Pre-election violence and territorial control: political dominance and subnational election violence in polarized African electoral systems

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Abstract: Cross-national research on African electoral politics has argued that competition increases the prospects for pre-election violence. However, there is a dearth of systematic research on the effect of political competition on pre-election violence at the subnational-level. We theorize that in African democracies characterized by competition at the national-level but low subnational competiveness (polarization), violence is often a manifestation of turf war and a tool to maintain and disrupt political territorial control. Consequently, contrary to expectations derived from the cross-national literature, pre-election violence is more likely in uncompetitive than competitive constituencies. Locally dominant as well as locally weak parties have incentives to perpetrate violence in uncompetitive constituencies. For locally dominant parties, violence is a tool to shrink the democratic space in their strongholds and maintain territorial control. For locally weak parties, violence can disturb the dominance of the opponent and protect their presence in hostile territory. We hypothesize that pre-election violence will be particularly common in opposition strongholds. In such locations, ruling parties can leverage their superior repressive resources to defend their ability to campaign, while the opposition can use their local capacity to reinforce the politics of territoriality. We test our hypotheses with original constituency-level election violence data from the 2016 Zambian elections. Data come from expert-surveys of domestic election observers and represent a novel way of measuring low-level variations in election violence. Our analysis shows patterns of pre-election violence consistent with our theory on pre-election violence as a territorial tool.

A recent estimate of election violence across sub-Saharan Africa shows that a majority of all election campaigns featured some degree of violence (Straus & Taylor, 2012). Empirical research has suggested that competitive elections, where the ultimate outcome is uncertain, are more prone to violence than less-competitive contests. When competition is high, political elites are more willing to engage in illicit tactics, including violence, to maintain or gain power over the state machinery and vital resources (Fjelde & Höglund, 2016; Hafner-Burton, Hyde & Jablonski, 2014).

The relationship between competition and election violence has been confirmed in several African countries like Kenya (Kanyinga, 2009; Boone, 2011), Côte d'Ivoire (Straus, 2011), Nigeria (Bratton, 2008), and Zimbabwe (Bratton & Masunungure, 2007; Lebas, 2006), where political actors have resorted to violence to manage electoral uncertainty. However, apart from high-levels of competition, the aforementioned countries have one additional similarity: they all have highly regionalized voting patterns and consequently low-levels of subnational competition. Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe all belong to a group of countries we will here refer to as *polarized electoral systems*. We define these systems as those that combine high-levels of national competition with low-levels of subnational competition. Such systems make up a great share of Africa's more competitive democracies, where electoral patterns remain highly regionalized and local bloc voting is prevalent despite increased-levels of national competition (Ichino & Nathan, 2013; Wahman, 2017). Polarized electoral systems introduce an important puzzle: if competition breeds violence, how can violence persist in countries where few subnational locations are competitive?

The conventional view of competition and pre-election violence does not offer much of an explanation of persistently high-levels of election violence in polarized electoral systems. Like other forms of manipulation, pre-election violence is associated with costs (Robinson & Torvik, 2009). All

else being equal, political actors should be more willing to bear those costs when competition is high locally *and* nationally, particularly if local elections run concurrently with national elections and parties are fighting to win marginal parliamentary seats.[1] This leaves us with three possible explanations for why polarized electoral systems may experience high-levels of election violence: (i) subnational-levels of competition are inconsequential for aggregate levels of violence; (ii) most violence in polarized electoral systems occurs within the rare islands of competitiveness; (iii) or competition plays a markedly different role in determining election violence at the national and subnational-levels. We will make an argument for the last proposition.

In this paper, we shift the focus from the national to the subnational-level to uncover a more complex relationship between competition and election violence in polarized electoral systems than previously acknowledged. Although most quantitative work on election violence has studied cross-national variation (Daxecker, 2014; Fjelde & Höglund, 2016; Hafner Burton, Hyde & Jablonski, 2014; Straus & Taylor, 2012; Taylor, Pevehouse & Straus, 2017; von Borzyskowski, 2014), several recent studies have concentrated on subnational dynamics of election-related conflict (e.g., Dercon & Guitérrez-Romero, 2012; Malik, 2018; Reeder & Seeberg, 2018). However, these studies do not theorize that competition plays a markedly different role on the subnational-level than it does at the cross-national level. Focusing particularly on pre-election violence,[2] the most common form of election violence in sub-Saharan Africa (Daxecker, 2014; Taylor, Pevehouse & Straus, 2017), we argue that subnational dominance—where one party is significantly stronger than its closest rival—

[1] See, for example, Birch (2007) on how single member district elections incentivize electoral manipulation to tip elections in competitive constituencies.

[2] We use Höglund's (2009: 417) definition of pre-election violence as violence carried out before an election "to influence the electoral process and in extension its outcome." Accordingly, pre-election violence should be understood as a tool of electoral manipulation (Birch, 2011). The perpetrators of violence may vary, and the targets of violence can include a wide array of people, such as voters, candidates, and election officials, but also objects, such as campaign vehicles, roads, or party headquarters. Pre-election violence in the most extreme cases may result in fatalities, although election violence need not entail fatalities.

rather than competition, is conducive to higher levels of pre-election violence. Thus, our argument for the subnational-level contrasts with the dominant argument presented in the cross-national literature.

We argue that political geography is crucial to understand elections in polarized electoral systems. Pre-election violence in polarized electoral systems can be understood as a tool for what Robert Sack (1986: 1) labels 'territoriality', i.e. 'a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area.' We argue that pre-election violence fills a dual role. First, it can be used to shrink the democratic space, by preventing effective campaigning by rival parties inside a party's stronghold. Second, it can be used to break the politics of territoriality and defend a party's presence inside an area dominated by a rival party. It is this combination of high-level national competiveness and low-level subnational competition that is particularly conducive to violence. On the one hand, parties have incentives to use violence to tip the balance in nationally competitive elections. On the other hand, subnational dominance makes violence a useful tool to preserve and contest the politics of territoriality. If competition is high at the national-level, parties cannot afford defection in their strongholds. Without securing super majorities in their strongholds they are likely to lose close national elections. We argue that pre-election violence is more likely in all uncompetitive constituencies, but the highest level of violence will be observed in opposition strongholds. In these constituencies, ruling parties can leverage their superior resources to perpetrate violence outside their own home turf, whereas opposition parties can use their considerable local capacity in an attempt to reinforce their territoriality.

We leverage a subnational analysis of the 2016 Zambian elections to test our theory on pre-election violence and subnational dominance. The analysis uses a dataset based on 464 surveys with

domestic election observers and offers an innovative way to measure subnational variations in election violence. Our method for measuring election violence across space assures systematic coverage and local disaggregation to a level not possible with frequently used event-datasets that tend to introduce systematic measurement errors (Eck, 2012; Weidmann, 2015; von Borzyskowski & Wahman, forthcoming).

Our analyses show results consistent with our understanding of pre-election violence as a territorial tool. The quantitative tests reveal that violence in the 2016 Zambian elections was particularly common in uncompetitive constituencies and in constituencies controlled by the opposition. Our findings have important implications for research on election violence in Africa and beyond. They highlight the need to understand the way in which election violence fills a role in shaping local electoral environments, not only how it affects micro-level political behavior. They also contribute to the burgeoning literature on subnational authoritarianism and highlight the importance of political geography in the study of election violence.

Pre-election violence and political campaigns in polarized electoral systems

To understand how pre-election violence persists in polarized electoral systems, we first need to understand the role of pre-election violence in electoral competition. Most theorizing on the matter is skeptical that pre-election violence can be used to effectively persuade swing voters or attract the support of new voters (e.g., Collier & Vicente, 2012; Robinson & Torvik, 2009). Some have even questioned its effectiveness as an electoral strategy and argued that voters respond negatively to parties engaging in violence (Rosenzweig, 2017).

If violence is ineffective for attracting swing voters and it can backfire on the perpetrator, why has pre-election violence persisted in African elections? The most plausible answer is provided by scholars who stress the potentially demobilizing effect that violence may have among voters. Through peddling in fear, parties can utilize pre-election violence to reduce turnout for rival parties (Collier & Vicente, 2012; Rauchenbach & Paula, forthcoming). Although intuitively sound, Bekoe & Burchard (2017) found no aggregate negative relationship between levels of pre-election violence and electoral turnout in African countries.

While concentrating mainly on micro-level behavioral consequences of violence (e.g., vote choice or decisions to abstain or participate in voting), earlier work on pre-election violence paid insufficient attention to political geography and the significance of violence in shaping the local electoral environment; however, the effect of violence may be more noticeable on the meso- than the micro-level. Existing studies have recognized that pre-election violence may shape political participation, but have understood participation narrowly by concentrating only on voting. We do not contest the idea that violence *may* be used to deter turnout, but participation involves a much wider array of activities, such as the ability to campaign, attend political rallies, articulate opinions, or canvas. When violence affects parties' abilities to engage in such activities, it may affect vote choice. This occurs not directly, through changes in voter preferences, but indirectly by shrinking the democratic space and disabling effective competition. For example, after experiencing systematic violence from government party cadres in the 2016 Zambian elections, supporters of the opposition were asked by their party not to display their party colors publically.[3] These supporters were unlikely

[3] More specifically, the so called "water melon" operation encouraged voters of the opposition United Party for National Development (UPND) to wear their red party colors underneath the green party colors of the government party to prevent being victimized.

to change their vote choice, but the visual absence of opposition party colors most likely affected the impression among voters of the viability of the opposition.

Due to low penetration of national media and low levels of nationalization, African parties have invested heavily in political rallies as a central campaign tool, particularly in polarized electoral systems such as Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia (Beardsworth, 2018a; Brierley & Kramon, 2017; Horowitz, 2010; Paget, 2018; Rauchenbach, 2017). The aim of such campaigning techniques is to show local viability. Recent research has shown that African voters tend to favor locally viable candidates (Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Ichino & Nathan, 2013) and overestimate the national strength of locally-popular parties (Horowitz & Long, 2016). Parties cannot rely on national communication to win support in an area. A party that is unable to show local presence cannot expect to win a significant share of the vote in that locality. Parties that have the ability to mobilize impressive crowds can demonstrate their local presence to voters. Drawing on earlier work on electioneering in the West (e.g., Chen & Reeves, 2011; Rohrschneider, 2002), studies on the locations of African rallies have argued that rallies tend to be targeted towards swing districts (Horowitz, 2010) or strongholds in an attempt to mobilize the base (Rauchenbach, 2017). But in a study on Zambia, Beardsworth (2018a) shows that parties also target areas where they traditionally had little support. This strategy is aimed at explicitly showing increased viability in the targeted locality.

Political dominance and violence as a territorial tool

In polarized electoral systems where parties strive to maintain and break territorial control and perceptions of electoral dominance, violence fills an important role. In short, parties use violence to perpetuate local dominance in their strongholds and attempt to forge entry into the electoral arena

in opposing parties' strongholds. Violence, according to this understanding, is primarily a tool to shape the local electoral environment.

In the African context, violence has often been used in uncompetitive constituencies by locally dominant parties as a form of 'anti-campaigning.' Reports from polarized electoral systems like Malawi and Zambia have described the creation of 'no-go zones,' where local power brokers prevent rival parties campaigning, and make voters fearful of attending opposition parties' rallies or wearing opposition party branded attire. This sends a signal that rival parties are not welcome and that voters should not display affinity towards parties other than the locally dominant one (Authors' interview, Choma, 12/22/2016).[4] For example, in the Malawi 2014 election, cadres associated with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) perpetrated violence against supporters of the People Party (PP) when PP's presidential candidate, Joyce Banda, held a rally in a DPP stronghold constituency in Thyolo (Dionne & Dulani, 2014). The violence resulted in two fatalities. Nevertheless, it helped reinforce the territoriality of the local hegemon; the DPP won 91% of the vote in Thyolo.

One might argue that this kind of violence, sparked by locally dominant parties, may be counter-productive for the perpetrator, as it could deter turnout in a party's stronghold. However, such risks are limited if pre-election violence is targeted against minorities, outsiders, and hardcore rival party supporters (Collier & Vicente, 2012). Although the risks are small, the potential electoral benefits are significant: if a locally dominant party is able to deter competitors from actively

[4] To develop the causal mechanisms suggested in the theory, we conducted three focus groups with domestic election observers active in the Zambian 2016 elections, each with five participants. Participants represented 15 different constituencies, and discussions were conducted in Lusaka, North-Western, and Southern Provinces between December 2016 and January 2017. These provinces represent urban (Lusaka and partly Southern) and rural areas (North-Western and partly Southern); government (Lusaka) and opposition-dominated areas (North-Western and Southern); and competitive (Lusaka) and dominant areas (North-Western and Southern).

campaigning or diminish crowds at their rallies, it will be able to perpetuate the perception of local dominance and diminish the losses from elite and voter defections. In polarized electoral systems, parties cannot afford to lose control over their strongholds and allow rival parties to chip away their overwhelming vote margins. Limited defections in strongholds are likely to result in an inability to win national majorities if rival parties are able to maintain their dominance on their own home turf. Violence is unlikely to kill the campaign of a rival party in a competitive area, where the party enjoys the support of a critical mass of supporters, but it can be very effective in places where the rival party is mobilizing mostly local minorities or small pockets of support. Voters that are already prime targets of repression and social exclusion are particularly likely to refrain from participating in the electoral campaign when the campaign turns violent.

Parties not only use violence in their strongholds to protect inroads from challengers, but also use pre-election violence in rival party strongholds to protect their ability to contest and participate in the local electoral environment. If parties can compete and show presence in their rivals' strongholds, particularly the more populous ones, this undoubtedly imposes high costs on their rivals. When faced with a hostile environment, parties with the ability to show repressive capacity are more likely to contest the dominance of rival parties. In this way, parties can forge entry into enemy turf and protect their place in the environment, thereby widening the space that the opposing party attempts to shut. In Zambia in 2016, the ruling party brought foot soldiers for protection when conducting rallies in the opponent's strongholds. Such foot soldiers were often responsible for using excessive violence to deter any attempts at 'de-campaigning.' (Authors' interview, Choma, 12/22/2016). We therefore formulate *H1*:

> *H1*: Pre-election violence is more likely in uncompetitive constituencies than in competitive constituencies.

The importance of capacity to engage in election violence

As emphasized previously in studies on election violence and other forms of electoral manipulation, pre-election violence is not simply a function of demand. Violence and other forms of manipulation require capacity and agents willing to engage in illicit acts on behalf of a reliable patron (e.g., Rundlett & Svolik, 2016; Taylor, Pevehouse & Straus, 2017). Such capacity varies between incumbent and opposition parties.

Local dominance enhances a party's capacity for violence. Locally-dominant parties can offer agents credible access to patronage networks and shield perpetrators from repercussions for engaging in violence. Although locally-weak parties have incentives to use violence to disturb their opponent's territorial control, organizationally-weak and cash-strapped African parties often lack the capacity to do so outside their strongholds. Indeed, empirical research has shown that African incumbent parties are responsible for the bulk of pre-election violence on the continent (Birch & Muchilinski, 2017; Hafner-Burton, Hyde & Jablonski, 2014; Straus & Taylor, 2012). In the Zambia 2016 elections, the ruling party had enough resources to recruit predominantly young, local, underemployed men in the city to work in political campaigns. These men were paid small sums of money and were often equipped with military-style attire to project strength and instill fear in rival parties' supporters. The cadres operated like organized crime groups, extracting small rents from bus drivers, taxi drivers, and market vendors under the protection of the ruling party.[5] Economic benefits that cadres received owing to their activities on behalf of the ruling party increased the cadres' stakes in the election. Many of the cadres used for violence by the ruling party were imported

[5] Authors on election violence in other African cases like Kenya (Mueller 2008) and Ghana (Bob-Milliar 2014) have noted similar dynamics in election violence.

from Lusaka and Copperbelt, two major urban areas, and transported to populous constituencies in nearby opposition strongholds in places like Southern and North Western Province. Cadres came in busses and were prepared to act violently, particularly when their president was campaigning (Authors' interview, Solwezi, 12/19/2016). The incumbent party's ability to control these cadres provided capacity advantages *vis-à-vis* the opposition with regard to mobilizing resources for violence (Authors' interview, Lusaka, 01/02/2017).

The resource advantage enjoyed by African incumbent parties makes them more capable of perpetrating violence in opposition parties' strongholds. Violence in 'foreign' territory can be enabled by control of the formal state machinery. For instance, Hassan (2017) shows that Kenyan President Moi's government tended to post co-ethnic Kalenjin security officers in opposition strongholds to enhance government coercive capacity. Government parties may also use state resources to transport supporters, hire thugs, and recruit party foot soldiers to perpetrate violence across constituencies outside their home turf. For example, in the Zambia 2016 elections, the opposition stronghold, Southern Province, was particularly affected by pre-election violence. Much of this was connected with ruling party rallies. In a focus group with domestic election observers, one observer explained this violence with territorial politics.

> Southern Province is known to be an opposition area, so when there was a [PF] campaign rally we saw all these new faces. And they came prepared. They were going to a zone where they weren't wanted. People were being imported from one province to another, so that fueled violence. You see, when you're in another world, you can act violently (Authors' interview, Choma, 12/22/2016).

The logic underpinning *H1* suggests that pre-election violence is more likely in uncompetitive constituencies. However, the argument above implies that we should witness more violence in opposition-dominated constituencies, as such constituencies are likely to see spiraling violence

between a locally strong opposition with the incentives to maintain territorial control and a ruling party with the incentives *and* resources to use violence to defend their presence in opposition strongholds. The second hypothesis is therefore:

> *H2*: Pre-election violence is more likely in constituencies that strongly support the opposition than in those that do not.

Case introduction and case selection

Zambia held executive, parliamentary, and local elections in August 2016. Parliamentary elections were decided in Single Member District (SMD) elections and presidential elections were decided by a national majority election. The election was highly competitive at the national-level. The 2016 election was contested just a year after the last presidential election, which was called to fill the vacancy when the then-president, Michael Sata of the Patriotic Front (PF), died. The 2015 election between Edgar Lungu (PF) and opposition front-runner Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development (UPND) ended with a small margin for PF, as Lungu defeated Hichilema by 25,575 votes, or 1.66%. The 2016 election was widely seen as a re-run of 2015. Lungu and Hichilema were again the main contenders (together they won 98% of the valid vote). However, factors including government party defections, poor economic performance, and an updated voter roll added significant uncertainty. Moreover, a recently-passed constitutional amendment introduced important institutional innovation: specifically, a new provision introduced the possibility of a run-off election if no candidate reached at least 50% of the vote. This made it vital for the ruling party not only to beat its closest opponent, but also to win an outright majority (Goldring & Wahman, 2016).

Although highly competitive at the national-level, the election was extremely uncompetitive subnationally, placing Zambia squarely in the category of polarized electoral systems. UPND swept the Southern, Western, and North-Western Provinces, while PF secured astonishing margins in Northern, Muchinga, Eastern, and Luapula Provinces. The two major urban regions, Lusaka and Copperbelt, voted predominantly for PF, but were more competitive. Central Province was the only province outside the major urban areas where elections were relatively competitive. Figure I shows there was a clear division between a solidly 'red' West and an overwhelmingly 'green' East. Although ethnicity is not irrelevant in explaining geographic polarization of Zambian voting, it would be a mistake to attribute polarization solely to ethnic voting. High levels of ethnic fractionalization mean that Zambian parties need to draw multiethnic support to be nationally viable. In 2016, most Zambians did not vote for a co-ethnic presidential candidate (Beardsworth, 2018b). Certain ethnically homogenous provinces such as Western and North Western had previously been highly competitive, but became uncompetitive in 2016 (Cheeseman & Hinfelaar, 2009; Larmer & Fraser, 2007). As in other African contexts, chiefs, religious leaders, and business leaders play important roles as vote brokers, but do not necessarily mobilize voters for co-ethnic candidates (Baldwin, 2013; Koter, 2017). Fraser (2017: 468) argues that it is a mistake to think of modern Zambian politics as primarily ethnic. Instead, Zambian parties are made up of networks of political celebrities that jump between political parties and have the ability to mobilize voters. However, patronage networks are contested at the local-level and political brokers of national and local standing need to convince electorates that they are advocating for a viable candidate. Political figures representing unviable candidates are likely to lose in political influence and following.

Figure I

The 2016 campaign was significantly more violent than previous contests (see Figure II). Increased levels of violence are noted in both expert data and in public perception. The Afrobarometer survey indicates that the percentage of Zambians who fear political intimidation and violence 'a lot' during elections has increased from 17% after the 2006 election to 29% after the 2011 election, and to 35% after the 2016 election.[6] Although we cannot point towards a causal relationship between polarized voting patterns and higher levels of election violence, Figure II shows preliminary descriptive data suggesting that the combination of high national-level competition and low local-level competition has been associated with higher levels of pre-election violence. Whereas the election in 1996 was also uncompetitive at the local-level,[7] it was highly uncompetitive at the national-level. In such cases, ruling parties are not overly concerned by the rare islands of opposition support that are unlikely to impact national vote totals and have small incentives to perpetrate violence. In 2001 and 2011, elections were highly competitive at the national-level, but also fairly competitive at the subnational-level. Several provinces like Northwestern and Western that were uncompetitive in 2016 were highly competitive in 2011. The election that most clearly illustrates a polarized electoral system is 2016.

Figure II

While most studies on election violence have concentrated on a handful of cases with extreme levels of election violence, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Kenya, few have examined pre-election violence in countries with levels of violence closer to the continent average. Zambia occupies this middle ground between peaceful cases such as Botswana and extremely violent cases

[6] Afrobarometer rounds 4, 5, and 7.
[7] The 1991 election had some rather unusual dynamics as this was a founding election that resulted in a massive loss for the ruling party.

such as Zimbabwe.[8] Zambia also shares many institutional characteristics with other countries that have highly regionalized patterns of party support (Wahman, 2017). Zambia combines a small average district magnitude with a directly elected head of government, and has a high level of ethnic fragmentation (Posner, 2004). Moreover, as in many other polarized electoral systems like Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Malawi, SMD parliamentary elections are held concurrently with presidential elections. This particular institutional setup makes for a hard test of our theory. In contrast to our theory, if competition creates incentives for pre-election violence, this should be particularly visible in countries such as Zambia where parliamentary elections are held in single-member districts, and local parliamentary candidates would need to engage in violence to tip the balance in close local races. However, if our theory is correct, we should see increased violence in uncompetitive constituencies, especially those dominated by the opposition. An important caveat, however, is that the argument presented here would not hold if elections are only decided in local constituencies and candidates are not competing for national majorities. For instance, in countries like Botswana, where candidates strive to win constituency majorities, not national majorities, parties do not necessarily win leverage by winning supermajorities in their stronghold constituencies.

Data and empirical strategy

We expect that pre-election violence varies across space depending on local competition and opposition party support. Unfortunately, existing datasets are unsuitable to test these hypotheses. Earlier research has used subnational election violence data from sources including the Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD) (Salehyan et al., 2012) and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (Raleigh et al., 2010). However, these datasets are likely to bias results as they are more likely to pick up violence occurring in urban districts (von Borzyskowski &

[8] See Figure XI in the Appendix.

Wahman, forthcoming). Urban bias is particularly problematic given the hypotheses in this paper because constituency-level population density in Africa is highly correlated with variables such as competition and ethnic fragmentation (Wahman & Boone, 2018).[9]

As an innovative alternative, we use data from our original Zambia Election Monitor Survey (ZEMS). ZEMS is a post-election survey with 464 domestic election monitors in the month after the 2016 Zambian elections.[10] Respondents were domestic election observers from the internationally-supported and non-partisan Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP) and the Southern African Center for Constructive Resolution of Disputes (SACCORD) and represented every Zambian constituency. Respondents were intentionally not a random sample; they were targeted as unbiased experts, similar to other expert surveys on election integrity (Norris, Frank, & Martínez i Coma, 2014). We worked with FODEP and SACCORD to secure respondents with relevant monitor training, a clear awareness of the entire electoral cycle in their respective constituency, and no known partisan bias.[11] Interviews were conducted via phone by seven trained research assistants. For a lengthier discussion on the data and its comparative advantages to other available alternatives, see von Borzyskowski & Wahman (forthcoming).

Dependent variables

When hypothesizing about *which* constituencies will have more pre-election violence, it is not entirely clear what 'more' means. Is 'more' a reflection on the number of violent events or also the severity of those events? Are political actors more likely to use more intense violence in some locations and

[9] See Table XII and Figure XII in the appendix.
[10] We surveyed three monitors in every constituency except Dundumwezi, Namwala, and Zambezi West (where we were unable to contact all the observers).
[11] This approach is different than Asunka et al.'s (forthcoming) study from Ghana, which focuses exclusively on monitor reports of violence on election day at polling stations.

more frequent low-scale violence in others? We are theoretically agnostic on this issue. We argue that the electoral environment would be more affected by many events than by one. Similarly, it will be more affected by one severe event than a less severe event. We therefore measure the frequency *and* severity of events to ensure our results are not contingent on this conceptual issue. First, we code *Severity* based on whether there is: *no pre-election violence* (coded as 0); *low-severity pre-election violence* (1); and *high-severity pre-election violence* (2). The low category includes events where there was property damage that did not result in total destruction of property, or violence without reported injuries or fatalities. The high category includes when people were injured, killed, or property was completely destroyed. Our classification is based on the narratives provided by respondents, not the subjective judgment by individual monitors. To give a sense of differences between categories, the violence in Ndola Central (Copperbelt Province) is coded as low; the opposition party held a rally where supporters of the governing party threw stones, damaging the opposition candidate's car. Conversely, Mazabuka (Southern Province) is classified as high because, during a visit by the incumbent president, government vehicles were broken and several people injured and even hospitalized.

Second, we code *Frequency*, i.e. the number of events. Given the problem with delineating events, we code frequency as an ordinal scale, rather than a count of events. We code *Frequency* as *no events* (0); *a single event* (1); and *multiple events* (2).

Third, to ensure we are not extrapolating from our data, we also estimate models based on a *binary* dependent variable of whether there was *any* violence (see Table IV in the Appendix). For all three dependent variables, we identify violence occurring if any of the three observers in the constituency recorded violence. We have no reason to suspect that monitors would falsely report

violence, and it is possible that one monitor witnessed or received credible reports of violence but the other two monitors did not, particularly in many of the geographically large constituencies in rural Zambia.[12] Table I contains descriptive statistics of how many constituencies experienced these types of violence.

Table I

Figure III maps the values of the various dependent variables.[13] The patterns of pre-election violence displayed in Figure III correspond well with our hypotheses: violence is widespread across the country and not confined to competitive urban and peri-urban areas. For instance, highly PF-dominant constituencies in Muchinga Province show high severity and frequency of pre-election violence. In accordance with *H2*, there are clusters of severe violence in UPND-dominated Southern and North-Western provinces, particularly in the northern part of Southern province, close to Lusaka, and the eastern part of North-Western province, close to Kitwe. In Southern Province, most of the violence happened in constituencies, like Monze, Choma, and Mazabuka, all towns connected to the T1 highway running between Lusaka and Livingstone. In focus groups, election observers noted how opposition constituencies with strong connectivity to Lusaka and the Copperbelt were primary targets of election violence as the government party could easily transport their supporters to these areas during campaigns. Clashes often happened between government and opposition supporters during presidential rallies.

Figure III

[12] We also estimate count models based on the number of monitors that reported pre-election violence in each constituency, and our findings hold (see Table VIII in the Appendix).
[13] Full lists of these constituencies are in Table XI in the Appendix.

Independent variables

We first hypothesized that pre-election violence is more likely in uncompetitive constituencies. *Competition* is measured by the runner-up's number of votes divided by the winner's votes; higher values indicate a constituency is expected to be more competitive (Cox, 1997).[14]

Our second hypothesis expects that pre-election violence is more likely in constituencies that strongly support the opposition, and our third hypothesis suggests this is especially likely in constituencies with high connectivity to urban government strongholds. We measure the strength of a constituency's support for the opposition by *Opposition votes*. This is the number of thousand votes that the opposition presidential candidate received in the previous election.[15]

We also include a number of control variables. We account for *Population density*, which measures the number of people per km^2 (Central Statistical Office, 2012); *General violence*, approximated by ACLED;[16] *Wealth*, approximated by the use of night light density data;[17] *Literacy*,

[14] Following Endersby, Galatas, and Rackaway (2002: 613), we also estimate the models using two-party vote margin, and the results hold. See Table IX in the Appendix.

[15] Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski (2014) use national level polls to determine competition at the national level. Similar polling data is unavailable at the constituency level in Zambia. However, we can measure party support with election returns from the 2015 presidential by-election. Votes for the PF in 2015 and 2016 correlate at 0.94 while for the UPND the figure is 0.97. The figures for vote share are 0.96 for the PF and 0.97 for the UPND.

[16] This binary variable is coded 0 when no violence was mentioned by ACLED in a constituency for May 15 to August 12, 2015, and 1 if violence was reported. The aim is to account for a general level of non-election-related-violence. In 2016, the campaigns started on May 22 and the elections were on August 11. Thus, we use a similar time-period from the most recent year available where there was not an election—the 2015 by-election was in January—to account for *General violence*.

[17] Earlier research has shown a high correlation between subnational levels of night light density data and subnational economic development (Weidmann and Schutte, 2017). For each constituency we take the mean score, divide it by the land area to get the mean night lights per square kilometer, add 1 to avoid losing observations that equal 0, and take the natural log. Data from the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's National Geographic Data Center are aggregated to the constituency level.

measured as the percentage of literate citizens over the age of 16 (Central Statistical Office, 2012); and *Ethnic fractionalization*, calculated with a Herfindahl Index (Central Statistical Office, 2012).[18]

The ordinal nature of our dependent variables—*Severity* and *Frequency*—where the distances between the categories are unknown, violates an assumption of the linear regression model. We therefore estimate ordered probit models for the dependent variables based on the severity and frequency of election violence, and probit models for the binary indicator.[19] We cluster standard errors by province to account for the lack of independence between constituencies within the same province.[20]

Analysis

We find strong support for both hypotheses irrespective of whether we use *Severity* or *Frequency* of pre-election violence as the dependent variable. The full results are in Table II.

Table II

H1 expects that pre-election violence is more likely in uncompetitive constituencies. We find strong support for our expectation that, contrary to previous findings, uncompetitive constituencies were more likely to experience pre-election violence (Models 1 and 2 in Table II). As Figure IV shows, non-competitive constituencies experienced significantly more minor and severe pre-election

[18] We also estimate models using Posner's (2004) Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups measure of ethnic fractionalization, and our findings hold. Data were aggregated to the constituency level by the Central Statistical Office of Zambia.
[19] As Long and Freese suggest (2014: 309), we also estimate multinomial probit models in case the assumption that the dependent variable is ordered is not justified; the results are robust to this alternate specification (see Table V in the Appendix).
[20] We also estimate the models using standard errors clustered by district (see Table VI in the Appendix); the results are robust to this alternate specification.

violence.[21] There is a less than 20% likelihood that the most competitive constituencies experience *any* form of pre-election violence.[22]

Figure IV

H2 expects that pre-election violence is more likely in constituencies that strongly support the opposition; Models 3 and 4 in Table II suggest there is also support for this hypothesis. To demonstrate the substantive effect, we depict the probability of the different categories of *Severity* based on varying levels of *Opposition votes* in Figure V, holding all other variables constant.[23] As the opposition's support in a constituency increases, the likelihood of pre-election violence, both relatively minor and severe, notably increases. In particular, the likelihood of severe pre-election violence goes from less than .1 to around .5 at the highest value of *Opposition votes*.[24]

Figure V

A potential critique of our research design is that the observable implications for *H1* and *H2* are similar. Recall that *H1* expects that pre-election violence is more likely in constituencies where competition in general is low, while *H2* expects that pre-election violence is more likely in constituencies where the opposition is increasingly dominant. It is possible that the entire variation in election violence can be explained by the level of support for the opposition. However, while

[21] We recognize a potential limitation of Figure IV is the lack of confidence intervals. However, when included the number of lines makes it difficult to interpret. We therefore include three separate figures side-by-side for each category of *Severity* and the associated confidence intervals in Figure IX in the Appendix.
[22] We provide the equivalent graph using *Frequency* as the dependent variable in Figure VII in the Appendix.
[23] Figure X in the Appendix again depicts the likelihood of all three categories of *Severity* side by side and with associated confidence intervals.
[24] We include the graph for *Frequency* in Figure VIII in the Appendix; the effects are similar: both single events and multiple events of pre-election violence increase as *Opposition votes* increase.

much of the most severe election violence occurred in opposition strongholds, our data include cases of violence organized by locally-strong parties in incumbent party strongholds. However, to rule out the possibility that violence is strictly a consequence of opposition strength, we compare government strongholds, competitive constituencies, and opposition strongholds. We therefore estimate ordered probit and probit models including a quadratic function of the share of the incumbent vote in 2015.[25] This serves as an indicator for whether the incumbent or opposition was expected to win in 2016, and thus whether violence occurred in constituencies where the lack of competition was driven by either incumbent *or* opposition dominance. The results are displayed in Table III.

Table III

The results show it is not just opposition dominance that influences pre-election violence. The statistically significant coefficient for *PF share*^{2} buttresses our claims from Models 1 and 2 in Table II that a lack of subnational competition, regardless of whether it is PF or UPND that is dominant, makes pre-election violence more likely than in competitive constituencies. The predicted probability of *Violence (binary)* based on this function is displayed in Figure VI. This finding is also important to address an important alternative explanation to our findings: that election violence was mostly a form of spontaneous protest by opposition supporters towards the general quality and bias of the election. Although it is true that violence was more common in opposition constituencies, we also see higher levels of violence in ruling party strongholds compared to more competitive constituencies. Similar to the opposition, ruling parties also have incentives to maintain control over

[25] Note that 98% of the presidential vote was won by the two major parties, PF and UPND. The third party, FDD, was not close to finishing in the top two in any constituency.

their strongholds and prevent the opposition from making inroads. For instance, when Hichilema tried to campaign in Shingwang'ndu (Luapula), a PF stronghold, PF cadres attacked his helicopter and managed to abort the opposition leader's rally.

Figure VI

The reverse *J*-shaped relationship between PF-support and pre-election violence is precisely what we expect given *H1* and *H2*: violence is more common in uncompetitive constituencies but particularly those dominated by the opposition. The highest propensity for pre-election violence occurs when PF vote share is at the lowest level. The lowest propensity for pre-election violence occurs when PF vote share approaches 50%. The propensity for pre-election violence increases again as the PF vote share rises above 50%.

Robustness tests

We conduct several robustness tests to confirm our findings. As discussed, we estimate probit models using binary indicators of pre-election violence. We also estimate models using all three dependent variables with the quadratic term of *PF share* to show the observable implications of the two hypotheses are distinct and supported. Long & Freese (2014: 310) also caution against analyzing a model as ordinal when the dependent variable does not warrant this. We therefore estimate multinomial probit models, as well as re-estimating the original models using district-clustered standard errors. We then re-estimate our models using Posner's (2004) PREG index to account for fractionalization among only politically relevant ethnic groups. We also show our findings are robust to an alternate measure of competition. Finally, we re-estimate our models using a dependent variable of the number of monitors who identified violence in each constituency. We then provide

the figures showing substantive effects using *Frequency* of pre-election violence as the dependent variable to demonstrate that the substantive effects are similar to *Severity*. Full details of these tests are in the Appendix. The results are robust to these alternate specifications.

Conclusion

Scholars of African politics have long argued that a lack of competition is one of the fundamental problems in contemporary African democracy (Lynch & Crawford, 2011; Rakner & van de Walle, 2009). With power highly concentrated in the executive and economic resources overwhelmingly centered with the state machinery (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997), government parties have generally controlled the national electoral arena. Consequently, entire groups have been effectively sidelined in the democratic project and poorly represented at the national-level. However, lack of competition is not only a national phenomenon. In fact, with high degrees of political polarization, competition remains significantly lower at the local than at the national-level (Koter, 2017). A number of African countries, such as Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia, have recently experienced electoral turnovers. Nevertheless, most African voters, even in these nationally competitive systems, belong to local political contexts where competition is virtually non-existent.

Given earlier research suggested that national-level competition is conducive to pre-election violence (Fjelde & Höglund, 2016; Hafner-Burton, Hyde & Jablonski, 2014), it might seem puzzling that problems of pre-election violence persist despite low levels of subnational competition. However, our results show that low subnational competition is, in fact, part of the problem. We argue that uncompetitive constituencies are more prone to violence due to a combination of incentives by locally dominant parties and locally weak parties to contest and maintain territorial control. Whereas locally dominant parties have incentives to preserve their hegemony, shrink the

democratic space, and establish a no-go zone for political competition, locally weak parties have incentives to use violence to disturb electoral dynamics and forge their ways into foreign territory.

The empirical scope of this paper has been Africa and we have particularly focused on polarized electoral systems. Political parties in Africa have remained less nationalized than parties in other comparable regions with shorter contemporary histories of multiparty democracy, such as Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia (Golosov, 2016; Wahman, 2017). Regionalism and lack of local competition has been particularly noted in much of the scholarship on African democracies (e.g. Kaspin, 1995; Ferree & Horowitz, 2010), but the story presented here is not uniquely Africa. In fact, regionalism is a striking feature for much of the developing world where low spatial integration, lacking infrastructure, spatial inequality, local grievances, and ethnic segregation have created distinct local market places. Regional variations in voting remain strong in countries as different as Mexico (Harbers, 2017), India (Chhibber & Verma, forthcoming), and Ukraine (Barrington & Herron, 2004).

We would particularly like to highlight three important further implications from this study on the broader study of election violence, beyond the African context. First, we show that local political geography has consequences for the probability of election violence. Cross-national research on election violence should further consider interactions between subnational and national-level dynamics and how such dynamics may create environments with varying propensities for election violence. Although much of the conflict literature has moved in the direction of bridging micro-, meso-, and macro-level approaches to violence (Balcells & Justino, 2014), more election violence research in this vein is required. Our findings suggest that it is insufficient to account for national-level competition to explain varying levels of election violence. One must also consider the

distribution of electoral support across space. It is conceivable that the highest levels of election violence will be observed in countries that combine national-level competition and subnational dominance.

Second, in this article we have stressed the theoretical importance of not narrowly focusing on the micro-level consequences of election violence. As the field has moved more towards identifying the causal effects of election violence on micro-level electoral behavior, we risk underestimating the way in which election violence shapes the electoral environment in more fundamental ways. This is particularly true in contexts where the electoral market place is essentially local and political nationalization is low. Survey experiments may identify that voters are less likely to vote for perpetrators of violence (Mares & Young, 2016; Rosenzweig, 2017), but the external validity of such experiments may be questionable if violence is used as a tool to effectively distort local political competition and shape the electoral environment in which voters make decisions on political action.

Lastly, these findings add to an emerging literature on subnational authoritarianism around the globe from regions such as Latin America (Gibson, 2013; Giraudy, 2015) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (McMann, 2006), a literature that has been primarily focused on political economy but been less attentive to repression as a more immediate tool to maintain subnational dominance. Further research is required to understand the local electoral market and the structures underpinning dominance, particularly with reference to violence.

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Table I: Dependent variables

Severity	**Comfortable incumbent stronghold**	**Incumbent stronghold**	**Incumbent marginal**	**Opposition marginal**	**Opposition stronghold**	**Comfortable opposition stronghold**	**Total number of Constituencies**
No violence or property damage	11	33	16	8	9	16	93
Low severity	5	14	6	1	4	9	39
High severity	3	4	1	2	2	12	24
Frequency							
No events	11	33	16	8	9	16	93
Single event	4	16	6	2	4	16	48
Multiple events	4	2	1	1	2	5	15
Violence (binary)							
No reports of violence	11	33	16	8	9	16	93
Reports of violence	8	18	7	3	6	21	63

Notes: Based on the 2016 Zambian presidential election, comfortable stronghold means the margin of victory is at least 67%; stronghold has a margin of victory from 34-<67%; and a marginal constituency has a margin of victory between >0-<34%.

Table II: Ordered probit models of the *Severity* and *Frequency* of pre-election violence

	Hypothesis 1		Hypothesis 2	
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Dependent variable	*Severity*	*Frequency*	*Severity*	*Frequency*
Opposition votes			.06*	.06*
			(.02)	(.02)
Competition	-1.52**	-1.32**	-1.15*	-.97*
	(.50)	(.43)	(.50)	(.42)
Population density	.00	-.00*	-.00	-.00*
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
General violence	.04	-.04	-.11	-.18
	(.62)	(.64)	(.64)	(.66)
Wealth	-.01	.08	.03	.12†
	(.05)	(.05)	(.07)	(.07)
Literacy	-.00	-.01	-.01	-.01
	(.01)	(.01)	(.01)	(.02)
Ethnic fractionalization	.96	.65	.73	.43
	(.71)	(.66)	(.68)	(.61)
τ_1	.08	-.09	-.10	-.27
	(.85)	(.89)	(.79)	(.85)
τ_2	.90	1.03	.75	.89
	(.81)	(.89)	(.76)	(.84)
Pseudo R^2	.03	.03	.06	.06
N	156			

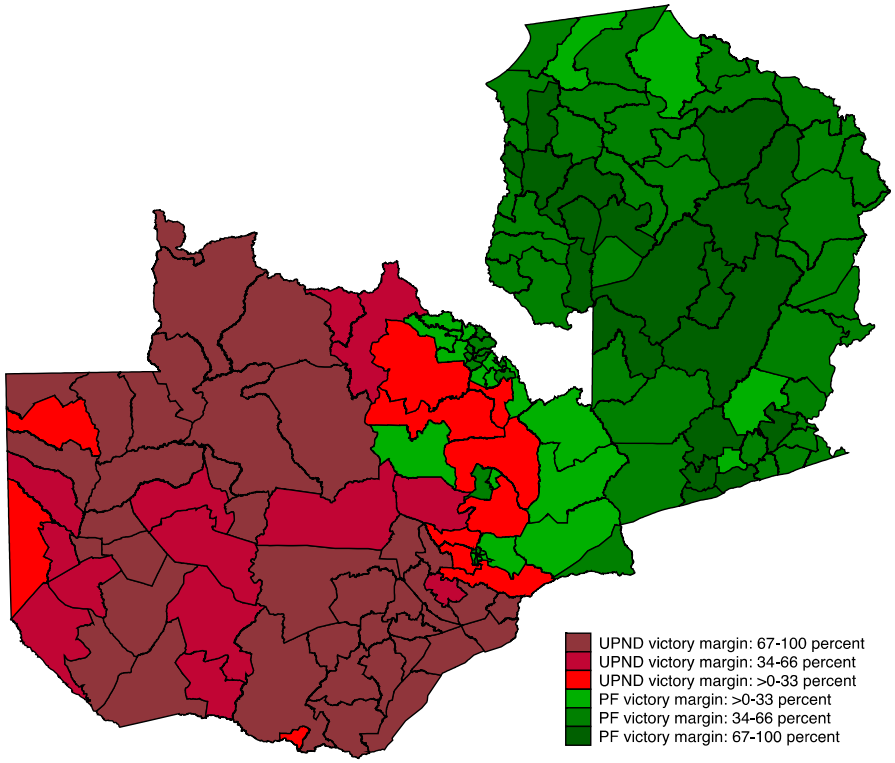
Data comes from ZEMS 2016.
Standard errors clustered by province.
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table III: Probit and ordered probit models to probe the mechanisms of pre-election violence

	Model 5	**Model 6**	**Model 7**
Dependent variable	*Violence (binary)*	*Severity*	*Frequency*
PF share	-.04*	-.05**	-.04*
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
PF share^2	.00*	.00*	.00*
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
Population density	-.00	.00	-.00**
	(.00)	(.00)	(.00)
General violence	-.37	-.01	-.08
	(.66)	(.63)	(.64)
Wealth	.09	.04	.12†
	(.10)	(.07)	(.07)
Literacy	-.01	-.01	-.01
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Ethnic fractionalization	.76	.79	.51
	(.76)	(.77)	(.69)
Constant	.66		
	(1.17)		
τ_1		-.66	-.71
		(1.05)	(1.11)
τ_2		.16	.42
		(1.01)	(1.11)
Pseudo R^2	.04	.04	.04
N		156	

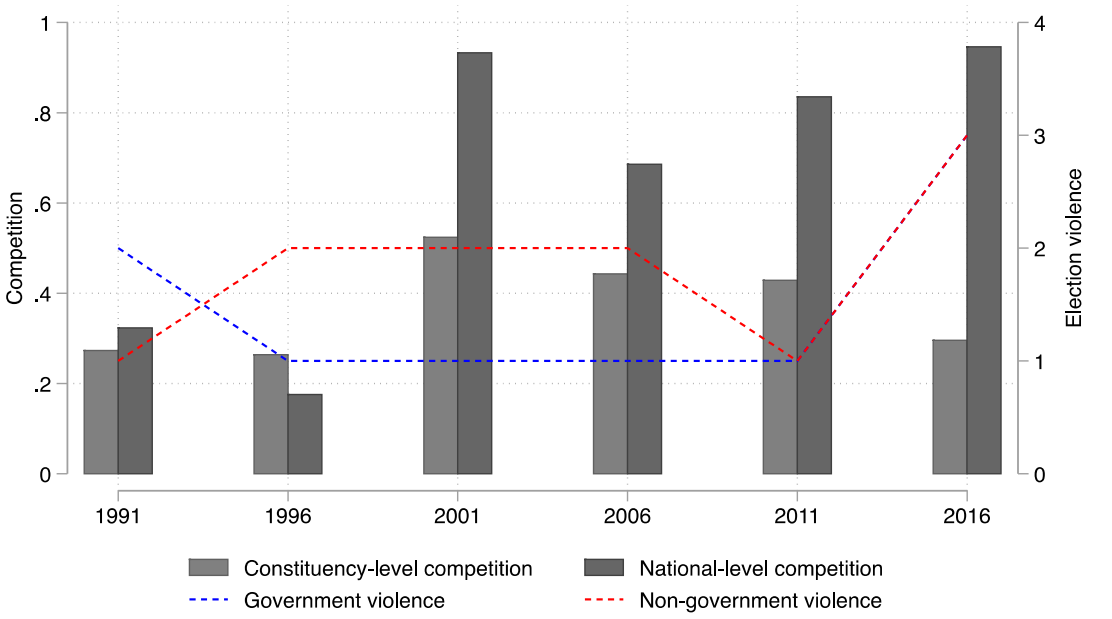
Data comes from ZEMS 2016.
Standard errors clustered by province.
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.10$

Figure I: Zambian 2016 presidential election, constituency margins of victory



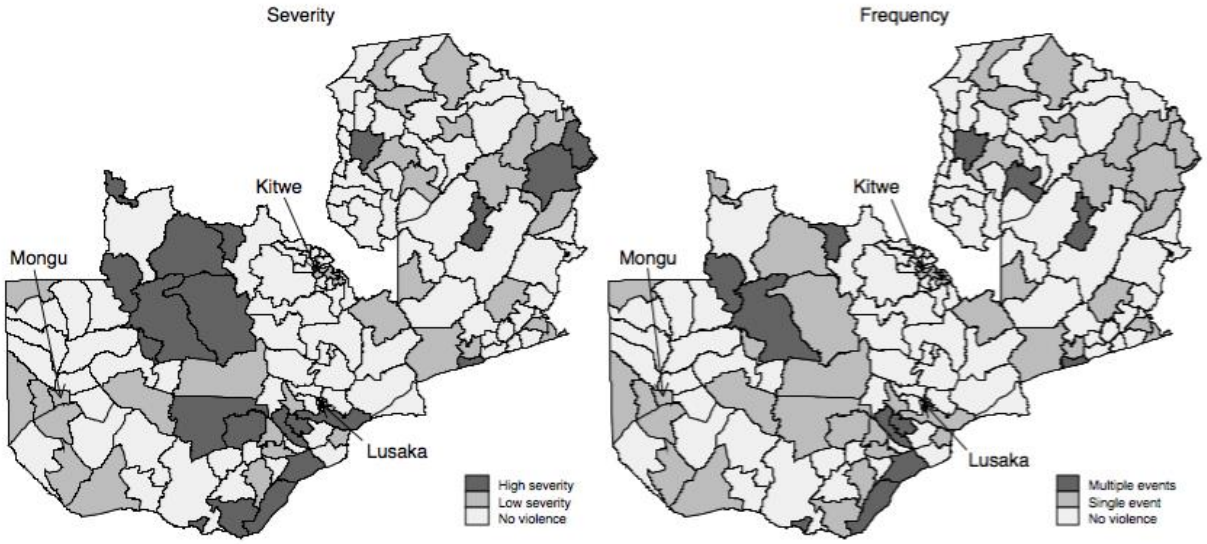
Source: Electoral Commission of Zambia

Figure II: Zambian pre-election violence and national and local level competition



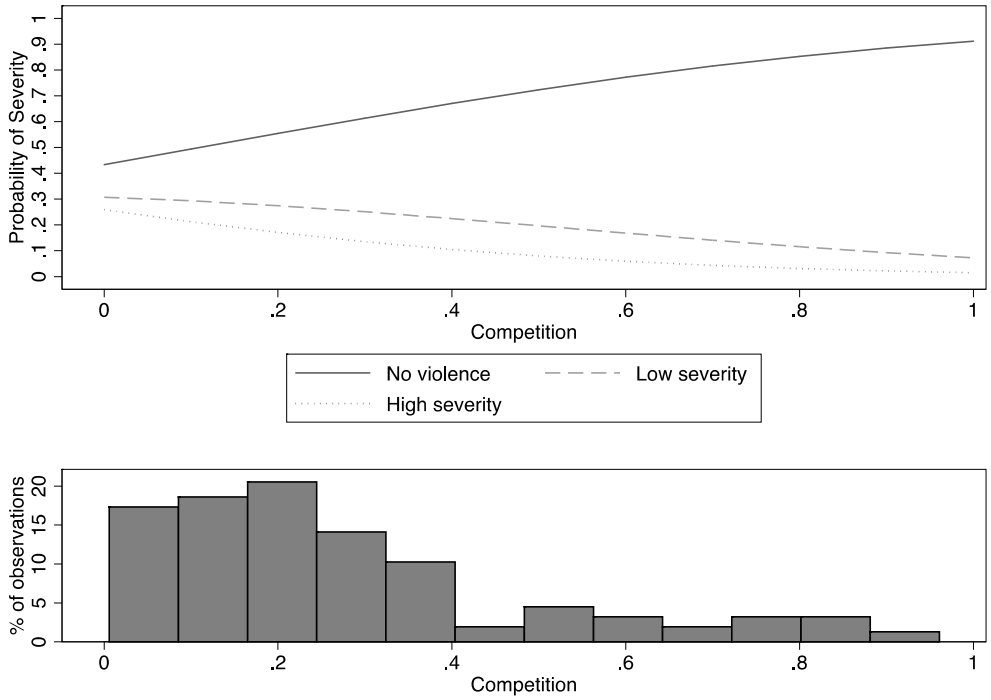
Notes: Higher values of *Competition* indicate a more competitive race, either on the constituency or national-level.
We measure constituency-level competition by the constituency vote of the second-placed party divided by the vote of the party that came first and take the average; national-level competition is the total number of votes for the nationally second-placed party divided by the first-party's votes.
Election violence data comes from V-Dem (Version 8) and is measured on a scale of 0 to 4.
We inverse V-Dem's scale so that higher values equal more violence.

Figure III: Zambia 2016 presidential election, severity and frequency of pre-election violence



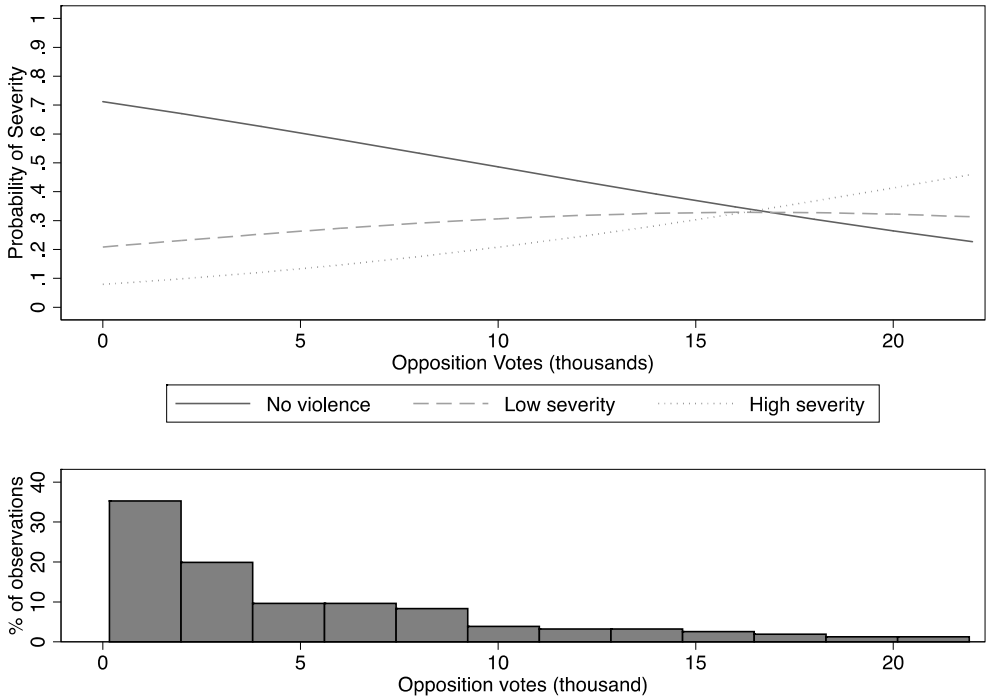
Source: ZEMS 2016.

Figure IV: Probability of *Severity* of pre-election violence based on *Competition*



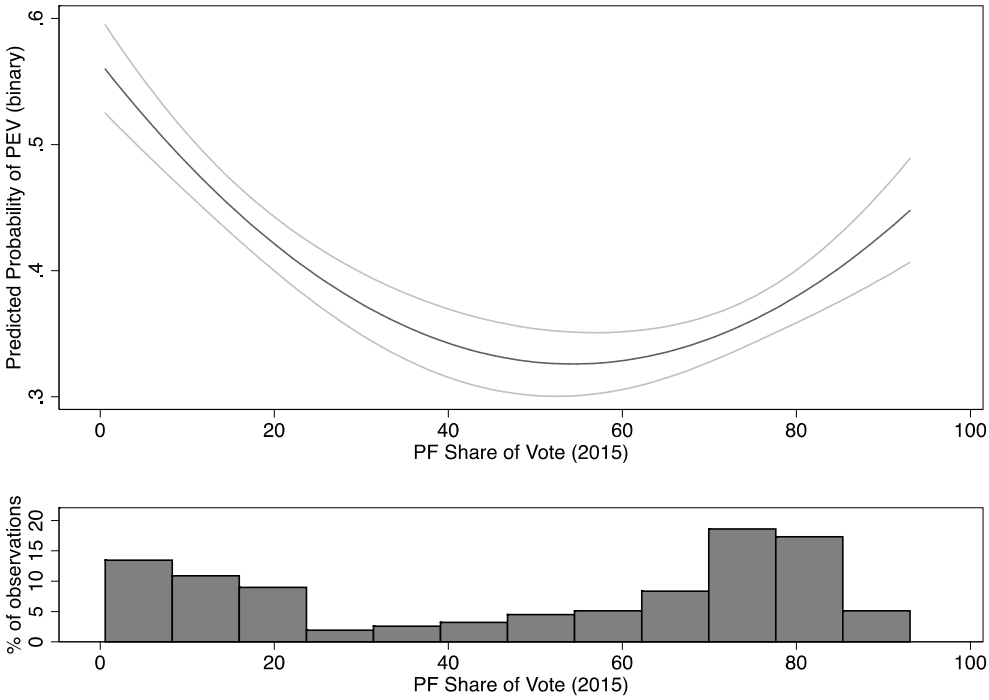
Predicted probabilities calculated after estimating Model 1.
All other variables held at their means.

Figure V: Probability of *Severity* of pre-election violence based on *Opposition votes*



Predicted probabilities calculated after estimating Model 3.
All other variables held at their means.

Figure VI: Probability of pre-election violence based on low competition due to incumbent or opposition dominance



Predicted probabilities calculated after estimating Model 5.
Gray lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

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