How Political Violence Shapes Trust in the State: Evidence from Zimbabwe

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Motivation

- Consider a political environment with a repressive state where protest is the dominant strategy of citizens who challenge the state.

1. Why do state actors use violence in authoritarian contexts?

2. Why do non-state actors engage in risky protest against such regimes?

Argument

- All else equal: indirect exposure to state violence leads to:
  - Fear of violence and
  - Identification with the state: a *rally around the flag* effect

- As a corollary: indirect exposure to anti-state protest leads to:
  - Fear of the state and
  - Identification with opponents of the state

Research questions

1. Why do state actors use violence and non-state actors protest against violence regimes?

2. Are violence state actors and anti-state protestors effective?

Challenge: violence is not random

- Violence is non-random, always conditioned on some information:

    - Targeting certain types of individuals
    - Targeting certain areas
    - Achieving certain political objectives

- Regression of support on violence almost certain to be biased

Novel method for effect of violence

- Want to compare identical groups only diff. is exposure to violence

- Exploit variation in the timing of local conflict events relative to the timing of Afrobarometer survey interviews

- We compare individuals interviewed just before and just after violent events in narrow temporal windows

- Individuals interviewed just before – **control**

- Individuals interviewed just after – **treatment**

Data sources

- Objective: create dataset that maximizes internal and external validity

- Afrobarometer survey: three waves, 60,000 interviews, 19 countries

- ACLED (Armed Conflict Location Event Database): 18,000 events

- Spatially merge two datasets using most precise subnational units common to both data sources.

- Focus on sub-set of data in which events and interviews overlap

- Zimbabwe: 90% armed conflict involves state, also anti-state protest

Balance

Variables	Mean			t-test	
	Treated	**Control**	**%bias**	*t*	*p-value*
	Panel A: Treatment is Ruling Party Violence				
Female	0.50	0.51	-3.3	-0.43	0.67
Age	34.78	35.75	-7	-0.89	0.37
Schooling: primary	0.27	0.25	5.1	0.66	0.51
Schooling: secondary	0.60	0.60	0.2	0.03	0.98
Schooling: post-secondary	0.13	0.15	-6.8	-0.9	0.37
Ethnicity: Ndebele	0.05	0.21	-49.3	-7.22	0.00
Ethnicity: Shona	0.91	0.74	49.4	7.04	0.00
Ethnicity: other	0.03	0.05	-9.8	-1.33	0.18
Shortage of public services	0.39	0.40	-4.2	-0.54	0.58

State violence & trust in ruling party

	(1) President	(2) Ruling Party	(3) Parliament	(4) Local Officials	(5) Police
Ruling party violence	0.48***	0.52***	0.21***	0.28**	0.38***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.04)
Female	-0.09	-0.04	-0.06**	-0.04	-0.07
	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.02)	(0.07)	(0.14)
Age	0.00**	0.01**	0.01***	0.00	0.01***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Schooling: primary	0.64***	0.58***	0.64***	0.61**	0.86***
	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.09)
Schooling: secondary	0.30***	0.35***	0.44***	0.16	0.52***
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.01)
Ethnicity: Ndebele	0.01	-0.07	-0.35	-0.52	-0.04
	(0.29)	(0.19)	(0.26)	(0.80)	(0.19)
Ethnicity: Shona	0.18	0.33	-0.10	-0.04	0.24***
	(0.14)	(0.21)	(0.31)	(0.74)	(0.04)
Shortage of public services	-0.66***	-0.61***	-0.58***	-0.82***	-0.85***
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)
N	708	732	711	461	757

State violence & fear of violence

	(1) Fear	(2) Fear	(3) Fear	(4) Fear	(5) Fear
Ruling party violence	0.88***	0.88***	0.88***	0.89***	0.87***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Female		0.24	0.23	0.19	0.17
		(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.11)
Age			0.00	0.00	0.00
			(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Schooling: primary			0.19	0.20	0.18
			(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.26)
Schooling: secondary			0.26**	0.22	0.18
			(0.04)	(0.10)	(0.12)
Ethnicity: Ndebele				-0.52	-0.50
				(0.43)	(0.50)
Ethnicity: Shona				0.26	0.30
				(0.15)	(0.28)
Shortage of public services					0.73
					(0.37)

Other effects of state violence…

- Additionally, respondents report:

  - Less likely to be punished by government officials if they complain

  - Less careful about what they say in public about politics

  - Less worried the state can learn of their vote

Anti-state protest and trust in state

	(1) President	(2) Ruling Party	(3) Parliament	(4) Local Officials	(5) Police
Non-violent protest	-0.28**	-0.30**	-0.30**	-0.39**	-0.59***
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.11)
Female	-0.14	-0.16*	-0.16*	0.06	-0.14
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.09)
Age	0.01*	0.01*	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Schooling: primary	0.58***	0.67***	0.62***	0.81***	0.75***
	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.21)	(0.16)
Schooling: secondary	0.31**	0.34**	0.38***	0.39**	0.34**
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.13)
Ethnicity: Ndebele	0.43	0.43	0.29	0.36	0.23
	(0.38)	(0.35)	(0.32)	(0.38)	(0.36)
Ethnicity: Shona	0.42*	0.57**	0.34	0.56	0.26
	(0.24)	(0.27)	(0.25)	(0.34)	(0.28)
Shortage of public services	-0.69***	-0.60***	-0.69***	-1.37***	-0.75***
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.23)	(0.20)
N	411	428	417	204	442

Anti-state protest and fear of the state

	(1) Careful	(2) Careful	(3) Careful	(4) Careful	(5) Careful
Non-violent protest	0.32***	0.31***	0.28**	0.27**	0.31***
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Female		0.12	0.13	0.13*	0.12
		(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Age			-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
			(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Schooling: primary			-0.14	-0.14	-0.21
			(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Schooling: secondary			-0.08	-0.09	-0.14
			(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Ethnicity: Ndebele				0.35	0.27
				(0.30)	(0.29)
Ethnicity: Shona				0.06	0.01
				(0.23)	(0.22)
Shortage of public services					0.59***
					(0.15)
N	441.00	441.00	441.00	441.00	435.00

Summary

1. Indirect exposure to violent action and protests leads to identification with the perpetrator.

2. Clear evidence of polarization in the Zimbabwean case

3. Offer a new method for identifying causal effects of violence and collective action

   - Windows around events by leveraging the timing of surveys