge out of and resonate with other local or national political struggles.

A more relevant body of literature is on the 'IMF Riots' or 'structural adjustment riots' in response to the neoliberal economic reforms of developing countries during the 1970s and 1980s. Energy-related protests were among the episodes of popular resistance triggered by the first wave of IMF regime reforms (Walton and Ragin 1990; Walton and Seddon 2008), but these studies undertook comparatively little analysis of protests around energy specifically, including them under the wider ambit of 'food riots'. The connections between mass protests about price changes and subsidy reforms emerged across food and fuel market emerged again in research on urban price protests in sub-Saharan Africa (de Brito, Chaimitie and Shankland 2017; Sneyd 2017; Engels 2015).

Debates about the political economy of fuel subsidies have drawn attention to the frequency and significance of popular protests about energy pricing, typically viewed as an obstacle to fiscally-necessary reforms (see Lockwood 2015; Inchauste and Victor 2017). Reform programme design needs to take into account the 'political logic' behind the adoption of the subsidy, and the support base and political efficacy of struggles for its continuation (Victor 2009). Public choice theoretical perspectives have concluded that fuel subsidies tend to be substantially larger in semi-authoritarian regimes than other types of polities, both because these enable grand corruption by ruling elites, and because 'concern about regime legitimacy and the wish to stay in power' encourages regime responsiveness to protests among core support groups (Andresen 2008: 6). Authoritarian regimes may be less able or willing to supply public goods, or particular kinds of energy subsidy may suit their 'selectorate' particularly well, shoring up the support of key groups; patterns of fuel use by different groups at different stages of urbanisation and development also shape the politics of fuel subsidies (Strand 2013).

Other relevant research has attempted to unpick the relevant relationships between regimes types, conflict and protest and prices of basic goods, chiefly of food (Berazneva and Lee 2013; Hendrix and Haggard 2015; Hendrix and Brinkman 2013). This literature is illustrative of aspects of these relationships, but overall somewhat inconclusive on the nature of political power arrangements which give rise to or enable such protests to emerge; nor, again, do they provide a distinctive focus on energy protests specifically. The limited nature of the relevant literature is plain: one recent PhD dissertation on the subject of recent food and fuel riots concluded that 'research on fuel riots is currently non-existent' (Natalini 2016: 3). The present preliminary exploration of fuel riots – or as we prefer, energy protests – is intended to engage with and stimulate any emergent debates about this apparently increasingly important phenomenon.

The historical and contemporary literature on food riots during moments of adjustment to capitalist economies provides useful theoretical and methodological starting points for the investigation of energy protests, while also keeping in mind the important specificities of energy as distinct from food. It helps to recognise that so-called 'food riots' were one part of the 'politics of provisions', or 'the ways in common people interacted with their rulers over subsistence... permitted and shaped by pre-existing social and political networks, both among rioters and between them and their rulers' (Bohstedt 2016: 1036). Such struggles were constant and ongoing, yet typically only became overt in moments of economic crises, when food shortages and price spikes resulted from war, disaster, or trade policies, in contexts where people's relationships to food were increasingly commoditised, leaving anyone on a low or precarious income acutely vulnerable to the downside of market forces. 'Moral economy' ideas, particularly pertaining to the responsibilities of public authorities to protect the people's right to eat against the right to profit from the food trade, were often

important parts of the political culture of these struggles, justifying unruly, disruptive, and even violent, assertions of those rights (Thompson 1971, 1991).

Yet not all the hungry protested, and food rioters were rarely the poorest or worst off. A physiological mechanism through hunger translates into anger and anger into protest is plainly inadequate for explaining why food riots occurred, or what they meant. Instead, patterns of food riots across Europe strongly suggest the need for explanations rooted in contentious political theory. Key issues on which to focus include the identities and previous political experiences of protestors, the political opportunities for mobilisation afforded by the crisis itself, and in particular as it affects groups connected by location, identity or occupation; the means of amplification and through which grievances undergo 'scale-shift', taking up more (or less) of the national political agenda; and the iterative relationship between repertoires of protest and official response (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001).

A recent comparative study of contentious recent struggles over the right to food involving some of the authors of the present paper concluded that food riots 'work' by shifting political interests and ideas with respect to provisioning, but that several factors are critical. Protestors tend to denote the presence of reasonably coherent groups visibly affected by policies governing basic provisioning (e.g. macroeconomic exposure to global food (or in the present study, fuel), price volatility; food (or energy) price regulations; food (energy) subsidies and transfers; wage policies). But the appearance of spontaneity implied by 'riots' was often belied by the fact that many protest groups had prior histories of organising, as well as political champions or allies in trades unions or occupational associations, political parties, civil society or the media. It was also clear that such protests resonated with, and informed, struggles over the terms of the subsistence settlement or social contract governing economic and sectoral policymaking. Critically, protests emerged under conditions in which aggrieved groups 'read' the situation as one in which they had a realistic chance of drawing official attention to their concerns, and of demonstrating willingness to use disruption and moral shaming to extract the desired concessions (Scott-Villiers and Hossain 2017). The study of energy protests drew substantially and directly on the analysis of the mechanisms through which other struggles over subsistence during the same period of volatility worked to materially change the politics of provisions in each context.

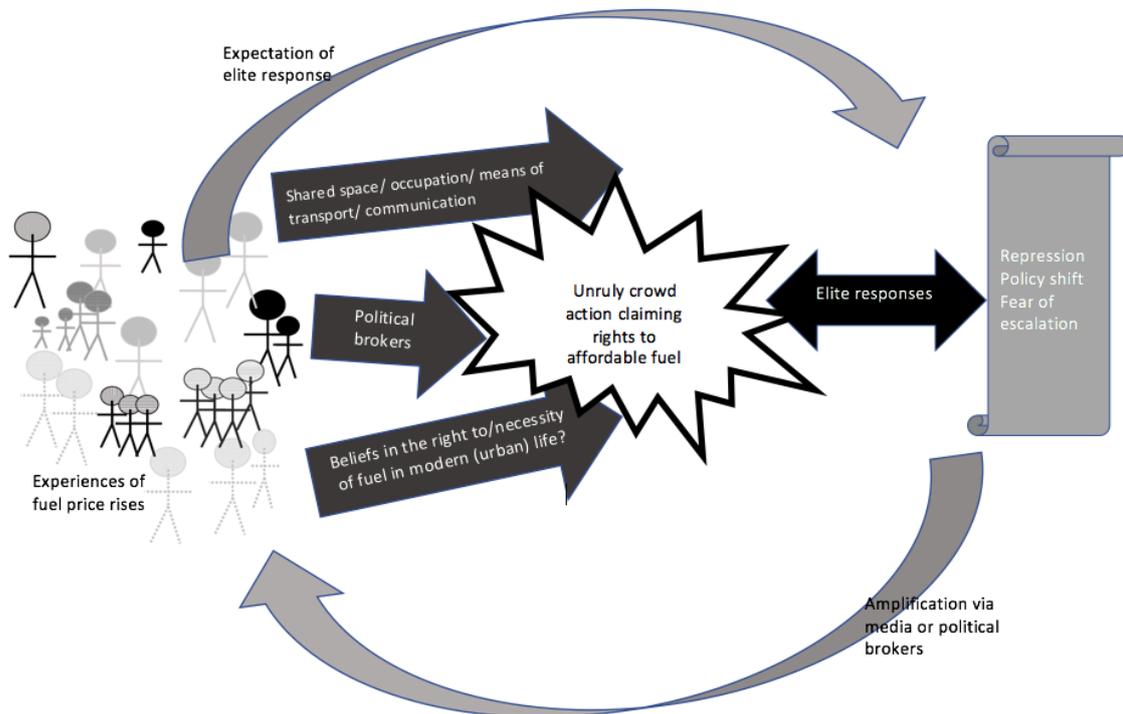
3 Approach and methodology

3.1 Mechanisms of impact/applying the learning from the food riots project

As noted above, members of the research team had recently completed a study of food-related popular mobilisation in Bangladesh, India, Kenya and Mozambique during the period 2007–12. Although keeping in mind that energy protests may have particular dynamics absent in food riots (and vice versa) relating to the sector itself, some of the lessons about how food riots 'work' to generate political change seemed applicable to the question of energy protests in fragile settings, and were used to develop a conceptual framework and methodological approach for the study.

In the absence of a literature on the triggering contexts, forms and modes, and wider impacts of fuel price protests, we drew on and adapted a conceptual framework developed to make sense of food price-related protests over some (2007–12) of the ten-year period in which we are interested. The framework is depicted in summary in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: How fuel price protests work: a dynamic model



Source: Adapted from Hossain and Scott-Villiers (2017).

The key propositions about how fuel price protests provoke policy or political responses are as follows. Mass or unruly demonstrations and riots that protest the new unaffordability of or lack of access to energy have an impact under the following conditions:

- Experiences of sudden fuel price rises affect large groups of the national population, particularly in cities, and in particular people on low incomes. The nature of the impact of fuel price rises depends on relative prices, the extent of any subsidies, the share of energy in household spending.
- Shared space, including common occupations and means of transport create conditions in which grievances about price rises may be aired and shared
- Opposition leaders identify this as a political opportunity to broker mass mobilisation, accrue political capital, or undermine the legitimacy of the regime, often drawing on past experiences of similar protest episodes.
- Food riots 'work' in part through the connecting glue of a set of reasonably strong, broadly-shared 'moral economy' beliefs about how food markets should run, and the responsibilities of public authorities to ensure they do (Hossain and Kalita 2014). We do not know if something similar exists with respect to fuel price rises; it is possible that fuel crises lack the moral urgency of food crises, the contemporary politics of which are often rooted in formative historical experiences of dearth. Alternatively, the reliance on energy in modern life means that rising fuel costs or bus fares may sharply increase the costs of work, forcing people into harder and longer working days, or other unsatisfactory amendments to their work-life pattern.
- Past responses to fuel price protests are likely to shape the expectation of elite responses, and this will in turn shape the likelihood and form of action taken
- The present elite response to the current crisis combines repression with immediate policy responses, particularly if the ruptures appear likely to escalate in scale or spread
- The media and a capable political opposition amplify the concerns of protestors in particular ways.

Drawing on the insights from contentious politics theorising, we expected individual protest events to be linked together dynamically, shaped by expectations based on past performance and on the current political calculus, and by the counter-response and changing context it may engender (Tarrow 2011; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2008). Critical concepts here include 'scale shift', in which response and counter-response bring about a 'change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to broader contention involving a wider range of actors and bridging their claims and identities (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 331).

The research started with a close focus on events framed as around fuel prices, in line with the expectation that food price rises driven by the global commodity spike of 2007–08 were the key grievance. This proved an inadequate framing for energy protests, for several reasons. First, global energy price rises transmitted unevenly to countries, depending on pre-existing subsidy and tax regimes, playing a direct role only countries without important subsidies (in our cases, Pakistan and Zimbabwe). While global energy prices shape the fiscal space for subsidies, governmental decisions to cut subsidies owed more to the introduction of austerity regimes than market price changes. Second, protests relating to energy policy included grievances about access and shortages (Pakistan and Zimbabwe) as well as large investment projects (the Ar Shwin Chinese gas pipeline in Myanmar, in particular). In Nigeria, energy protests fused grievances about political elite corruption in the oil industry with those about subsidy cuts and the impacts on subsistence.

3.2 Media review/events mapping exercise

3.2.1 Event identification and selection

To gather evidence on these elements of the fuel price protest model, we mapped energy-related events in the six countries, using international media coverage as the main data source. Relevant events to be mapped/reviewed were selected based on the following initial criteria:

1. The events took place within the last decade in the six countries, all fragile and conflict-affected and/or lower or middle-income countries
2. Protests were identifiably related to fuel price rises, and this was listed as a grievance by protestors or those reporting on the protest
3. The cases involved a series of unruly events rather than a single episode or event. This is important in order to gain a sense of the interaction between protestors and authorities, and of the outcomes of such events.

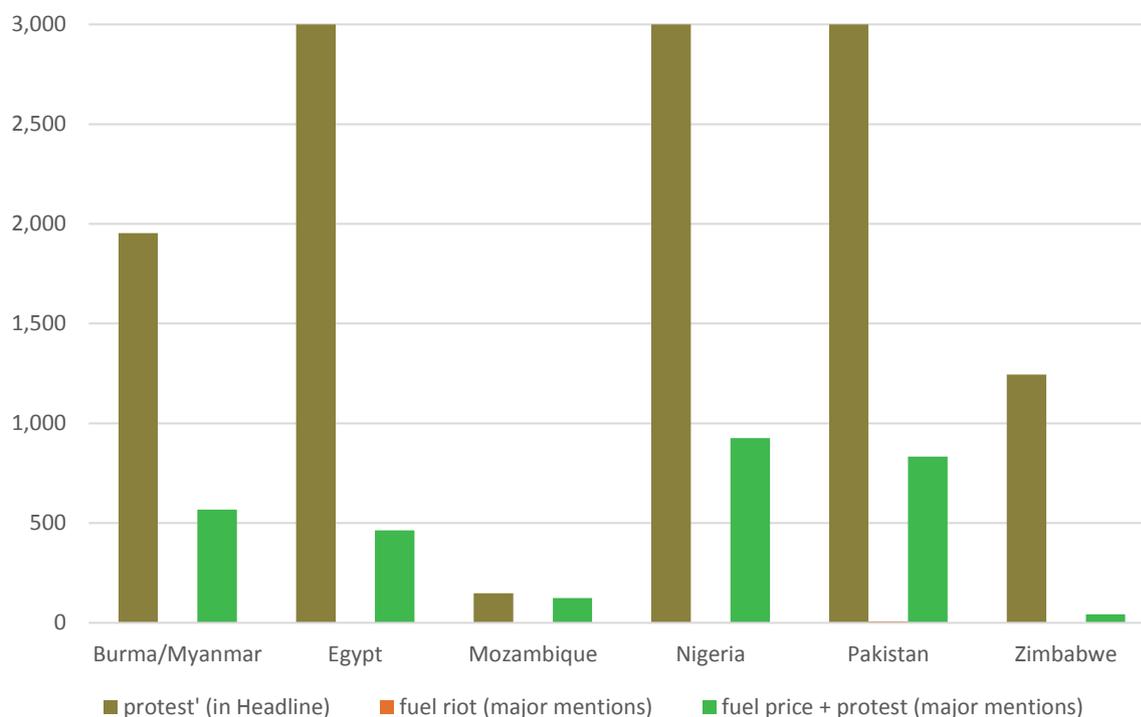
After an initial review of findings, the decision was made to focus on fuel price-related protests in each country, as offering the greatest chance of enabling cross-country comparisons. Later, the somewhat different cases of Pakistan and Zimbabwe were added, in which protests were chiefly about energy shortages, and although connected to mass concerns about energy costs and access, were not chiefly driven by them. These, as well as the loose coalition between fuel subsidy cut protestors, chiefly urban youth, and trades unions in the lucrative but leaky oil transport industry, highlight the ways in which energy protests could encompass wide cross-class coalitions of interest, at least temporarily. This then highlighted the importance of exploring energy protests somewhat more broadly, to include the possibilities of these cross-class coalitions around energy use.

3.2.2 Databases, tools and search terms

The Event Mapping/Media Review involved several rounds of search and preliminary review, in order to refine and finalise search terms and overall search strategy. Two main sources were used: the Nexis news database (Nexis.com), and a general sweep of the internet using search terms specific to each country and events.

Some indicative estimates of the numbers of potential news articles addressing the issue of fuel price protests (as compared to 'protest' more generally) are given in the figures below.

Figure 3.2: Search results by country and search term



Source: Authors' own.

Note: For each of Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan, the numbers of article returning 'protest' in the headline was over 3,000.

It should be noted that searches are sensitive to search terms used, and that the numbers of articles returned does not necessarily match frequencies of events or their significance. Mindful of the impacts of media framing on how such ruptures are covered in developing countries and therefore on the results of such searches (Hossain 2018), different search terms were trialled in the Nexis database, and then cross-checked against wider internet searches. Search terms such as "fuel riot" + COUNTRY generated few results; less colourful but more precise terms such as "fuel / gas / oil price protest" generated more for most countries. The search period was for the past decade, namely 01/01/2007 to 01/01/2017, to capture the early onset of the fuel and food crisis of 2008 and to bring it as up to date as possible.

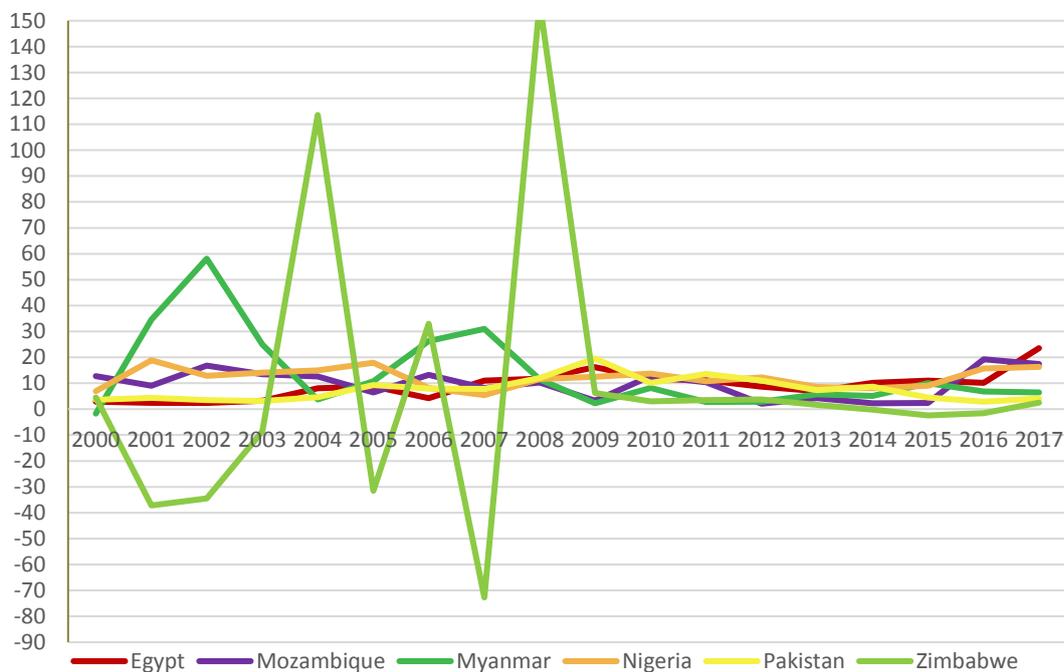
Data about the numbers, participants, locations, grievances and responses to fuel price related protests in each country were stored using a framework developed to build events catalogue as part of an earlier project on food riots. In each country case, an effort was made to contribute evidence from the Event Mapping/Media Review towards understanding the following:

- a. the conditions under which such protests emerged
- b. the grievances being articulated
- c. the absence of alternative, more institutionalised and dialogic modes of engagement with civil society and formal politics
- d. the effects and outcomes of such political events in the short- and longer-terms, and
- e. risks and opportunities for external actors to engage with such contentions, to support processes of empowerment and accountability for disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups.

Quantitative findings about the nature of the protests in each of these countries over these years, including who was protesting, about what, with what kinds of a response (data permitting) were distilled. From the Event Mapping/Media Review activities, and supported by other literature where relevant, brief overviews of the nature and significance of fuel price protests in each country were developed, pending further discussion at the January workshop.

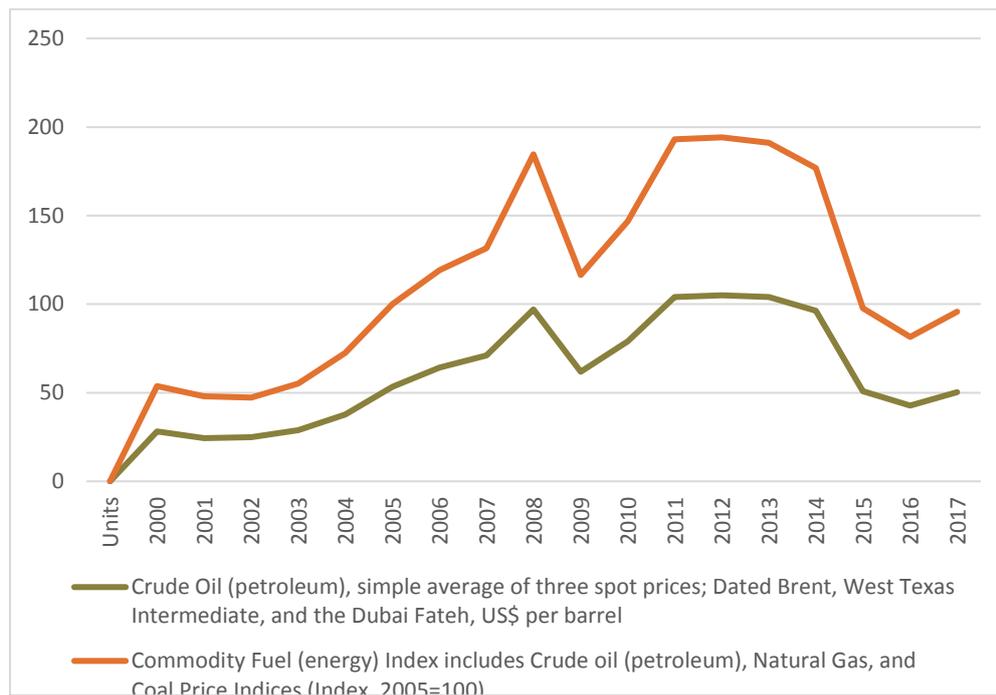
Additional fuel price, subsidy and consumer price inflation data were sought to provide a basis for comparing contexts across the countries (see Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4). Figure 3.4 shows that global fuel price rises were marked during 2007–08 and 2011–12, but as Figure 3.3 shows, these global fuel price movements played out unevenly in consumer price inflation during the period. This reflects, among other matters, the range of different policy instruments with which governments seek to insulate populations against sudden price rises, including energy subsidies and fixed consumer or industrial prices or allowances.

Figure 3.3: Inflation, average consumer prices (% change) 2000–17



Source: Authors' own, based on IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/02/weodata/index.aspx (accessed 21 December 2017)

Figure 3.4: Global food and fuel prices, 2000–17



Source: Authors' own, based on IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=24&pr.y=16&sy=2000&ey=2017&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=001%2C603&s=POILAPSP%2CPNRGW&grp=1&a=1 (accessed 21 December 2017)

From earlier research that used a media review-based events catalogue to identify and analyse food-related protests, we were aware of the strengths and limitations of these methods (Hossain 2018). To study energy protests, we included only English-language items, so that all domestic news in the vernacular was excluded. This meant that it was only the events deemed sufficiently newsworthy due to their rarity (Myanmar) or violence (Mozambique and Nigeria) that appeared in initial searches. Less dramatic protests, such as small but frequent demonstrations in Pakistan over energy access, and the series of protests in Zimbabwe after 2015, appeared less frequently. Yet this did not mean that events in Pakistan or Zimbabwe were necessarily less significant moments in the politics of provisions in those contexts. These biases were identified and partially corrected through a more in-depth hand search of online media sources, but it nonetheless highlights the independent framing role played by the international media, and the limitations of a media review-based analysis of energy protests.

International media review/events catalogue methodologies are also limited in their capacity to identify protestors and grievances in each particular setting, as the need to communicate stories across political contexts leads to an inevitable flattening out of the complexities of identity, interest and opportunity involved. Read from above or outside, an energy protest looks one way; from the ground, many more features can be seen, and the overall picture does not always look the same from that perspective. Greater knowledge of the context and the actors in each setting is necessary to make sense of why such protests emerge and their implications. Nonetheless, media review-based events catalogues do have the advantage of establishing key facts about these events (who, when, where, how), which can also help to correct the interpretative biases of knowledgeable local actors themselves.

3.3 In-depth analysis/workshop

In an effort to correct for the biases and limitations of the media review, a second round of research activities involved scholars and activists in reflecting on and collectively comparing findings about these energy protests in each setting. A research workshop entitled ‘Unruly Ruptures in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings (FCVAS)’ in Brighton, 28 February to 1 March 2018 brought together 15 scholars and activists to reflect on the findings of the media review/events mapping. Scholars and activists were invited to prepare a commentary on the media review/events catalogue, adding their own research, data, or observations of the actual protests and their aftermath in each setting. Discussions of the media review/events mapping by the scholars and activists during the workshop are synthesised in the analysis below. The workshop participants also discussed the need for and approaches to further research on energy protests in fragile settings.

4 Causes and effects of energy protests

Table 4.1: Summary of key energy protest features

Country	Dates, places, scale	Actors and groups	Specific grievances	Political & policy responses
Myanmar	6 weeks, August 2007 Initially peaceful small protests grew into thousands, possibly more, in city streets, mostly but not only in Yangon	Possibly started with urban industrial workers; soon taken up by democracy protestors, then by monks and wider population Became known as ‘The Saffron Revolution’	The removal of subsidies leading to sharp increases in consumer energy prices, at a time of great hardship and rising costs of living	Subsidies were reinstated in some places; arrests and violence against protestors, at different points triggered a ‘scale-shift’ Later US sanctions in protest against repression Described as a ‘failed revolution’ (Shen and Chan 2010; Selth 2008)
Egypt	Protests about energy prices scattered throughout decade; series of fuel- / other cost of living related protests immediately precede & morph into 2011 uprisings. [Events during the Revolution were excluded from this search]. Specific protests in the Media Review: 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013.	Urban industrial workers; urban transport users; general urban public; social media role?	High fuel prices and subsidy cuts	Some cuts were rescinded or delayed. Fuel price protests were among other struggles which culminated in political turning points such as Tahrir Square, the Tamarod Campaign. Despite protests in 2016, reform programmes are proceeding, under an IMF package.

(cont’d.)

Table 4.1 (cont'd.)

Country	Dates, places, scale	Actors and groups	Specific grievances	Political & policy responses
Mozambique	2008 and 2010	<i>Chapa</i> transport users, general public; social media	Fuel subsidy cuts in a time of higher cost of living	Subsidies often temporarily reinstated; violent repression by the state, which brought out the tanks. 13 deaths, including of 2 children. Country now negotiating an IMF reform after the austerity regime that followed Mozambique's loss of credibility in capital markets / withdrawal of donor funding after the 'secret debt' scandal.
Nigeria	2012; 2 weeks in January 'Tens of thousands around Lagos, and in Kaduna, Benin City, and Kano.'	Urban transport users, trades unions (particularly fuel-related trades), general public, popular musicians (Femi Kuti, son of Fela Kuti, took up the cause); social media	Fuel subsidy cuts, that is, cuts to the only public benefit from Nigeria's vast oil wealth, known to be subject to grand corruption	Subsidies temporarily reinstated; later withdrawn under an IMF reform package The protests part of the political transition? Lasting anti-corruption movement (Occupy Nigeria)
Pakistan	The Nexis.com search yielded too few results to analyse. Hand searches on google identified protests in 2010 and 2012, and on a smaller scale 2015. Umair (workshop participant) identified a larger number of protests, big and small, from the national press.	Transport workers, industrial workers, traders, farmers, factory owners and business people, the general public	Protesting prices in many instances, but chiefly shortages and access	
Zimbabwe	The Nexis.com search yielded too few results to analyse. Hand searches on google and in discussions with Simbarashe (workshop participant) and from Marjoke's knowledge of urban popular politics, events were identified throughout the years 2015–2017.	General public, transport users, car-users	Protesting prices and shortages, including in a period of currency reform	

4.1 Egypt

The Media Review/Event Mapping for Egypt identified fuel price protests, and reported concerns about fuel price protests, at several points through the decade, rather than concentrated at a particular moment in time. The exception is the period of the 2011 protests that lead to the Tahrir Square moment. We looked at protests recorded as in some way related to fuel prices, but noted that the motivations and demands of protestors and protest groups varied and shifted over time, becoming increasingly connected with political demands during the 2011 revolution. The 2011 Tahrir Square occupation and protests cannot in any sense be described as 'fuel price protests'. However, fuel price protests both pre-date 2011, within the 2007–17 period, and post-date it, marking in particular the 30 June 2013 episodes.

Key moments at which fuel price protests were recorded included:

- Prior to our period, from 2006, industrial and public sector workers had been striking for higher wages to pay for rising living costs; over 200 episodes were recorded in 2006 alone
- International media first picked up fuel price protests specifically on 8 April 2008, when industrial workers in Mahalla struck for higher wages, protesting the rise in food and fuel prices and the conduct of recent local elections; the area had been restive throughout 2007; the government responded swiftly and favourably, with raises and other benefits
- May 2008: nationally, taxes and fuel prices were hiked to pay for public sector wage rises, raising fears of further protests
- fuel price-related protests then reappear in late January 2011, when protests against high food and fuel prices triggered the onset of the anti-authoritarian movement in Egypt of that year [note: we have excluded from this analysis the entire remaining protests and struggles that resulted in the resignation of President Mubarak in February 2011]
- After fuel subsidies were cut as part of a 2012 IMF package, protests started up again across different groups and parts of the country; compared to 2010, there were four times as many protests in 2012, according to one source (Shukrallah and Ali 2013)
- By 2013, with fuel shortages underpinning the risk of renewed unrest, the Tamarod Campaign raised millions of signatures demanding President Morsi's resignation, following which a coup / revolution replaced the Muslim Brotherhood leader with former-General Sisi
- Further fuel price-related protests were reported in 2016, in response to proposed economic reforms under the IMF package.

It is important to note that the significance of fuel prices and subsidies is subsumed within the far larger and wider struggle against Mubarak or authoritarianism. Nevertheless, it seems clear that fuel prices were a specific trigger for protests preceding, and indeed succeeding, the Tahrir Square uprisings. They drew a direct connection between the political management of the economy and the political legitimacy of the regime. That fuel subsidies were implicated in the removal of Morsi and have successfully been reduced in the years since under the aegis of an IMF programme of reform and deficit reduction again draws attention to the significance of the economic structures of everyday life in shaping the prospects for empowerment and accountability in Egypt.

Industrial workers appeared to have been the first to protest during this period, winning pay rises at the expense of further fuel subsidy cuts and tax hikes for the rest of the population in 2008. Social media emerged as a feature of mobilisation early on, as young urban activists' efforts to use Facebook to organise strikes and protests in 2008 attracted 70,000 Facebook followers, although it failed to generate real (or 'offline') mobilisation at first. In the early part of the period, grievances were about rising living costs in general, and fuel prices were part

of the overall discontent about the economy. By 2011, the cost of food, particularly bread, came to be a core grievance.

Material grievances then soon connected to the wider problems of economic management under authoritarian rule. Public finances were in a perilous condition as global fuel prices rose again in 2011: Egypt's vast fuel subsidies amounted to almost US\$10bn, or 8 per cent of GDP, before the 2011 uprising (Ellis 2010). In an effort to cut public expenditure as crude oil prices again breached US\$100 a barrel in 2010, the Egyptian government took steps to cut the subsidy. Subsidies were further cut in the aftermath of the Revolution as part of structural adjustment package, first in 2014: this time, cuts faced no protests. In 2016, fuel subsidy cuts elicited a number of further scattered fuel price protests around the country. The fuel subsidy bill remains a vast US\$11bn at current prices (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Egypt's energy subsidies (US\$ million)

Fuel	2014	2015	2016
Oil	16,096.1	9,669.9	5,840.1
Electricity	5,227.1	4,969.2	4,989.6
Gas	1,634.2	502.4	298.8
Coal	-	-	-
Total	22,957.3	15,141.5	11,128.5

Source: IEA fossil-fuel subsidies database, www.iea.org/statistics/resources/energysubsidies/ (accessed 20 December 2017)

Other sources, which it is unfortunately at present impossible to cite, similarly highlighted the importance of energy and related costs of living as triggers for initial protests which then rapidly turned political. Police brutality and torture triggered a massive political campaign, and triggered the events of 2011. Blogging and digital activism pre-2011 found activists new ways of hedging against risks, enabling a transplanting of political awareness to a new space, but with no guarantee that the digital and offline space of dissent and protest would come together. However, a political events catalogue based on Egyptian sources selected to cover a range of newspaper types uncovered 35 episodes of energy-related protest up to 2013. It found that material and political grievances frequently merged in these protests, but that prior to 2011, price rises had been a core grievance. It also found that many protests were primarily led by women, reflecting women's responsibilities for managing for the family budget, and that protests were primarily in Cairo and principal towns. Categorisations of the protests revealed that 'the masses' was the most frequent category of protestor, and over half the protests specifically cited economic grievances. Repertoires have changed over time, from protest to the blocking of highways, sit-ins, and continuous protest; numerous 'million-person' (large) events, which contributed to the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood government. The last protests in the Egyptian newspaper catalogue were on 28–30 June 2013, followed a 100 per cent increase in fuel prices as a consequence of IMF conditions. There was a rise in price of meat, veg, and in basic foodstuffs – and food prices reflect transport. More recent efforts to cut fuel subsidies spawned movements with slogans such as 'You have Made us Hungry', 'The Revolution of the Poor', and Dunk (a slogan word for extreme poverty); however, these have failed to mobilise significant street action in a context of tighter laws against protest and a strong counter-response on social media to activists efforts to mount protests.

4.2 Myanmar

The key episodes of fuel price protests in Myanmar between 2007 and 2017 took place over the six weeks between 19 August and 25 September 2007. The country was rocked by an unprecedented series of protests triggered by, and focused throughout on, the government announcement of subsidy cuts that would raise the cost of petrol by two-thirds, double the

cost of diesel, and increase the cost of compressed natural gas (CNG) a staggering fivefold (AFP 2007). A protestor explained: 'We are marching to highlight the economic hardship that Myanmar people are facing now, which has been exacerbated by the fuel price hike' (Win 2007).

Economic hardship was a central theme. Members of the 'recently formed "Myanmar Development Committee," had staged a February protest in downtown Yangon with placards calling for better health and social conditions and complaining about economic hardships' (Associated Press International 2007). Factory owners reported handling earlier protests by factory workers in August, negotiating wage rises in 87 Yangon factories 'to help workers deal with the sky-high fuel prices' (Htay 2007). People living at or close to the poverty line would have been particularly hard hit by steep rises in the cost of living; we now know that in 2005, that was almost half the population, considerably more than previously assumed. Energy is a key concern, occupying a rising share of household spending, and Myanmar ranks low on 'energy security' (Sovacool *et al.* 2011). Fuel prices were heavily subsidised and were believed to cost more than spending on education or healthcare, but remained tightly rationed by the state (Overland 2016).

The protests increased in scale, and peaceful, silent protests were met with an increasingly heavy-handed response by the military. Regime-backed thugs attacked protestors, while activists associated with the '88 Generation Students group that led the 1988 revolt against military rule were detained. Then-Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was still under house arrest, and the 2008 constitutional reforms that paved the way for quasi-democratic elections in 2012 and 2015 were in the future, but it was in response to these protests that Aung San Suu Kyi was permitted to make her first personal appearance since 2003. The protests retained a strong focus on the rise in fuel prices and economic hardship, but began to be explained with reference to the authoritarian political regime (Berger 2007).

The protests escalated in scale and spread across other parts of the country later in August, winning some concessions and pushing back against state repression, but remained small and scattered until the monks became involved. By late August, with protests at several locations around the country already recorded, monks joined a demonstration in Sittwe in the northwest. A striking aspect of what later came to be called the 'Saffron Revolution', a reference to the photogenic colour of the Buddhist monks' robes, was that monks marched holding their alms bowls upside down, signalling a refusal to accept donations from the army, a significant moral blow to the army and its legitimating ideology of rule (McCarthy 2008).

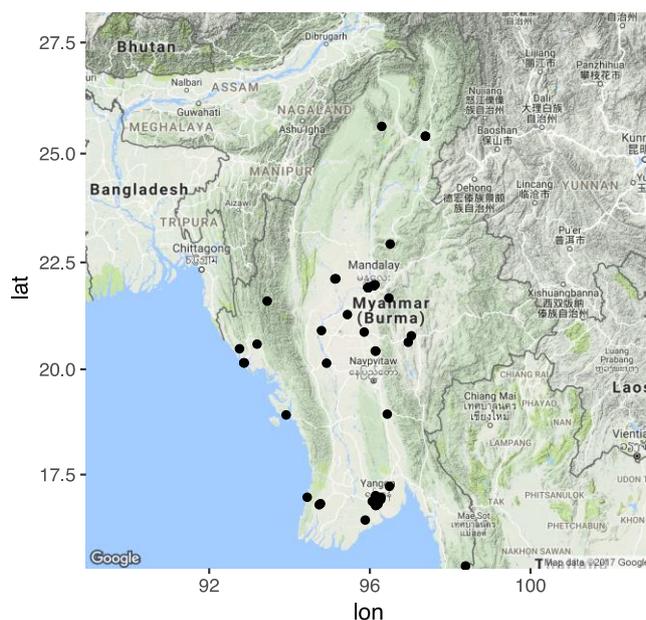
Myanmar was closed to the outside world, apart from some external radio and television access. Stories about the protests were circulated and re-circulated in the international press. Many were sourced through the new medium of the internet, using mobile phones and portable satellite links, some financed by western aid or philanthropy. An exiled news group, the Democratic Voice of Burma (Myanmar) (DVB), had deployed 100 citizen-journalists on the ground in an anonymous network of reporters, to gather information from across the country (Thai News Service 2007a). Myanmar's military rulers accused the foreign media of instigating the demonstrations and barred foreign reporters (Thai News Service 2007b).

By the third week of September, protest participants were said to number 50,000 in Yangon, and tens of thousands in other towns. The army brought out 10,000 soldiers to 'restore order'. In the violence more than 30 people were killed and around a thousand were injured, according to a UN observer. The fuel subsidy reform was partially rolled back, at least temporarily.

In response to the violence, economic sanctions were applied to Myanmar later in 2007. These squeezed Myanmar's mining and gem markets, as they restricted access to US financial markets and targeted individual companies and business owners. Whether or not the 'Saffron Revolution' – and therefore, fuel price protests – played a significant part in the shift to democracy is unresolved. The moment has been authoritatively described as a 'failed revolution' (Shen and Chan 2010; Thawnghmung and Myoe 2008). It may have helped generate the 2008 constitutional reforms that enabled the NLD to assume part of the balance of power in the 2012 and 2015 elections, or to remove obstacles to a democratising shift (Seekins 2009; Steinberg 2008; Thawnghmung and Myoe 2008). Nonetheless, it is clear too that the democratising impulse has been partial and the power of democracy remains highly constrained – and quite possibly captured – in the political settlement that prevails in contemporary Myanmar (Rieffel 2013; Jones 2014; Bünthe 2016), including within its civil society formations (Lorch 2006, 2008, 2017).

Further insights about energy protests in Myanmar were provided through analysis of an events catalogue developing using 'exile' media over the period 2011–14. Since the power-sharing arrangement and the constitutional reforms, energy-related protests have continued in Myanmar. Yangon faces acute problems of power outages and is mainly served by captive generators. Of the 185 protests recorded by Andy Buschmann over the period 1 February 2011 to 31 December 2014, an unexpectedly large number were linked to fuel-related grievances. While several were about access and shortages, there were also protests against the Shwe gas pipeline. Protests about fuel shortages nest within wider contention around energy exports to China. Notable recent episodes included in May 2012, when candle vigils started in Mandalay, demanding 24 hour power supply. People gathered in front of power plants and protests spread to other parts of the country (see Figure 4.1 for an illustration of the locations of documented protests during 2011–14). Around 1,500 people marched in Mandalay in some of the largest protests since the 2007 Saffron Revolution. The Shwe gas project, initiated in 2006, a huge gas deposit in the Bay of Bengal to pipe gas to China, and China's second largest pipeline, is itself central focus of a protest movement. However, the population still has limited access to energy, yet sees energy and fuel exported to China, breeding a strong sense of inequality. Energy remains a signal source of contention in Myanmar, but its forms seem likely to change in a context in which widespread energy poverty remains, but which is also seeing an opening of the democratic and civic space.

Figure 4.1: Map of protests in Myanmar, 2011–14



Source: Buschmann (forthcoming), reproduced with kind permission.

4.3 Mozambique

Mozambique experienced a series of fuel price-related protests during the period 2007–17, each of which resulted in an immediate policy response, usually backing down from the full reform or introducing new more targeted subsidies; state violence against protestors; and further hikes in prices down the line, finally resulting in the full removal of fuel subsidies by mid-2017. In the case of Mozambique, more than in Myanmar or Egypt, the protests could be described as riots, lethally violent efforts by the police to clear initially non-violent road barricades triggered violent resistance. Looting also occurred, primarily targeted bakeries and other individual businesses, often food shops owned by foreigners: the police did little to stop this, and many eyewitness accounts noted that some police joined in.

Key events were clustered around two points during the period:

- 5 February 2008: subsidy cuts on 23 January saw petrol prices increase by nearly half again, and diesel prices nearly double; protests erupted in Maputo and the suburbs of Magoanine, Matola City, when the Transport Ministry agreed an increase in fares on the *chapas* (minibuses) that provide much of the private transport in Maputo (Agencia de Informacao de Mocambique 2008). ‘Thousands’ were reported to have been involved in clashes with the police, according to the state radio; the final death toll was six, with at least three protestors shot by the police, and over 100 were injured. The subsidy cut was rolled back in part. In 2009, new subsidies were introduced to protect petrol companies from the losses from fixed prices. Other protests appear to have taken place in the week that followed, and was reported on 11 February in Chokwe in the southern province of Gaza.
- 1–3 September 2010: against a South African rand that had appreciated by 43 per cent compared to the previous year, pushing up import prices in Mozambique, the state utility company raised rates by 13 per cent, while water and bread subsidies were also cut (AFP 2010). Riots were framed more around food prices in 2010 than fuel prices, as in 2008, but the overall rise in the cost of living was the general grievance expressed. ‘Thousands’ of angry ‘young men’ were said to have taken to the streets, again in Maputo’s poorer districts, again damaging private and public property, and again spread to other cities, including Chimoio in the Centre. In two days of protests, some 13 people, including at least two children, lost their lives, and an estimated 450 people were injured. The bread subsidy cut was reversed, but later cut along with energy subsidies, as part of an austerity policy implemented from 2016 in the wake of the ‘secret debt’ crisis and ahead of the agreement of an IMF programme. It should be noted that prices had been fixed before the elections in 2009, and raised simultaneously in 2010, after the elections, triggering the protests.

Mozambique has invested billions of dollars in oil and gas investments in recent years, but its high rates of economic growth have generated slow and uneven progress on poverty and human development (World Bank 2017a). The country is correctly understood as a predatory authoritarian state, in that the domination of power chiefly serves to enrich political elites and their business allies within and beyond Mozambique, even though politics and policies are often framed in terms of the nationalist and leftist struggles against colonial rule. Having historically subsidised goods that mainly benefited the urban lower and middle classes, such as bread, energy and transport. During 2010–14, these subsidies alone amounted to a cost of almost 1 per cent of GDP, and over 3 per cent of government revenue (World Bank 2017a).

Analysis of the causes and effects of food and fuel-price related protests during the period 2007–12 in Mozambique, part of the larger Food Riots, Food Rights project on which the present Unruly Ruptures study draws, indicated a causal connection between the loss of legitimacy following the response to the 2008 and 2010 riots and the rise of the urban-based

democratic opposition group MDM. It may also have contributed to the subsequent electoral success of the armed opposition group Renamo, which won the 2018 mayoral election in Nampula, the largest city in Northern Mozambique. The study also identified the rise of the virtual and cultural public spaces in transmitting calls for action, in particular to urban 'digital natives', users of social networks and digital media (de Brito *et al.* 2014; de Brito, Chaimitie and Shankland 2017).

The context included a squeeze on public finances due to rising global price of fuel and fixed consumer energy prices/fuel and other price subsidies, in a context in which the majority of the population had seen slow progress, despite high rates of economic growth. Concerns about corruption under a dominant model of rule and the possibility of the MDM emerging as an opposition political force were part of the political landscape. Rising access to ICTs and new digital public space also featured.

In 2008, fuel price protests emanated from the *chapas* stops in the poorer suburbs that transport urban workers, comparatively low paid mostly younger men in the informal sector, into the city centre. Also in 2008, protestors sought to prevent bus service owners from raising fares, in a classic 'moral economy' mode of restoring morality to markets. In both 2008 and 2010, mobile phone messaging was reportedly a means of alerting protestors to action; in 2010, the Government of Mozambique responded by ordering service providers to halt service (with which order they complied).

Violence was used, both by protestors and in the police response, which featured live ammunition from an early stage. The immediate and violent resort to the street suggests an absence of alternatives in the form of formal or civic forms of representation for low income urban *chapas* users. Trades union leaders argued for more distributive economic and social policies, but did not notably come out in support of protestors; civil society organisations were similarly notable for their detachment from the concerns of the urban precariat (de Brito *et al.* 2014). The term used for these actions was 'greve' or strike, and has its roots in anti-colonial action. Popular cultural forms of amplification of protest messages through media such as hip hop music and cellphone ringtones appeared to have been important.

The Brighton Research Workshop explored further the significance of the *chapas* for Mozambicans from the periphery. People are trapped in poverty – living near prosperity, but without access to it (Tvedten, Roque and Bertelsen 2013). Of the groups that come to Maputo for a better life, only to be trapped in the peripheries, the youth are most active in the revolts, reflecting resentment about an extended 'waithood', featuring a prolonged adolescence forced by their inability to earn enough to gain true adult independence in the city (Honwana 2012). When people took to the streets they demanded immediate change. The songs, slogans and SMS messages were directly critical of the Frelimo political elite and the business elite (treated as indistinguishable), linking political unresponsiveness and arrogance with economic inequality. Not even opposition political parties engaged in the riots; formal civil society only responded against the police overreaction.

Popular culture was an important means of mobilising public opinion and galvanising protest. The popular and critically acclaimed Mozambican singer and songwriter, Azagaia, known in particular for his take on popular politics, became a key figure during the 2010 protests, when he was accused of inciting riots with his song 'Povo no Poder' ('Power to the People'), recorded after the 2008 protests. In *Minha Geração* (My Generation), Azagaia's raps about how his generation was the one that saw costs of living – but not wages – rise, and were criticised as lazy thugs, even while corrupt politicians crowd them into election rallies. The video shows Azagaia driving one of the iconic *chapas* vans, arguing that his is the 'generation of the competent, not the obedient', that 'does not allow the knot of its tie to/To choke down the cry of freedom that explodes in the throat' (see Figure 4.2).

Violence and disruption were important features of these protests. There is a clear need to include transport as a theme in the grievances and organisational space around which energy protests might emerge. The roles played by popular music in amplifying or crystallising popular concerns, how different music reaches different social groups, classes and generations, and the role of broadcast and digital music sharing are significant in understanding popular politics in Mozambique. The mobilising potential of popular music in this context is clear, where election campaigns feature musicians, and major stars are in great demand for election parties.

Figure 4.2: Still from Azagaia's Minha Geração video (2011)



Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFGh4Qp4Qaw. Reproduced with kind permission of [KISAL](#).

4.4 Nigeria

In Nigeria, the period 2007–17 was marked by almost two weeks of violent protests over fuel price rises that took place between 3 and 16 January 2012. Starting with 'thousands' in early January, by the middle of the month protestors were counted in the tens of thousands, and in locations across the country, including around Lagos, and in Kaduna, Benin City, and Kano. These protests 'accompanied a nationwide strike [which brought Nigeria] to a standstill with millions of trade union members downing tools' (Pflanz 2012).

The demonstrations aimed to enact:

popular outrage at the scrapping of a government-funded subsidy that artificially kept petrol, diesel and kerosene prices as low as 26p a litre. Overnight, prices had risen to more than 56p a litre. Millions of Nigeria's poorest people, who survive on less than £1.50 a day each, will be hardest hit by the price increase. 'This government is supposed to be there to protect us, to allow us to make business, to feed and clothe and educate our children, and now they are here shooting us,' said David Amosu, a civil servant who joined one rally in Lagos. (Pflanz 2012)

In addition to civil servants, the unions came out, broadly in support of the protests, but nonetheless attempting to curtail their violence:

One union leader described the federal government's hugely unpopular move as 'immoral and politically suicidal', and urged Nigerians to resist 'with everything they have'. But Tuesday's protest showed that, once unleashed, the pent-up anger of the masses could be hard to curtail. Angry crowds vandalised gas stations, intimidated owners into keeping their pumps unused and assaulted a soldier, showing how easily the fragile peace in Africa's most populous nation could spiral into chaos. One young man threw jerrycans of engine oil off the racks at a gas station and tried to damage the station's gas pumps. After union leader and chairman of the Joint Action Front, Dipo Fashina, asked the young man to stop vandalising the station, he did, but later started one of the first bonfires of the protest in the middle of the highway. (Alamba and Ibukun 2012)

The pressures on the Nigerian state from the fuel subsidy were significant (see Table 4.3), amounting to some US\$2.5bn annually. However, analysis indicated that reducing Nigeria's fuel subsidy was likely to increase government revenues, but could impact adversely on poor household incomes, through higher costs of fuel and goods depending on fuel (including food), unless public spending was made more redistributive (Siddig *et al.* 2014).

Early on, a connection was being drawn between corruption and the need to reform the fuel subsidy. Estimated at £5 billion a year, around a quarter of government spending, 'rafts of allegations that large tranches of the money were pocketed by corrupt cartel bosses' who benefited from Nigeria's lack of refineries, in Africa's largest crude oil exporter (Pflanz 2012)

Table 4.3: Nigeria, fuel subsidies in US\$ millions, 2014–16

	2014	2015	2016
Oil	3,515.9	2,438.8	2,472.3
Electricity	-	-	-
Gas	82.6	-	-
Coal	-	-	-
Total	3,598.5	2,438.8	2,472.3

Source: IEA fossil-fuel subsidies database, www.iea.org/statistics/resources/energysubsidies/ (accessed 20 December 2017)

Angry crowds vandalised gas stations, intimidated owners into keeping their pumps unused and assaulted a soldier (Alamba and Ibukun 2012).

The superstar musician Fela Kuti's son, Seun Kuti, came out in support of the protestors, marching shirtless among them, and speaking at protest rallies. One observer described how riot police repeatedly hit people with batons before firing into the air as the crowd, angered by the beatings, surged forward. 'They fired up, then they fired down, that's when people were hurt badly.' Elsewhere across the West African nation roadblocks with burning tyres were set up and hundreds of people marched through the streets with placards (Pflanz 2012).

One read: 'Soon the poor will have nothing left to eat but the rich'. T-shirts were emblazoned with 'Kill corruption not Nigerians'.

Contributions to the workshop noted that the protests in 2012 were unusual for Nigeria. Protests around fuel subsidy removal have a long history, but had rarely been so big or widespread before 2012, or connected so many different actors. The long history of

authoritarian rule has meant response to unrest is generally force, a small number of actors in a tight civic and political space, and protests and demonstrations that are limited in scope, rarely spreading north. Religious and ethnic difference typically come to play in protests or unrest, raising questions about mobilisation around ethnic or religious lines; this tends to dissipate the common material basis of such concerns, for instance, about fuel subsidies. But 2012 was different: spontaneous, widespread, and uniting union and civil society activists behind a common grievance. The atmosphere was friendly, people playing football in the street, being entertained by famous singers. Timing was a factor: the announcements took place during the Christmas holidays, when many people had gone home and found they were unable to return. Subsidy cuts were not what the people had voted for in the recent 2011 elections.

Looked at closely, the protests were not about fuel price rises alone. Placards and slogans included statements such as 'Kill corruption, not Nigerians'. The fuel price rises became connected to charges of corruption. The Opposition party was active, addressing crowds, sometimes supporting protests. These became very clearly expressions of accountability, compared to previous protests around fuel price hikes. The official response saw a mix of labour unions, civil society groups, and entertainers and the general public and asked who to negotiate with. The labour unions (mostly in the fuel and transport industries) came to the table, got a price reduction, some subsidies back, and a hardship fund for their members. The demands of the young people, civil society, activists on the street were ignored, but the state was able to break the coalition by getting the unions to call off the strike. Fatai concluded: 'When they were able to call in military etc., to tackle the 'rabble-rousers', that was the end of the Nigerian Arab Spring.' There is a generational dimension, in that the older generation is accustomed to military rule whereas young people have had their aspirations raised by exposure to social media. It is notable that fuel subsidy cuts in 2016, by contrast, provoked no protests, and the contrast between the two highlighted the importance of political context: the President in 2012 faced many complaints of corruption, in which context the withdrawal of the subsidy was seen as siphoning off the modest benefits drawn by the majority of citizens for yet further corrupt uses. It is important to note that in the 2012 oil subsidy protest, the unusual convergence of key rapporteurs of protests, i.e., civil society/civil right groups on the one hand and the labour unions on the other, brought a potency to the riots that produced an unintended consequence. Rather than cement the civil society-labour unions alliance, the 2012 oil subsidy protest and its attendant outcomes damaged mutual trust in such a way that forging a common front for future protests is uncertain. Civil society/civil right groups view the labour unions as unreliable, while unions perceive civil society as out of control, raising unrealistic demands. This lack of trust among the key mobilisers contributed to lack of coordinated popular response to the 2016 oil price hike in comparison to the 2012 protests.

By contrast, in 2016, the President had the image of an honest man, an anti-corruption crusader. His government framed the subsidy removal as part of the fight against corruption. Trades Unionists commented privately on the need to be patient, rather than to protest. Overall, what mattered was differences in public trust, perhaps particularly among the key organising actors, and the timing of the reform initiative itself.

Other contributions noted that the fuel subsidy was widely seen as the only social welfare that Nigerians received from the country's natural resource wealth, and so had symbolic as well as material value. Nigeria is also surrounded by poorer countries to which subsidised fuel is regularly smuggled. This vast illegal industry contributed to the tensions around fuel prices, as parts of the fuel industry profit from this trade. Protestors were arresting goats and holding impromptu roadside barbecues, while other 'below the line' expressions including people painting messages on their vehicles, and graffitiing. One protestor rode a donkey in a visual commentary intended to say, 'look, soon we won't have any fuel'.

The fuel protests of 2012 contributed directly to the 2012 Occupy Nigeria movement and the Enough Is Enough movement, with their strong emphasis on corruption. The selection of an anti-corruption Presidential candidate, and the political transition to the opposition, can also be connected to the 2012 struggles. 2012 was also marked by young people using social media to spread grievances and protests across the country (where in the past it would have been concentrated in the southeast). Since then, online activism had been increasingly energetic, but while more frequent, protests were generally small.

4.5 Pakistan

The Media Review/Events Mapping methodology returned comparatively few articles on Pakistan's energy-related protests. However, Pakistan's energy protests were in character and grievance protests more about access and shortages than sudden price hikes and subsidy losses; they were staged mainly by middle class rather than urban poor groups, with small and medium-sized business interests chiefly at stake and on the frontline of the protests. Energy access and shortages are concerns of the majority population, but fuel price rises are less prominent causes of protests in Pakistan, largely (it seems) due to the absence of an important fuel subsidy regime to trigger protests under austerity reform packages.

The Media Review/Events Mapping returned a small number of incidents, in 2008, 2010, a short series in 2012, and again in 2015. The politics of energy appears to be a pervasive feature of political discourse, with several articles predicting protests by transport owners or workers when fuel prices rises or shortages anticipated, sometimes because trades unions have used these to issue warnings to the government. From the limited information available, it seemed that Pakistani energy protestors were more likely to be associated with the transport and industrial sectors that depend most directly on access to affordable fuel for their incomes, comprising CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) station owners and employees, private transporters, cab drivers, industrialists, factory workers, traders, and farmers. The 'general population' were also said to have participated in some protests, but they were driven by clearly economic interests among reasonably well-organised groups.

Contributions to the workshop offered more insights into the nature, context, and effects of energy protests in Pakistan during the period:

Pakistan presents a salient case for the study of unruly ruptures and their impact, given the pervasiveness of formal and informal conflicts involving a range of actors as well as the vestige of a highly authoritarian state–society compact. These two legacies shape a context in which formal channels for grievance articulation, especially with regards to citizen rights and access to essential goods and services, are either weak or absent for extended periods.

Key factors include the nature of urbanisation and demographic change in Pakistan – which has the fastest-growing urban population in South Asia - and changing energy needs and demands. These are occurring in a context in which political parties remain dominated by elites, and leave little space for the articulation and incorporation of mass concerns – for instance, around energy access or affordability. Popular political space is limited, featuring low-levels of organisational presence and contact at the lowest-tiers of politics, while civil society organisations are weak, dependent on donor funding, and unevenly distributed in spatial terms.

At the same time, requirements for maintaining stable authoritarian rule and controlling popular pressures entailed a reasonably responsive social contract around basic needs provision. This was seen most clearly in the recent 2008 food crisis (see work by Haris Gazdar (2015) in particular on the moral economy of Pakistan's response in 2008).

The nature of the fuel policy regime is central: Pakistan phased out fuel subsidies under IMF reforms in the 2000s, and now petroleum taxes comprise a significant revenue stream. Many of the population rely on biomass as energy sources. These factors together help to explain why fuel price protests are few and far between – only around 9 in the period 2007–17, and mostly organised by transport workers and related associations. By contrast, protests around access and shortages, including around electricity, were frequent and widespread, with around 209 such incidents. Analysis of an existing database of contentious political episodes for Pakistan (Bueno de Mesquita *et al.* 2015; Butt 2016), indicated the large presence of informal groups, including citizens in low-income and informal neighbourhoods alongside professional/commercial unions and associations and political parties in protests around energy access and shortages in the period. At this time, it was possible to see images of bazaar traders and businessmen in suits marching alongside images of burning tyres, etc.

Repertoires included demonstrations and rallies, highway blockages, and sit-ins, often disruptive events focused on government offices. The period of June – July 2012 saw spontaneous protests erupt nationwide, including in several cities in Punjab, also most urbanised. Energy shortages are most acute in summer, without the relief of fans or air-conditioning. The state response was repressive, and at least 17 people were killed. But more repression would have been expected, and the relatively moderate response reflected that the police were under the opposition-led provincial government.

The ‘wave of anger around energy/fuel shortages during the period under review was capitalised upon by the then opposition party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN)’ which supported the protests, and put it at the top of their election manifesto for the 2013 elections to defeat the ruling Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) in the most populous and most urbanised province, Punjab. Umair Javed summarised the politics of energy protests as follows:

Commentators and analysts traced the scale of the PML-N’s victory down to the resonant framing of its campaign around the energy crisis, which helped build a voter coalition of disaffected elites (businessmen in particular) as well as marginalised groups in urban and rural areas.

Taking power in 2013, the new government undertook to improve power supply with new gas imports and Chinese-supported power plants. Supply problems have eased, and protests with them, although the overall problems of sectoral governance and long-term supply remain.

Discussions of the Pakistan case highlighted the limitations of the ‘price protest’ variable in the Media Review/Events Mapping methodology. The distinctively different nature of fuel-related protest in Pakistan and Zimbabwe compared to the countries with fuel subsidies facing austerity regimes reflects in substantial part the different ways in which people engage with the state over energy access or affordability. This points to the need for a stronger grasp of the political economy of fuel pricing strategy in the country, to understand the elements of difference prices of different types of energy, including of taxation.

The Pakistan case also highlighted the significance of cross-class alliances in energy-related protests, and in the incorporation of their grievances into the political party agenda. The PLMN opposition was able to capitalise on the discontent, which aligned well with its own business elite interests. The media played an active role in 2012, providing non-stop coverage, from its own socioeconomic and political bias, notably against the incumbent government. The elite politics of access to oil clearly matters here; private sector contributes around 60 per cent of oil refinery and distribution. Protestors are less focused on taxation than on access to natural gas and electricity, and on what is seen as a loss of access. People were used to stable energy access in the 2000s and therefore were not expecting

the loss of access. In Pakistan this was the first time an election focused on service delivery. It encouraged optimism about this newest phase of democratisation as about service provision.

4.6 Zimbabwe

The Media Review/Events Mapping exercise returned too few articles on Zimbabwe to develop a timeline of energy protests. In part this appears to reflect the nature and context of these protests: they were chiefly urban protests, often featuring comparatively affluent car-users; they were also closely integrated within a wider set of grievances about economic mismanagement and the effects on everyday life for the majority, and the connected issues of corruption and authoritarianism. Unlike all the other countries, these do not appear to have been centrally protests about energy specifically. In a context of political fragility, in addition, it is not clear that the international media would have perceived them as significant or newsworthy as mere protests about the cost of living (etc.), in the Zimbabwe context, at least.

The absence of much useable detail from the Events Mapping/Media Review means the following discussion relies chiefly on contributions to the workshop. There were particular similarities (lack of subsidy, long history of unbroken authoritarian rule) between Pakistan and Zimbabwe. Like in other countries, energy protests were not disconnected from broader grievances, including political complaints. With reference to the Zimbabwe case specifically, Simba referred to Wendy Willems' argument that we need to understand political resistance beyond dramatic revolutions and rebellions in the face of widespread surveillance and a culture of suspicion, which has effectively suppressed many forms of protests before they could go to scale. The government always contained the protests early through deployment of repressive state security apparatus, mainly through brutal response by the anti-riot police and sometimes the notorious Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) officials to intimidate protest leaders and participants.

Energy-related protests had been shaped by the protracted political and economic crisis since 1990s, but in particular by the recent period of hyper-inflation which reached its peak in 2008. Fuel imports were a huge drain on foreign exchange, so the currency reforms left the Zimbabwean government with a procurement challenge. It should be noted that protests took place, but the Mugabe regime had crushed these brutally. But much of the protests and disgruntlement was very contained compared to other cases.

The period 2015–17 had seen a spate of protests about fuel access and shortages, amidst wider concerns over cash shortages, increasing levels of (youth) unemployment, and legal restrictions on alternative and informal livelihoods. Government corruption and malpractice were considered the main cause for this dire state of the economy by many aggrieved citizens. These protests were different from mass protests between 1999 and 2001: they were not organised by formal civil society (NGOs, human rights organisations and the labour union) or opposition political parties like the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) but by urban residents, people disgruntled by the problems faced in everyday life, and some organised social media movements that had emerged since 2013. These struck a chord for various reasons. The #ThisFlag movement was started by a pastor draped in the flag posting a video about his struggles with everyday life matters – such as getting fuel for the car and failing to get money to pay his children's tuition at school among other problems. Within a day, the video that he posted on Facebook had been viewed 300K times, and sharers were using the national flag and the #ThisFlag to post their grievances, turning it into a comment on nationhood and nationalism, thus opposing the ways in which the state had promoted its own version of patriotic history and nationalism since 2000. Other movements included #Tajamuka – or agitated – 'we have become unruly' – with its roots in the informal vendor sector, and #ThisGown – unemployed graduates, become important part of the

protests (as noted above). These movements worked together to challenge the government to be accountable to citizens and to deal with the many problems that citizens were facing such as shortage of fuel, the increasing prices of energy, deepening corruption and massive unemployment.

Repertoires ranged from protests in the street, political rallies, barricades of roads, even commuters. On 4 July 2016 there was a violent standoff between commuters and police on a number of issues such as fuel and roadblocks (that are used by police to get bribes). Commuter operators and many people in Harare commented that it was becoming increasingly difficult to do business or to travel because of the bribes demanded by the traffic police and fuel prices that continued to skyrocket. Fuel dealers justified hiking fuel prices to the introduction of bond notes and the lack of foreign currency to import fuel. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) was struggling to provide foreign currency to business owners selling their products in local bond notes. Therefore, many of the fuel operators purchased expensive foreign currency in the informal parallel market (black market). Repertoires included subversive musical lyrics, comedy, petitions of government, use of social media to mobilise protests and articulate grievances. Prayer vigils were set up, in the belief the state would not harm or attack people kneeling and praying. Relying on such symbolic and spiritual forms of protests disempowered the brutal anti-riot police who could not beat up praying protestors. Some members of the #Tajamuka movement also offered flowers to the police in response to police brutality.

Social movements were largely apolitical and resisted being co-opted by political parties, although some protesters joined an alliance of opposition political parties under the banner of the National Electoral Reform Agenda (NERA). The protests are believed to have helped pave the way for the military 'soft coup' in November 2017, since the military needed to legitimise their action to especially SADC countries, and visible popular protest against President Mugabe would indicate support for his removal. In fact, the military urged the war veterans and leaders of the social movements to organise a massive protest in support of the military take-over. The march which legitimised the military take-over was on 18 November where protesters carried placards thanking the military generals for ousting former president Robert Mugabe. After the new government took over from Robert Mugabe, it made a statement on fuel prices and availability. The government ordered a decrease in fuel prices after reducing taxes and duty of fuel importation.

The Zimbabwe case again highlighted the role of religious leaders, which as Ayo pointed out was not new – Desmond Tutu in the anti-apartheid struggle, for instance. In Nigeria, even though more outspoken clergy are holding government to account, sharp religious division between Christians and Muslims prevail against faith-based actors making common cause. The use of symbols such as the flag drew attention to the grievances being expressed as issues of nationalism, and possibly therefore as above partisan or factional politics. But the nationalist struggle would lack the resonance for the younger generation it possessed for their parents and grandparents, who had indeed had a common experience.

4.7 Grievances and protestors

Common patterns across the countries indicate that these are clearly material grievances in the first stages of protests: these are, at least, initially, clearly complaints about the impacts of economic policy on everyday life. They often appear to start with young, low income urban groups, industrial workers (Myanmar, Egypt), or transport users (Mozambique, Nigeria). Subsidy reforms provide the classic political opportunity, making most (not all) of these protests a category of 'IMF riots'. Neither Zimbabwe nor Pakistan have had subsidies and in those settings, protests have focused on shortages and access, although prices have also played a role. In terms of who protests, and about what, it is clear that protests that start off being about material matters of the cost of energy quite quickly morph into political

complaint, and a critique of authoritarianism and in particular, corruption. These protests can then draw in or be taken up by wider circles and groups, including democracy campaigners, the middle classes, and the wider population. The '88 Generation Students group played a key initial role in Myanmar's 2007 events. In both Myanmar and in Zimbabwe, faith-based groups played a prominent role. In Nigeria and Mozambique, popular musicians articulated and amplified the grievances, and joined the protests. Pakistan saw a particularly wide range of class fragments and coalitions, bringing together business and factory owners with transport workers, commuters, and the general urban public.

4.8 Forms and expressions/repertoires

These took a wide variety of forms, apparently shaped by political context. Popular culture played a significant role in Mozambique and Nigeria, amplifying and dispersing grievances across populations, using songs and mobile phone ringtones to signal resistance to the new price regime. Across these settings, ICTs could become means of amplifying and organising, a fact which did not go unnoticed by governments, several of which moved soon after the events studied here to control or restrict virtual public space. But there were also instances, for instance in Nigeria and Egypt, where online organising or information had little discernible effect on the 'off-line' or real direct action.

The 'moral economy' was notably expressed within organised religion, through the involvement of faith-based actors in protests. The involvement of monks in Myanmar clearly introduced strong moral and ethical overtones into what had already quickly transformed from small peaceful protests about fuel prices into democracy struggles. Arguably, their apparently large-scale participation in the 2007 struggles, including the highly symbolic act of marching with their bowls upturned to signal rejection of support from – and therefore, for – the military – was part of a 'scale-shift'. That is, the problem went from being a specific concern about the cost of energy in a society already facing severe economic stresses, with rising world food and other prices beginning to bite, to a wider commentary on the moral authority of a state that does not deliver even basic public goods, but which represses demands for accountability for such failures. The scale-shift here involves a shift of the grievance from the sector to the system, and from the specific concerns of those most affected by energy price rises, to the generalised problem facing all consumers and citizens in closed, unresponsive political-economic systems. On the subject of repertoires, it should be noted that the so-called 'Saffron Revolution' was framed in very particular ways by a curious international media, which reproduced images of lines of protesting monks, a newsworthy story about a closed and secretive place. Informed views from within Myanmar suggest that monks' embeddedness within the wider society and the more complicated nature of their participation in the protests had to be taken into account to understand the rebellion. Popular pastors or church leaders were also at the forefront of popular grievances about fuel shortages in Zimbabwe, with Evan Mawarire leading the #ThisFlag protests about economic and political rights, which preceded Mugabe's removal in late 2017 in a coup d'état. A moral economic agenda was also present in how grievances about fuel prices were rooted in the urgent need for energy/ fuel/ transport to be able to work and provide for families, a theme which resonated across contexts.

In each of Myanmar, Egypt, Mozambique and Nigeria, the Nexis search uncovered clear indications that the protests were amplified and scaled-up from local or national economic conditions, into a bigger political challenge. In Mozambique and Nigeria, this involved significant disruption to the economy and to everyday urban life. In Pakistan, energy protests had visibly shaped the electoral contest that followed, and the implications for policy thereafter. In Zimbabwe, too, grievances about energy connected with wider urban protests about the everyday issues of prolonged economic crisis, gathering pace as part of the larger political struggles in the period since the end of the Government of National Unity in 2013.

4.9 Enduring effects and political legacies

These were frequently very violent events. In several cases protestors were clearly trying to re-establish the status quo ante, by pressuring local transport owners to keep prices low, for instance, in Mozambique and Nigeria. In each case, efforts to enforce a moral economy of energy prices, to disrupt everyday life, or to transgress political rules about public assembly, appear to have become violent only in response to state repression. In the decade in question, from crowds numbering in the hundreds to vast struggles involving hundreds of thousands of people took action in the knowledge of a reasonable risk that the state would respond with threats, troops using live ammunition, or even tanks. From an ethical standpoint, it is essential to keep the violence such protests can elicit at the forefront of our minds. These are highly dangerous forms of political expression: the critical question must be why public deliberation over energy and other costs of living must take place through the heated exchange of public protest?

Some of the outcomes that appeared to feature across the cases were that protests about material needs create space for expression of wider political discontent. This is a different point to that advanced by Andresen's (2008) public choice analysis, in which the political significance of energy protests (that they endanger the fragile legitimacy of authoritarian regimes, and have a history of being part of regime change) is limited to how these feature in the 'political logics' of ruling elites. A credible hypothesis may be that the particularly moral qualities of protests about basic subsistence secure them some protection against instant or total repression, in conditions where authoritarian rulers seek to protect or defend their legitimacy. In so doing, they create space for wider political complaint that cannot be voiced in the closed or restricted civic or political space. Protests that are sufficiently amplified by the media or other influential actors may demand an official response; how that response is formulated and who it seeks to benefit is likely to trigger further action, and counter-response. The cases here illustrate the importance of an iterative reading of series of protests as connected episodes with feedback effects and escalating triggers. Some of these price protests have created opportunities for organisation and mobilisation, and an associated critique of corruption or authoritarian rule. Yet it is not clear that fuel-related protests directly spawned important or lasting social movements or activist groups in Myanmar, Mozambique, or Egypt, although a more direct link between fuel energy and political transitions was traced in each of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Pakistan.

4.10 The roles of external actors

As noted above, the politics of energy are globalised and/or transnational in nature, so that key actors are only 'external' to events by a matter of degree.

The international and national media play distinct roles in these unruly politics of provisions. The international media does not cover each and every energy-related protest, and it may not always categorise or label such events in the same or a consistent way; much depends on the newsworthiness of the protest (see the Zimbabwe case).

The Media Review/Events Mapping methodology used a simple search and coding strategy; more sophisticated approaches are available, and could be applied to the Nexis database used here to greater effect. However, the rapid search and analysis enabled us to construct reasonably robust timelines with adequate basic information on the contexts, grievances, actors, repertoires, and responses. This data provides snapshots of moments as they unfolded (or as they were interpreted as unfolding), and therefore provide something of a corrective to the tendency to *post hoc* rationalisation in regard to major protest movements. However, it cannot gauge the relationships, prior ideologies and mobilisation histories, nor provide more than glimpses of any effects on empowerment and accountability. This highlights again the risks of depending on political events catalogues constructed chiefly from international media sources (as many are), and the need for attention to national media

discourses, activists and scholarly interpretations of these events to triangulate and challenge such perspectives.

It seems likely that the international media can help to amplify protests internationally and nationally, creating external pressures on the state and supporting 'scale-shift', when the grievance changes from being a localised and specific to a generalised and broad complaint about economic and political governance. The contrasting examples of energy subsidy cuts eliciting variously furious mass protest and silent acquiescence in Nigeria and Egypt draws attention to the role of the media in framing public opinion about such cuts.

Some key conclusions on the roles of external actors included the importance of the independence of domestic political actors for their credibility, and their vulnerability to elite charges that apparently spontaneous popular protests must have been engineered by external actors. This entailed sensitivity to how external support or approval of any kind may be viewed. The Mozambique case highlighted the gap between aid-funded civil society organisations and the popular protests around fuel and food, in which organisation civil society played no important role until the state responded with repression.

Powerful influences on fuel pricing policy include the IMF, and the group agreed that the fuel price protests specifically in this set were all a species of what Walton and Seddon would term 'IMF riots' or protests against the austerity regimes of structural adjustment policies (Walton and Seddon 2008). More needs to be understood of different groups and interests in different kinds of energy and policy in each country, and of the incidence of cuts in the short and longer terms. Subsidy cuts often appear to be implemented without reference to the local political climate, or the resistance they may engender, a substantial threat to lives and livelihoods.

Green energy reformers and other environmental actors also have a stake in these protests. Energy subsidies are generally highly polluting, and regressive. And struggles over energy are typically transnational (as the cases we saw here also showed). There is a nationalism of natural resources that warrants attention in these transnational struggles. In Mozambique, for instance, a huge dam to supply hydroelectricity to South Africa has raised questions such as 'why we produce energy for other countries, but have none for ourselves'. It was also noted that Chinese companies were the main partners in each of the big energy projects noted in these countries. However, this is a story about global change, and not merely Chinese investment. The main investors in the Mozambican energy sector have traditionally been the South Africans (hydro and gas) and Brazilians (hydro and coal), with the Chinese moving only recently into the Pemba gasfields on the heels of the Americans and Italians who were already there. In Myanmar, Thai and Italian investments were also contentious. Although China is by far the biggest player overall, there is a wider 'BRICS in Africa' / 'rising power subimperialism' story, itself overlaid on a much older story of energy exploitation by former colonial / hegemonic powers (Shell in Nigeria, Burmah Oil in Myanmar being classic examples).

5 Conclusions and implications for research and policy

Energy protests on the scale and of the significance identified in each of these countries appear to be a comparatively new phenomenon across the developing world, reflecting the pace and nature of urbanisation, and changing demand for energy in daily lives and livelihoods, including as foundational for the price of food. They appear to slow, if not block, structural reforms, and they also appear to morph readily into more political protests with far greater potential than their origins in fuel prices or outages would predict. The politics of provisions provides a framework rationale. The sheer volume of fuel protests indicates that there are new grievances and new arenas for claims-making (once about food, now as much about fuel). These could have important implications for state–society relationships in FCVAS, depending on how stable or fragile those are with particular groups.

Some of the preliminary conclusions from this analysis include that unlike food riots, fuel protests were indirectly related to global fuel prices, and tended to follow policy shifts rather than fuel prices themselves. The protests are thus not so much about malfunctioning of commodity markets, as a direct and unmediated claim on public policy, even though that is itself closely shaped by global energy markets.

Nonetheless, energy protests were also rooted in moral economy arguments about the basics of everyday life, in modern economies where people travel for work. These moral economy ideas rest not upon claims to protection against hunger, but reflect instead a rapid change in the demand and supply of energy and its use in everyday life: rapid urbanisation, patterns of urbanisation, transport provision, and household energy supply and demand are key elements in this story, which the present inquiry touched on very little. Urbanisation, and in particular, the presence of large low-income, precarious populations in peri-urban areas, places a particular premium on the costs of mass transport. Their moral basis was very likely strengthened by the involvement of credible, legitimate faith-based actors, including the monks in Myanmar and the church in Zimbabwe.

Energy-related protests, both fuel price protests against subsidy cuts (as in Myanmar, Egypt, Nigeria and Mozambique) and protests about energy shortages and outages (more in Pakistan, Zimbabwe, later in Myanmar) are common, possibly increasingly so. These also increasingly connect with protests about foreign investment in energy. It seems likely that as societies urbanise further and become more dependent on energy and transport, the politics of provisions will centre further on the politics of energy – who can access or afford what kinds, and how that is regulated and enforced.

In addition, while the moral economy nature of these protests about energy appeared to grant them some space for expression, grievances about energy often morphed very rapidly into political critiques of authoritarian rule and associated corruption, either in response to state repression of protests, through the support of more established political opposition actors for the struggle, or reflecting pre-existing grievances about the links between corruption, authoritarianism, and the economic conditions faced by the majority. These become fundamentally struggles over basic economic justice, and so challenge the distribution of political power in a direct way. Indeed, as scholars of fuel subsidies have noted, political complaints about energy are often associated with bigger threats to the popular legitimacy of a state, and have been linked to regime change in notable instances (Andresen 2008; Victor 2009; Strand 2013; Inchauste and Victor 2017).

While the present study highlights some of the mechanisms through which energy protests may be linked to wider processes of empowerment and accountability, it is beyond its scope

to document these in any detail. The sense of political agency acquired during successful protests may linger even when further protests are blocked by intensified repression. In the absence of strong grass-roots organisations and/or strong links with dissident elite factions (reformists within the ruling party, opposition parties, elite civil society groups) this sense of agency is not easily channelled into a more lasting renegotiation of the political settlement. We propose that energy protests may clear pathways to greater (political) power for the (politically) powerless to hold the powerful to account and identify some instances of that. However, it is clear that more work is needed to establish how these mechanisms play out in such settings, and the risks of violence and disruption associated with such protests.

Although energy protests can sometimes pack a powerful political punch, it is not clear to what extent marginalised and less powerful groups benefit from the gains achieved, either materially or in terms of enduring forms of political power. In some cases, other interest groups associated with such struggles, notably trades union activists, transport and related-business owners, and domestic political oppositions were often the prime beneficiaries, sometimes at the expense of the interests of the urban low income and precarious workers on the protest frontline.

The energy protest focus also provides a framework for looking at cross-class alliances, at how different categories of citizen come together over a common cause, with elite support and organisational backing. The question of who protests should also explore which groups depend on what energy, whether social media overcomes the rural/urban divide, and how different groups are incorporated into the political settlement (and therefore stand a chance of eliciting a benign official response).

We also need to understand better the conditions under which protests succeed in achieving their aims, and what it means to succeed. A short-term reversal of a subsidy cut may be a success. But does it lead to any more lasting organisational change that empowers marginalised protestors, or enable them to hold public authorities to account in a less dangerous way? Alternatively, may it strengthen moral economy ideas within the political culture, so that accountability takes the form of iterative or repeated struggles rather than formal institutions or behaviours?

5.1 Audiences

Who would be interested in research on energy protests? Fuel subsidy reform proponents, such as the IMF and the World Bank, have a clear interest in political economy analysis of the prospects for reform. These are generally heavily elite-dominated political scientist frameworks, with limited attention to popular grievances and claims, particularly as these play out in authoritarian or FCVAS settings. Research on energy protests, situated within a more nested understanding of the political economy of energy, could help to explain the politics of provisions within which energy protests have meaning. The research should also be of value to the green and anti-fossil fuel movements, in helping to make sense of the popular struggles faced in rapidly urbanising settings. As Azagaia pointed out, these struggles should galvanise investment in renewable alternative energies.

International aid donors and human rights champions would find this research useful to ground the material and the governance dimensions in an integrated analysis of empowerment and accountability processes as they actually occur. This would help identify new entry points and more effective strategies for amplifying social justice and human rights concerns, including developing better capacities to take ‘the pulse of the street’.

Fuel price protests, and energy protests in the South in general, have been studied very little to date. The empirical and theoretical work needed to undertake such a study would

contribute a wider range of repertoires and more transnational contexts of struggle, in the specific settings of fragility and conflict.

5.2 Key research questions/hypotheses

Key questions to ask of the relationship between energy protests and the empowerment and accountability of marginalised groups in FCVAS settings include:

- Are energy protests more important in FCVAS than in more stable political settings? How have these patterns changed over time? Which features of FCVAS settings make these modes of protest more common?
- How does energy feature in the politics of provisions in different settings, with differing energy demand? Which groups suffer most from fuel poverty and/or dependence on fuel use? How does 'natural resource nationalism' feature in contention about energy policy?
- In which spaces (e.g. transport hubs, social media, news media) and with which repertoires (peaceful and playful, disruptive or transgressive) have energy protests amplified into widespread popular grievances? What role do cultural forms and memes – music and images – play in this amplification? What do we learn from moments when predicted protests fail to materialise?
- Are energy protests more likely to attract cross-class alliances over key grievances – and therefore to succeed in their aims (cf. protests about food prices, which mainly affect the poor)? To what extent are the interests of marginalised and disempowered groups, as distinct from party or other political group interests advanced by such struggles?
- Are there specifically generational dimensions to waves of protest: young people may have very specific relationships to energy and the associated right to travel, and may have higher expectations of their state than their parents. How do such generational differences shape the dynamics of energy protests?

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