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## Digital Repression and Conflict Violence

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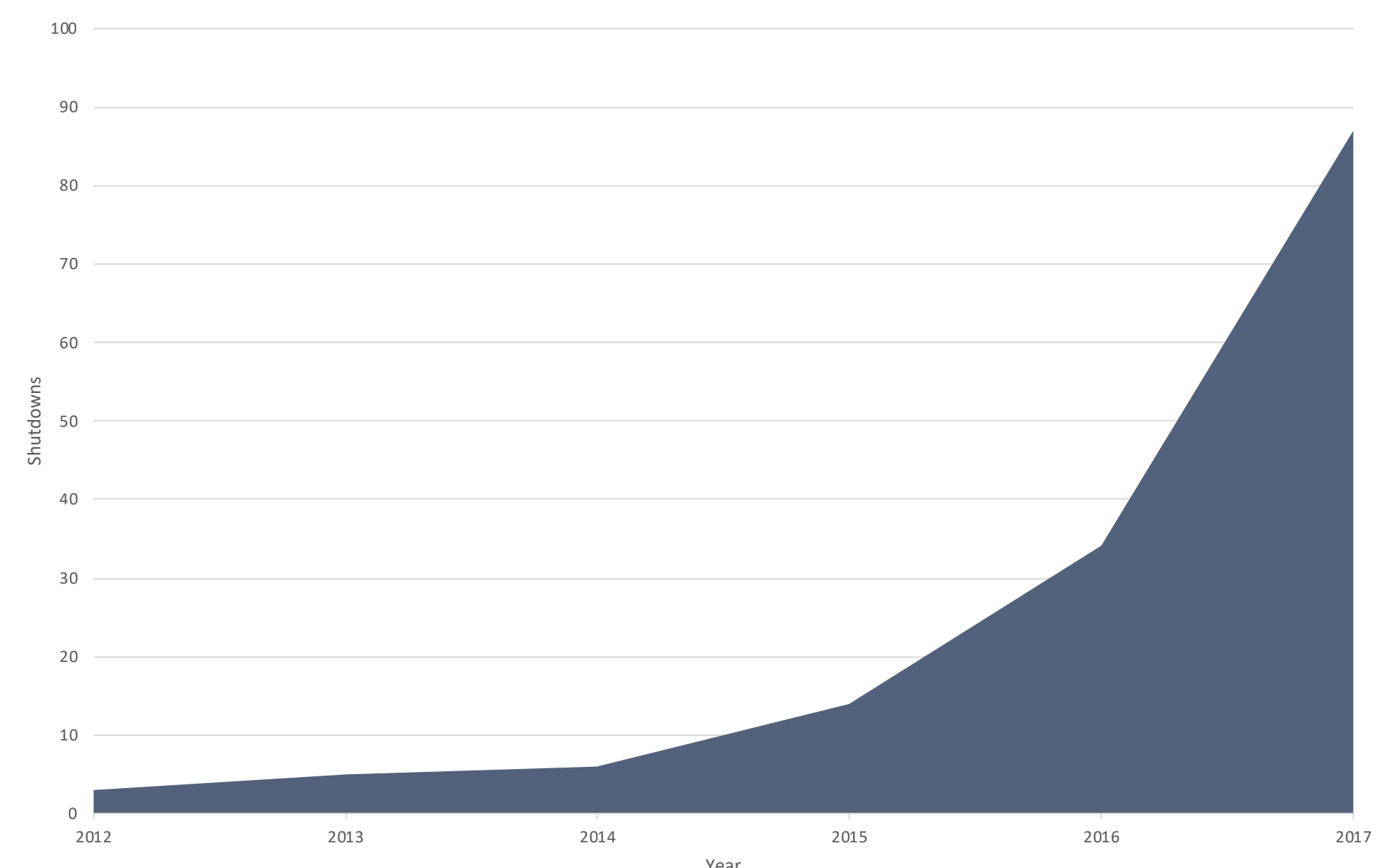
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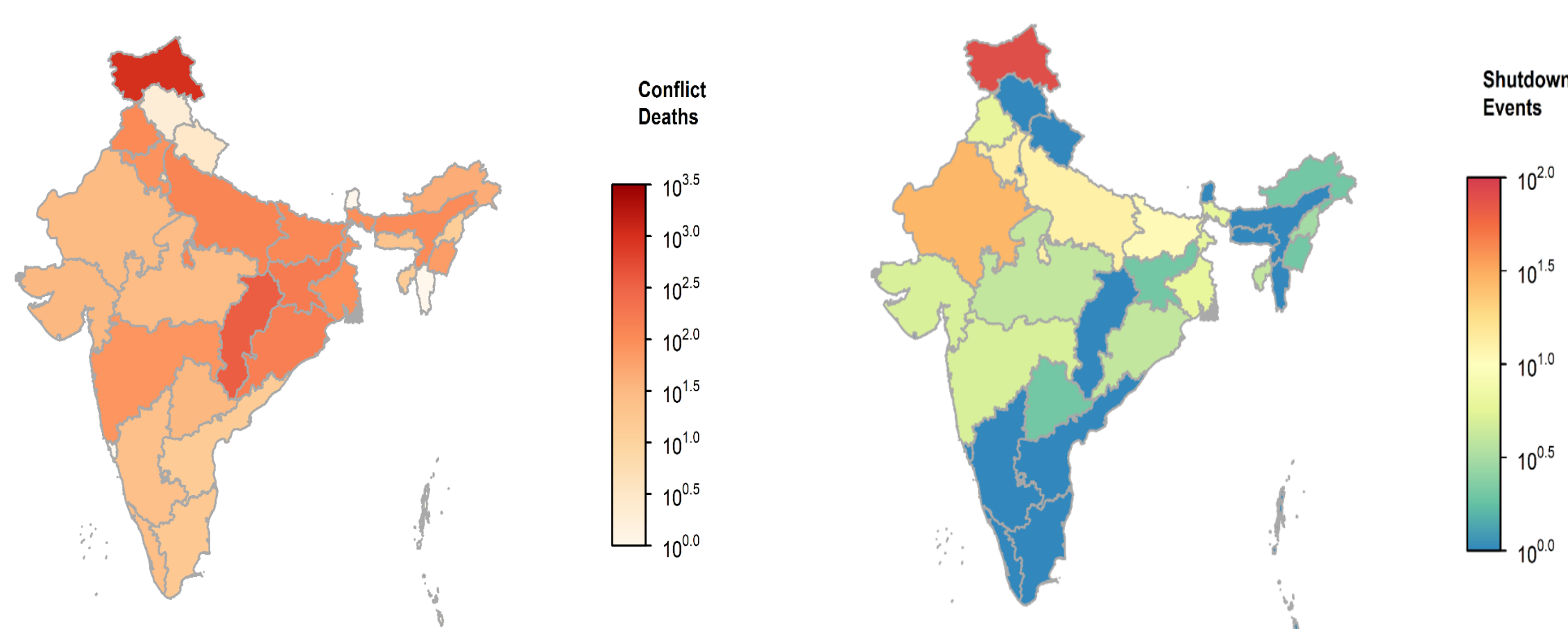
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## Background, Question, Argument

- The Arab Spring drew significant attention to the use of social media during civil unrest. Globally governments started acknowledging the power in networked collective action and adapted to counter it through digital repression.
- Now, almost a decade after the Arab Spring, India leads the way in government-enforced digital repression.
- Research indicates India attempts contain and stop voice by turning off internet and cellphone services. This thesis examined if these efforts are effective.
- Findings indicate that this is not an effective tactic to stop violence, and in fact, shutting off the internet and cell phones has the inverse effect of increasing violence in the days following a digital shutdown event.



Trend of Digital Shutdowns in India



Comparing Digital Shutdowns and Violence across India

## Research design

- Do the days following a digital shutdown event see an increase in violence?
- Quantitative research used: Armed Conflict and Location Event Data (ACLED), containing 30,000 civil unrest events in India from 2016-2018 and the Shutdown dataset (that was specifically coded for this research) containing 150 digital shutdown events from 2016-2018.
- Qualitative research used: Case study on the April 2018 #Bharatband protests, which involved digital shutdowns and violence

Poisson Regression—Shutdowns and Violence.

	Dependent variable:		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
shutdown	2.233*** (0.083)	1.718*** (0.088)	1.301*** (0.087)
shutdown_lag1	1.634*** (0.099)	1.176*** (0.097)	0.912*** (0.096)
shutdown_lag2	1.079*** (0.118)	0.557*** (0.118)	0.503*** (0.117)
shutdown_lag7	1.096*** (0.116)	0.718*** (0.112)	0.857*** (0.110)
days		0.011 (0.010)	0.025** (0.010)
peace_days		-0.029*** (0.001)	-0.025*** (0.001)
military_violence			2.057*** (0.043)
protest			0.076*** (0.003)
Constant	-2.497*** (0.020)	-1.508*** (0.026)	-1.997*** (0.030)
Observations	29,750	29,750	29,750
Log Likelihood	11,146.810	-9,789.663	-8,811.309
Akaike Inf. Crit.	22,303.630	19,593.330	17,640.620

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## Results

- Research indicates there is a significant increase in violence in the days following a shutdown event.
- Using digital repression to reduce or stop violence during civil is not an effective tactic.

## Why this matters

- Technology and human behavior is deeply intertwined. As digital technology advances faster than norms can be established, governments will continue to grapple with how to deal with the increasing trend of networked collective action.

