

Modeling the Repression-Dissent Dynamic: A Network Approach

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Abstract

Modeling the repression-dissent nexus has long been an empirical challenge, and this challenge looms large when we consider the fact that both repression and dissent comprise a **wide variety of tactics** imperfectly captured in standard violent-nonviolent empirical dichotomies. I introduce a network approach to model the interdependent tactics between repression and dissent behaviors. A network based on actions, rather than actors, can discover actions typically clustered together and identify tactics triggering escalation of violence and mutual spiraling. This approach has a number of advantages: It captures the complex interplay of actions in the repression-dissent dynamic, provides special leverage to analyze the repertoires of contention at the micro-tactic level, and enables prediction of future interactions. I apply this method to cross-national resistance event data from 1990-2012 in which tactics employed by the state and opposition are documented. The result shows that this network approach significantly outperforms the standard approaches in predicting types of state repression on resistance movements.

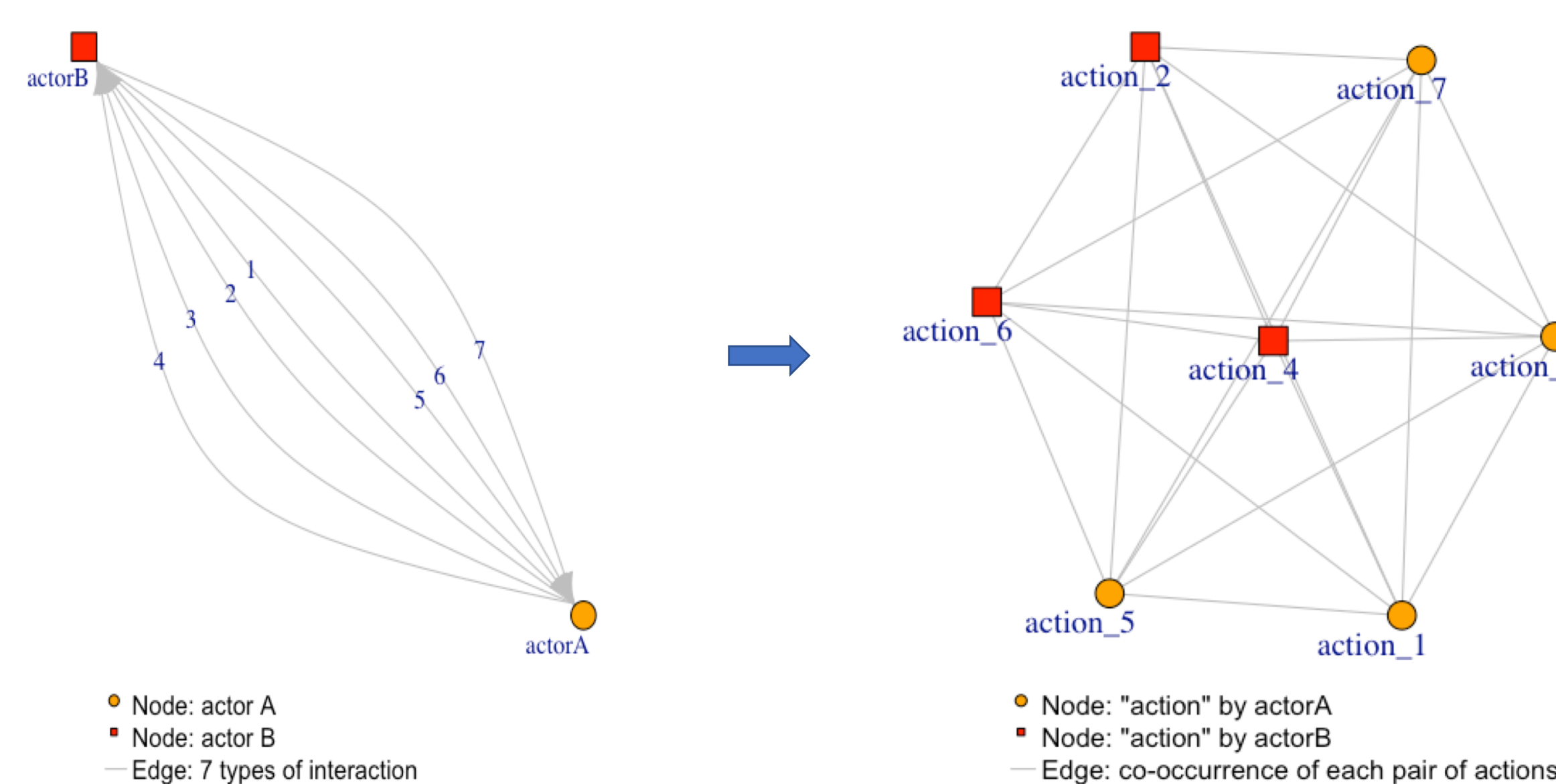
Research Question

- How do dissent behaviors interact with state responses (e.g. repression)?
- How can we study this interaction between different **types** of dissent and repressive actions?
↳ longstanding questions/debates in political science literature

A Network Approach to Modeling the Dynamic

- Traditional networks: Given one type of interaction → model the variation in actors
- Action-based networks: Given a set of actors (e.g. two sides) → model *multiple types* of interactions

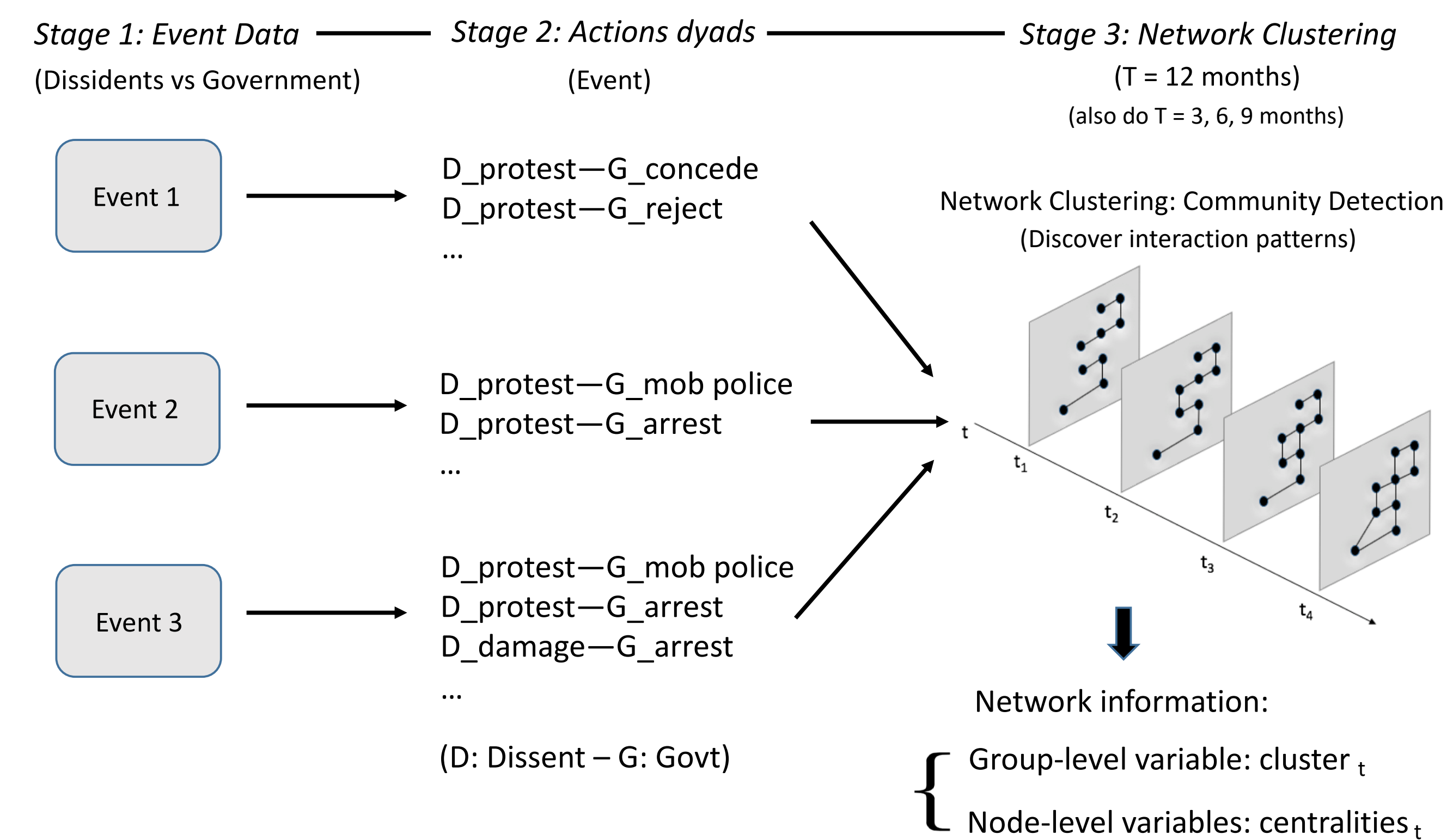
Figure 1: Converting Traditional Networks to Nodes-as-'Actions' Networks



Application

Event-Tactic Data: Nonviolent and Violent Civil Resistance Outcomes event data (NAVCO v3.0) on anti-government campaigns

Converting to Network Data:



Examples of Tactic Clusters in Egypt, 2008, 2011

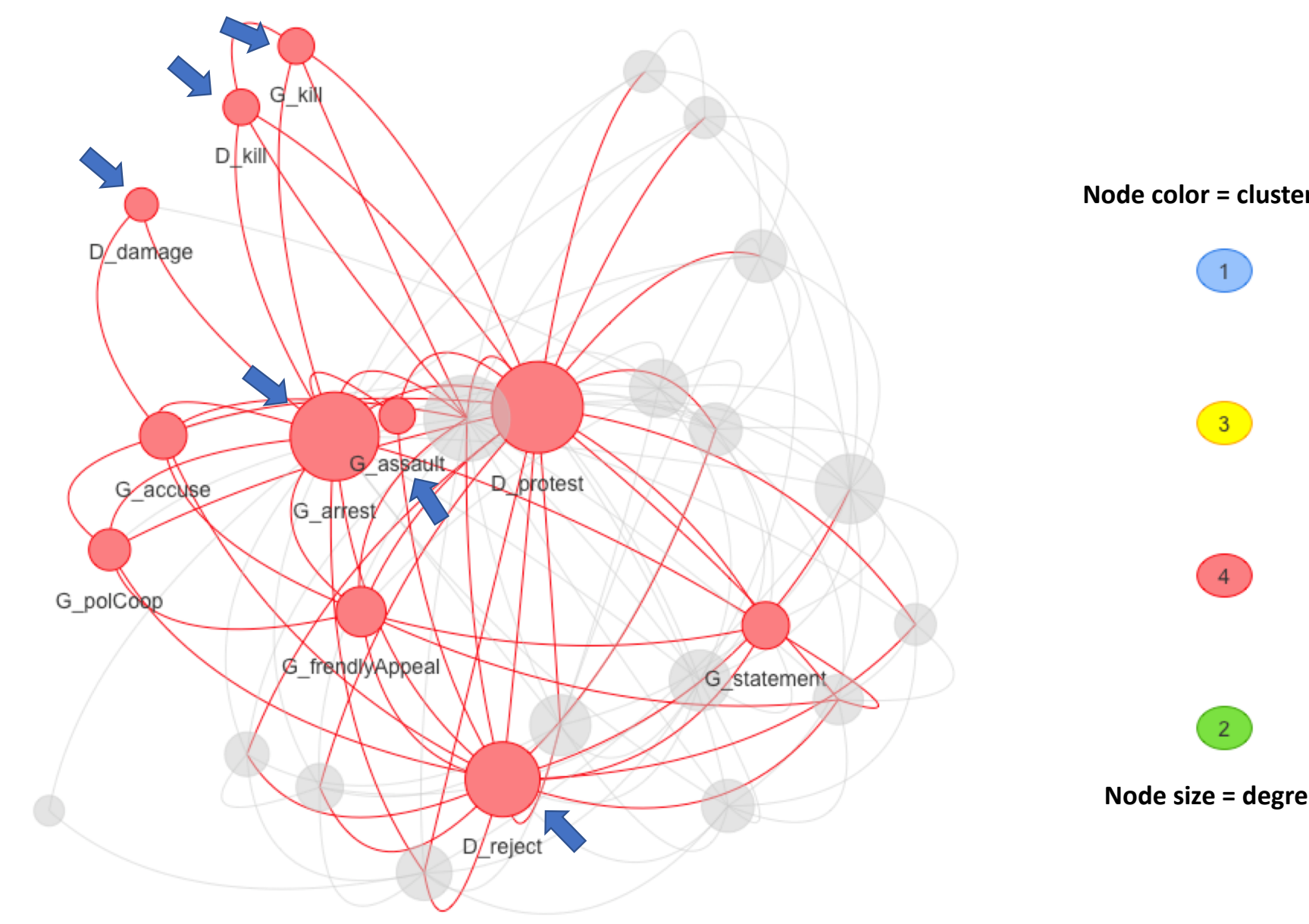
- No conflict escalation: repressive tactics, such as mobilizing police and arrests, were effective in dissuading conflict escalation

Figure 2: The Protest Cluster, 2008



- Severe conflict escalation: both sides often employed more violent tactics against each other
- Violence was mutually stimulated, eventually leading to mutual spiraling

Figure 3: The Protest Cluster, 2011



Event Example

Story title: Clashes as police prevent Berber march in Algeria (Tizi Ouzou city, 2002-07-25)

- D_demand: “Leaders of the Berber minority had planned the march in Tizi Ouzou, the Kabylie capital, to **demand** the release of comrades...”
- D_protest, D_reject: “Demonstrators **marched** in defiance of a **ban** on a planned protest march.”
- G_mob police: “Police were **deployed** heavily around Tizi Ouzou”
- D_clash, G_clash, G_disperse: “On the western edge of Tizi Ouzou, security forces **clashed** with protesters ...; **Skirmishes** also broke out near a theater ...; Police used **tear gas** to **disperse** groups of marchers ...”

Result: Predicting State Repression

Baseline model: standard covariates (in the literature)

Network model: standard covariates + network variables

→ Regression model: logit regression

Figure 4: Out-of-sample Prediction (Logit): 2010-2012

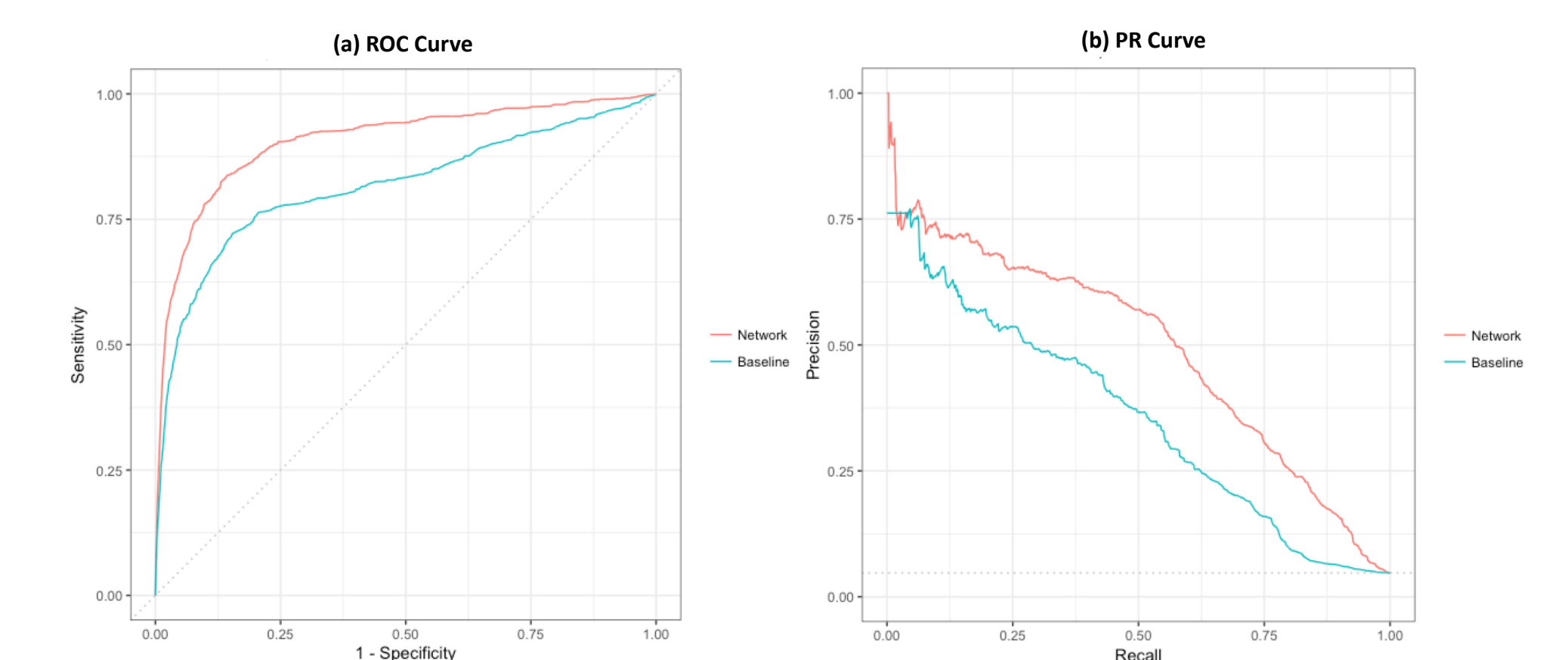
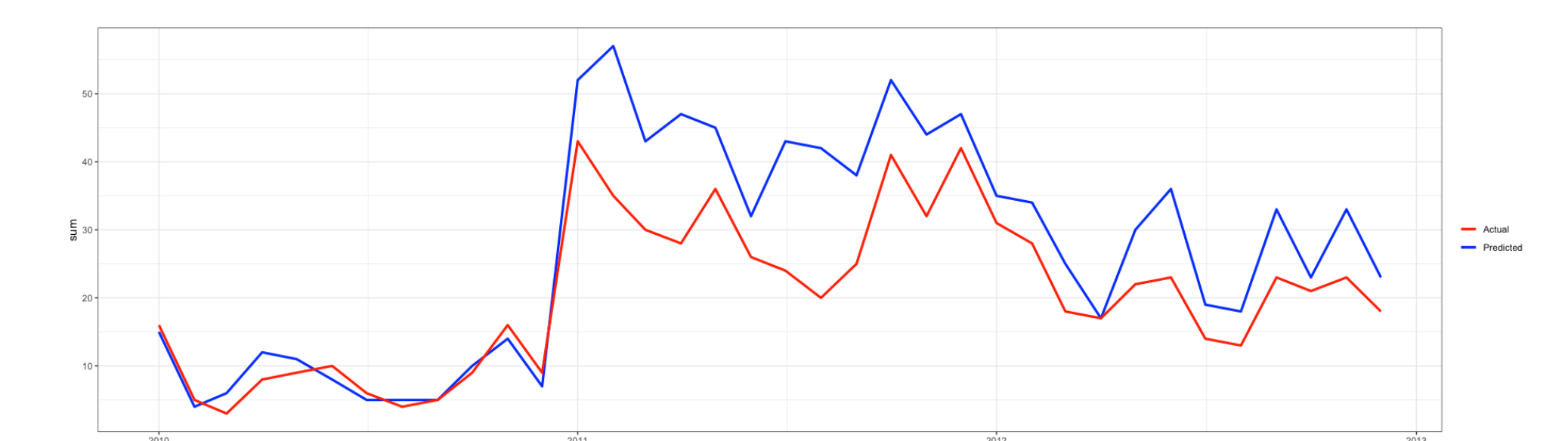


Figure 5: Out-of-sample Prediction: Protest v.s. Arrest



Discussion

- The action-based network provides a simplified way to capture complex dependence between repression and dissent tactics, reveal hidden processes of conflict escalation, and enable prediction of future interactions
- Opens the door of a host of new research: 1) a new avenue to study escalation of violence under different conditions (e.g. electoral violence) 2) helps investigate questions on when repression-dissent conflict will lead to large-scale mobilization and regime transition