

# Coercive Legacies: From Rebel Governance to Authoritarian Control

---

Shelley Liu, Duke University

Ex-rebels govern almost a quarter of sub-Saharan Africa today. How does war affect these countries' long-run political development, and what explains their rebel regimes' longevity? The article explores the role of coercion in rebel governance: postwar governance draws from wartime strategies, which helps to explain (1) the continued use of organized coercion in postwar politics when faced with challenges to ruling party dominance and (2) where such coercion is most effectively employed. I examine Zimbabwe where the anticolonial rebel party has remained in power since 1980. I rely on archival data to qualitatively trace mechanisms, map prewar to current-day administrative divisions, and code a measure of wartime governance. I combine these data with Afrobarometer surveys to demonstrate long-run subnational variation in coercive political control. Findings deepen our understanding of war's effects on peacetime politics and provide one explanation for infrequent political turnovers despite regular elections in many postconflict states.

**A**growing literature has examined rebel governance during war and its immediate postwar effects (Arjona 2016; Liu 2022; Mampilly 2011; Martin 2021). Postwar politics is characterized by insecurity: from establishing wartime social contracts to elections after conflict, citizens are persuaded or coerced to vote for different armed groups (Daly 2022). After war, rebels parties then reckon with promises made during war (Huang 2016). Even when rebels win the war outright, they must still focus their attention on preventing war recurrence. During this postwar period, evidence suggests that rebel victories are especially successful at eliminating multiple sovereignties and maintaining stability (Lyons 2016; Toft 2010).

This article examines rebel governance's long-run effects on politics under rebel victories. I focus on sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where rebel victories have been particularly prominent. Rebel victors today in SSA are dominant single-party regimes, tend to be more authoritarian, and are better equipped to exert coercive power during both electoral and everyday politics. Of the 20 rebel victories in the past five decades, only two (Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC] in 2019 and Guinea-Bissau in 2020) have peacefully transitioned power. Four were overthrown, and 14 still remain in power today—with tenures

ranging from 11 years in South Sudan to 47 years in Angola and Mozambique (app. sec. A.1). Victors in power have been able to institutionalize their political parties and established single-party dominance better: Meng and Paine (2022) find in Africa that the likelihood of rebel victors retaining power in a given year was four times higher than other authoritarian regimes. In the rest of the world, prominent rebel victories such as those in China, Vietnam, and—most recently—Afghanistan point to the importance of understanding how rebel governance affects postwar politics.

I explain rebel victories' longevity through the continued use of violent strategies of wartime rebel governance when rebel victors are faced with viable political challengers. Postwar politics is shaped by the legacies of wartime rebel institutions: when rebels win civil war and gain control of the state, they are more likely to build on wartime rebel-civilian ties and governing strategies devised during war. Since coercion underpins rebel governance, this increases the likelihood that rebel victors continue to use coercive strategies after war against political challengers.

When rebels seek to establish control during war, they bargain with civilians and enlist supporters from local communities. During this process, rebels focus on cultivating a

---

Shelley Liu (shelley.liu@duke.edu) is an assistant professor of public policy at Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

This research is gratefully supported by the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, the Institute for Quantitative Social Science, and the US Institute for Peace. Replication files are available in the *JOP* Dataverse (<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop>). The empirical analysis has been successfully replicated by the *JOP* replication analyst. An online appendix with supplementary material is available at <https://doi.org/10.1086/729947>.

Published online August 1, 2024.

*The Journal of Politics*, volume 86, number 4, October 2024. © 2024 Southern Political Science Association. All rights reserved. Published by The University of Chicago Press for the Southern Political Science Association. <https://doi.org/10.1086/729947>

000

subset of civilian supporters who either have preexisting legitimacy or are able to establish legitimacy within the local community. Through them, rebels establish roots and build organizational capacity, creating informal governing institutions that may provide local security, rule of law, or public goods (Huang 2016). These informal institutions may also change intracommunity power structures or morph local social norms (Wood 2008). Rebel governance thus increases the group's embeddedness within areas, meaning that when rebels win, areas where rebels governed are also the localities where the new governing party has most solidified control.

However, while rebel governance represents rebel-civilian cooperation, it also relies on coercion. Rebel-civilian cooperation is established under the shadow of the gun during civil war, and rebel institutions are also underpinned by coercion—often coproduced by citizen supporters (Balcells 2011)—designed to control civilian lives. Although there is variation in how, and how deeply, rebels can impose themselves, the end result is still negotiated control when rebels govern (Arjona 2016; Mampilly and Stewart 2021). After rebel victory, rebels continue to enjoy organized local support through their wartime institutions, allowing them to sustain support while expanding these institutions and practices across the state (Liu 2022). Yet, replicating wartime institutions and strategies of control after war means cementing coercion as a tool for politics, even if the new government intends to govern programmatically. This legacy of violence, combined with the rebels' roots in communities through imposing its governing institutions during war, has long-term implications for how politics is carried out after war is long over.

I demonstrate support for this argument in Zimbabwe by analyzing the effects of rebel governance during the Liberation War on current day politics. The war pitted two liberation parties—the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU)—and their armed wings against the colonial Rhodesian government. During war, ZANU's fighters formed ties with civilians in rural areas by enlisting youths as their “eyes and ears” on the ground, establishing village committees, and engaging in village-wide politicization. After winning the war, as ZANU-PF (ZANU-Patriotic Front) the party's postwar governing strategies are shaped by its past experiences with leveraging civilian ties to exert control. Zimbabwe is an important case to illustrate my argument: the war emerged out of programmatic ideals and a fight for independence, and the ruling party initially made major strides in development. Thus, we would expect the party to continue governing programmatically rather than assert power through fear. Yet, when challenged at the polls, ZANU-PF has relied on the coercive strategies drawn from war to sustain control.

I provide mixed-methods evidence. First, I draw qualitative evidence from three archives to show how ZANU-PF's violent strategies became entrenched in wartime strongholds in the long run through socialization into, and institutionalization of, wartime practices. I then show quantitative evidence for the observable implications of the theory on civilian attitudes and behaviors using (1) a data set of district-level ZANU control; (2) colonial land apportionment maps, digitized to identify where rebels would have focused their efforts during war; and (3) Afrobarometer survey data. I present results from both a linear regression (ordinary least squares, OLS) and an instrumental variable (IV) approach that relies on an exogenous shift in ZANU's wartime base locations in 1975. While both the OLS and IV designs have their respective weaknesses, concordance across their estimates assures the validity of the theorized effects.

Quantitative findings are consistent with my argument. Where ZANU's armed fighters sustained wartime social control, the new ruling party ZANU-PF retains the strongest control today, and this control is upheld in large part through coercion: political intimidation today is disproportionately concentrated in districts that were historically pro-ZANU wartime strongholds. Decades after war, individuals living there are more likely to engage in visible political activities to support the ruling party and less likely to protest. I show that this visible support is not due to coethnicity and actual political support for ZANU-PF; rather, evidence suggests that it is more likely due to political control and fear. These findings are robust to alternative specifications, highlighting the role of coercion in ensuring continued electoral support for ZANU-PF.

This article links scholarship on wartime rebel-civilian relations, postwar politics, and coercive clientelism (Taylor, Pevehouse, and Straus 2017). Rebel victors may enjoy greater support postwar due to wartime politicization, but citizen loyalty is continuously cultivated as the victor consolidates power. Scholarship has gone far in explaining rebel-to-party transformations (Ishiyama and Marshall 2015; Lyons 2016; Sindre 2016); however, less is known about how these transformations shape state-citizen interactions in the long run (Bandiera et al. 2022; Rickard and Bakke 2021). This article's argument adds theoretically to ongoing scholarship about the long-run legacies of political violence (Barceló 2021; Liu 2023; Wang 2021) and on how rebel victories sustain power after war (Liu 2024; Meng and Paine 2022). Results have implications for rebel governments beyond Zimbabwe and, in particular, speak to almost a quarter of the countries in SSA still ruled by ex-rebel parties today.

## THEORY

When rebels win, how does rebel governance—both in terms of how rebels control civilians during war and where they are

able to do this—affect postwar governance? I focus specifically on how the use of coercion during rebel governance translates from war to postwar politics.

### Coercion in rebel governance

Existing studies of rebel governance have analyzed the foundations of subnational penetration and the importance of prewar institutions for subnational state-building, alongside assessing civilian agency (Arjona 2016; Mampilly 2011). Rebel groups offer law, public goods, and protection, representing a better alternative to states that cannot provide these services (Revkin 2021). Rebel militaries may hold a monopoly over violence in the areas they occupy and deterring banditry. More ideological rebel groups build local systems of taxation, judicial courts, public goods provision, and other subnational bureaucratic structures to demonstrate will to govern (Stewart 2018).

Although methods of rebel governance differ (Mampilly and Stewart 2021), violence and coercion (whether overt or implied) is consistently used to achieve political goals. Within the state-building literature, to exert social control over a population—meaning to exercise power and authority to regulate social relations and practices—rulers use both coercion and persuasion to induce compliance (Migdal 1988). Rebel groups similarly use coercive strategies to exert social control, even as the degree of coercion falls along a spectrum depending on rebel governing goals and constraints. For example, they may use large-scale violence to engineer dominance (Hägerdal 2019) or engage in individual-level punishment to induce compliance (Gilbert 2022). Further, rebel governance is more likely to engage in “governing violence,” which follows distinct logics meant to mold a specific political order (Aponte González, Hirschel-Burns, and Uribe 2024), and to impose ideological visions (Mampilly 2011).

Rebels may impose martial law—the most repressive (Mampilly and Stewart 2021)—but many rebel groups collaborate with civilian communities for support (Huang 2016). Even in such cases, rebels do not cede full control, and control is underpinned by the rebel groups’ coercive capacity. When mobilizing for support, the entire community is unlikely to be involved: many civilians wish to stay out of politics (Kalyvas 2006). Rebels may instead cultivate and empower core supporters within the community who can help sustain rebel social control (Liu 2022). They help rebels to rule—to not only politicize civilians and generate support but, importantly, to also identify and punish dissenters (Balcells 2011). Where civilians share some power with rebels, direct violence is coproduced alongside community elites and civilian supporters who have an outsized say over who is punished (Balcells 2017). Once control is established, other community members then can-

not safely opt out of such governance. Thus, coercion under rebel governance need not be overt violence; rather, the threat of violence is legitimized and routinized within affected communities.

### Use of coercion after war

Coercion in rebel governance should increase coercion in postwar governance when rebels win. This may particularly be the case because, while I have argued that rebel governance involves coercive practices, violent rebel groups are more likely to be voted into power (Daly 2022). Coercion is then reproduced through socialization and institutionalization into postwar politics.

First, rebel governance contributes to the use of violence for control after war through socialization, shaping community norms and rules surrounding politics and political conduct (Checkel 2017; Ricart-Huguet 2022). Socialization involves group-level conformity with respect to both the production of violence and also accepting it as routine. Rebels, their civilian supporters, and civilians living in rebel-governed communities are socialized through various methods such as ideological training, role playing, or group-based violence. Where the war was fought over independence and nationalism such as in Zimbabwe, wartime rituals, roles, and ideological teachings help to impose group-based norms, promote recall of wartime struggles, and increase acceptance (and fear) of coercion. Wartime socialization thus promotes acceptance of violent norms during and after war.

Socialization into the production and acceptance of violence is instrumentally encouraged after war because it offers continued control over civilians, and thus there is incentive for the rebel government to reproduce it until it is internalized (Rickard and Bakke 2021). This is because pressures of maintaining control have not ceased. Postwar politics is not a blank slate: other forms of violence and threats to rule from political rivals continue to worry the victor (Wittig 2016). And, because political competition still exists after war, victors seek to exert control at a national level while attempting to also govern (Liu 2024). Thus, the tasks of governance increase dramatically once in power, and yet its position in power cannot be taken for granted. The victor may therefore rely on existing tools in its arsenal to maintain control at the lowest cost.

One avenue for coercion to exert control that may emerge after war is in electoral politics. After civil war, armed actors that become political parties may normalize violence first by threatening electoral violence immediately after war (Daly 2022). Rebel victors thus demonstrate nominal compliance with democratic processes while using coercive clientelistic strategies (Mares and Young 2018). Then, by winning the first elections and coming into power, rebel victors cement their

success in using coercion to garner votes and normalize the use of coercion in electoral politics (Staniland 2014). In addition, with respect to intraparty candidate selection, rebel victors may prefer intraparty elites who are most ideologically loyal (Ishiyama and Marshall 2015). These elites adhere to party goals and were also complicit in wartime coercion; they may therefore be more willing to both condone and take part in its use postwar.

Wartime strategies are also institutionalized: coercive apparatuses from rebel governance may be replicated after rebel victory. That rebel institutions are subsequently integrated into postwar politics should not be surprising. Not only do rebel victors learn from their successes, but some are also ideologically committed to how they governed during war (Stewart 2018). Rebel institutions therefore provide a useful blueprint for future governance, but, due to their wartime functions, rebel institutions may continue to be underpinned by coercion (Wittig 2016). The use of citizen militias for wartime security and reconnaissance—and subsequently for the same reasons postwar as private proxies—is common among rebel parties (Aalen, Orre, and Muriaas 2022). The Imbonerakure youth, for example, originated during the Burundi civil war as watch teams for reconnaissance, local security provision, and message passing for rebel soldiers. Postwar, the Imbonerakure youth have become implicated in violence on behalf of the new ruling party. Other rebel victories have similarly carried over coercive collaborations, such as the use of Dozo hunters as rural security in Côte d’Ivoire.

In short, the reproduction of violence through rebel institutions means that (1) it is not just security apparatuses that replicate coercive practices, and (2) the violence is not necessarily overt: the more control rebels have over civilians, the less overt the violence need to be. Rather, rebel institutions for local governance have underlying coercive functions, as they can successfully induce civilian participation when civilians may prefer to refrain. This is particularly evident with informal institutions from rebel governance, which can exert coercion both during and after war.

While rebel governments may have greater capacity for coercion, continuity in coercive practices need not be immediately visible within their strongholds after war. If the ruling party continues to enjoy support from its base, it may be less likely to engage in overt coercion, but this does not mean that subtle forms of coercion are not employed. In Uganda, for instance, the victor was able to sustain strong development after the war, and thus it did not necessarily need to overtly coerce strongholds to sustain control. Nevertheless, the ruling party’s grassroots organizational capacity for coercion remained high: its wartime revolutionary councils, for example—renamed local councils after the war—were used after war to implement

development but crucially were also useful to sustain control through information provision (Lewis 2020). Wartime village committees from the Zimbabwe Liberation War were similarly used as blueprints for postwar control.

### Where postwar coercion is strongest

Both socialization and institutionalization are likely to be strongest in areas where they had been implemented during war (i.e., where the victor engaged in rebel governance). Rebels are better able to engage in local social control through their wartime institutions because of their embeddedness within local communities. Where they were able to extend their reach during war, rebels formed ties with different civilian supporters, many of whom helped the rebels to establish rebel governance and build local party structures (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015)—thereby rooting them within local communal and political affairs. Such entrenchment may be even more salient for rebel groups that maintain both political and military wings, because they are more likely to act as “proto-political parties” during civil war (Lyons 2016). They engage in revolutionary rhetoric to establish legitimacy through service provision (Stewart 2018).<sup>1</sup> As rebel groups establish more governing functions and form more ties with civilians, they deepen their influence over an area. This allows them to entrench their governing institutions and practices within areas under their social control.

Rebel governance—particularly when it involves the formation of rebel-civilian ties and embeddedness into community affairs—is comparable to the incubation of postwar partisanship among wartime supporters. After war, these supporters help the victor to engage in coercive clientelism to win votes and fragment challengers (Haass and Ottmann 2022). They continue to provide information about local affairs to the rebel party hierarchy, sustain on-the-ground control, and are crucial in suppressing criticism. They are also effective brokers, using both vote buying and voter intimidation to garner votes. In short, because local mobilization capacity during war persists after war, and because such ties sustain the new rebel government’s foothold within a community, there is continuity in where the victor derives its strength after coming into power.

The show of coercive strength in wartime strongholds also reflects strategic reasons. In polarized contexts such as after civil war, strongholds may be more likely to tolerate ruling party violence, especially if opposition supporters are framed as security threats (Jenkins 2020). More importantly, embeddedness

1. Notably, these rebel groups need not have programmatic or ideological goals to govern, e.g., extractive rebels in Liberia or the DRC or ethnic rebels in Burundi or Côte d’Ivoire.

in local affairs—and the ability to engage in clientelistic state control—also means that the victor faces the lowest threat of backlash from citizens in strongholds even if they do not support the incumbent. When governments repress, there is a threat of protest. The victor should therefore prefer to employ coercion in areas where protest is most easily discouraged or contained through fear (van Baalen 2023; Young 2019). In strongholds, where supporter embeddedness is highest, the victor can use patronage and coercion to sustain such control. Patronage pays supporters to sustain control through coercive clientelism on the ground (Taylor et al. 2017). The more embedded the supporters, the better they can both broker votes and prevent protest.

Time also matters: rebel governance increases the likelihood of postwar control in strongholds simply because of longer engagement. Partisans can help uphold these institutions in strongholds, and civilians accustomed to these wartime institutions are more likely to acquiesce after war. In contrast, outside of wartime strongholds, the victor may have to slowly impose its institutions and influence (Liu 2022). While the new government can exert control by deploying progovernment bureaucrats across the country, wartime control—both in terms of wartime institutions and the subset of civilians who helped to uphold them—ensures party strength from the very beginning.

Finally, influence over an area is relational. Rebel governance during war affects not just the new government's strength within that area but also any opposition party's relative weakness. Rebel governance entrenched victors in local sociopolitical affairs during war, and local intermediaries can help to exclude any opposition's potential foothold into the terrain from the very beginning of postwar politics. This crowds out political rivals (Letsa 2019), regardless of whether these rivals emerged during or after war. For the former, the rival's own wartime strongholds, where it is the strongest, would not overlap with the rebel government's wartime strongholds. For the latter, its support base would most likely grow out of areas where political organization and support for one of the rebel parties is low. Thus, the rebel government's influence in wartime strongholds ought to give it an advantage over alternative political parties.

In sum, coercive practices from rebel governance may translate to postwar coercive practices, particularly in wartime strongholds. This argument complements existing literature on authoritarian resilience such as deploying patronage or coopting opposition leaders. The rebel victor's wartime supporters—who contribute to postwar coercion in victors' strongholds—should in fact become beneficiaries of government patronage (Haass and Ottmann 2022). They are rewarded for continued loyalty and their willingness to perpet-

uate coercive practices on the ground. Then, by sustaining such control, the victor may crowd out broad opposition coalitions and weakens opposition leaders' influence in politics, making them easier to co-opt through various means for cementing authoritarian control (Arriola, Devaro, and Meng 2021).

### Scope conditions

The theory speaks to rebel victories rather than other forms of conflict termination. Negotiated settlements with a balance of power between armed groups should produce different postwar dynamics: factors such as institutional design and electoral rules are likely to matter more. Government victories also differ because the argument's logic relies on rebels' ability to politicize at the grassroots level, which is less likely for government forces seeking to regain rather than to build control. Governments are more likely to eschew the slow process of building local organizational capacity in favor of eliminating armed group presence through counterinsurgency.

There are two additional scope conditions, which together describe a majority of the rebel governments in power in SSA today. First, the argument applies to electoral challenges: this is not a strategy that is undertaken while civil war is the dominant threat to regime survival. Under conflict recurrence the rebel government engages in counterinsurgency, a different form of violence than the process described in this article. Second, the theory speaks most strongly to protoparty rebellions (Lyons 2016)—rebels that attempted to govern during civil war. These include many conflicts that claim revolutionary legitimacy; however, it is not just revolutionary parties that should follow the logic outlined in this theory. Ethnic parties that derive power and cohesion from wartime identities and subsequently consolidate power, such as in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, or Burundi, should lead to similar predictions.

### REBEL GOVERNMENTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

I have argued that rebel victors tend to use more coercive governing strategies due to wartime practices, facilitating a transition into authoritarianism. As an initial check, I show broader patterns of coercion and illiberal politics among rebel victors across SSA.

While hybrid or competitive authoritarian regimes are common in SSA, rebel parties are particularly well represented (app. sec. A.2). Since 1945, 16 of 20 rebel victories avoided being overthrown in a subsequent civil war, ruling from 47 years in Angola and Mozambique to 11 years in Côte d'Ivoire thus far (app. sec. A.1). In the most authoritarian case of Eritrea (29 years), laws prevent opposition party formation altogether. Most rebel-ruled states, however, are competitive authoritarian regimes with a dominant ruling party. When power is

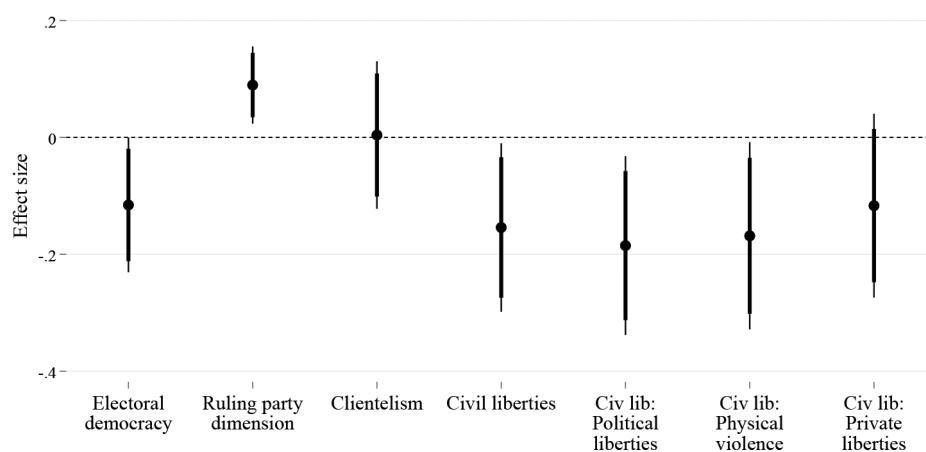


Figure 1. Comparing rebel and nonrebel governments in SSA (V-Dem indexes)

threatened, governments deploy overt violence and covert repression to win.

Varieties of Democracy data (Coppedge et al. 2020) show descriptive differences between states in SSA governed by rebel victors and others (fig. 1). These states are less likely to be democracies, but their ruling parties are more institutionalized. The Ruling Party Dimension Index indicates that chief executives in rebel parties are more beholden to the party for power than the other way around. Rebel victors are just as likely to engage in electoral manipulation (Clientelism Index), but the nature of electoral manipulation is different: they use more coercive methods, reminiscent of their wartime roots. They score worse on a broad index that measures civil liberties, and this negative effect persists across the three subindexes measuring physical violence, political liberties, and private liberties. These correlations suggest that rebel regimes are both long lasting and coercive, with substantial differences from other governments in SSA.

### CASE SELECTION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

I now provide subnational evidence from Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe Liberation War featured two protoparty rebellions where one rebel group, ZANU, enjoyed postwar political dominance as the victor. ZANU’s ideological underpinnings were similar to other rebel victors such as those in Mozambique, Eritrea, Uganda, or Angola. For wartime tactics, ZANU used Maoist guerrilla strategies such as mass civilian politicization and organization, common across rebellions (Stewart 2021). Thus, ZANU’s wartime strategies are generalizable to a wide set of cases across Africa.

In addition, Zimbabwe may be considered a hard case: given the ruling party ZANU-PF’s programmatic ideals and strong postwar support, it should have been less likely to continue using coercion—particularly within its own strongholds. The

rebel group ZANU was initially created as a liberation movement, and its leaders had been involved in nonviolent anti-colonial resistance long before the war began. During the war, ZANU preached, and relied on, socialist and nationalist ideology to gain supporters in areas where it operated. After coming into power, ZANU-PF lived up to wartime promises by engaging in significant development, including large-scale health initiatives and broad education expansion. Despite its development-minded beginnings, however, ZANU-PF also used coercion to stay in power. I show evidence that its wartime coercive practices carried forth to postwar electoral politics whenever the party was challenged.

I present complementary mixed-methods evidence, where qualitative and quantitative evidence come together to present an overarching picture of how coercion is reproduced (Thaler 2017). First, the qualitative section explores the socialization and institutionalization mechanisms, providing evidence for postwar top-down control from the rebel victor using wartime strategies. The quantitative section then shows the implications of such control for civilians, by tackling the subnational effect of the argument—that coercion continues to be most present and most felt within the victor’s wartime strongholds. Put another way, the qualitative evidence allows me to more explicitly identify ZANU-PF strategies, and the quantitative evidence shows systematic within-country variation in the use of these strategies.

### ZIMBABWE’S LIBERATION WAR AND PRESENT DAY POLITICS

I consult three archival sources: (1) the National Archives of Zimbabwe, housing documents from the Rhodesian government; (2) the Jesuit Archives in Harare, containing independent records of war and postwar politics; and (3) the Mafela Trust, documenting the role that ZANU-PF’s rival (ZAPU)

played in the independence movement. Together, these three sources provide different perspectives.

I begin with a description of how rebel coercion during war was carried out through civilian supporters, rebel institutions, and the mandatory ideological rituals within ZANU strongholds. I then show evidence of the following empirical implications: under the socialization mechanism, we should expect the wartime civilian roles and rituals that ZANU implemented to become routine in postwar politics; under the institutionalization mechanism, the structure of ZANU's wartime governing institutions should be reproduced in informal and formal political structures after war. Finally, as evidence against the counterfactual—that the coercion did not stem from rebel governance—this coercion should be stronger in areas where rebel governance occurred, and these should also be areas where electoral support is strongest.

### Background and patterns of civilian support

Zimbabwe's independence movement began in 1960 within Rhodesia, but its leaders were soon exiled to Zambia in 1961. In 1963, the movement split into two groups because of tactical disputes: the ZAPU and its armed wing, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), and ZANU and its armed wing, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). The two liberation parties coexisted uneasily in neighboring training camps in Zambia. By the early 1970s, both ZANU/ZANLA and ZAPU/ZIPRA were engaged in guerrilla warfare, entering Zimbabwe through the country's border with Zambia. During this initial phase of the anticolonial struggle, ZAPU had been the main liberation movement with a wider base of support domestically and internationally, while ZANU—which had split from ZAPU after exile—had little recognition and a smaller military force.

Imbalances in civilian support reversed in 1975. When Mozambican guerrillas won independence, they invited both ZANU/ZANLA and ZAPU/ZIPRA to join forces and rebuild their camps in Mozambique. This attempt at consolidating independence movements failed and ZAPU/ZIPRA chose to remain in Zambia, where they still maintained military camps. ZANU/ZANLA moved its operations to Mozambique. This move proved to be a decisive factor in explaining geographical patterns of civilian politicization during war: with access to the entire eastern border, ZANU's political reach into Zimbabwe increased and its army ZANLA gained rapidly in strength. During this latter half of war, ZANU/ZANLA became the dominant liberation army.

### Rebel-civilian ties during war

ZANU/ZANLA fought a people's war—politicizing civilians and organizing them to contribute to the war effort (Bhebe

1999). I describe three main strategies to exert social control: (1) wartime youth supporters (*mujibas*), (2) village committees, and (3) all-night events (*pungwes*).

First, ZANU/ZANLA engaged a wide network of wartime youth supporters (*mujibas*) who lived within the rural areas in which the guerrillas operated. ZANLA soldiers often remained hidden within their bases during the day because they were never able to militarily control territory in Zimbabwe. As part of their efforts toward establishing social control, ZANLA soldiers organized youth supporters into small bands who became their first point of contact within communities. They were often entrusted with information about guerrillas' whereabouts and their actions and were tasked with passing information between guerrillas and the community during the war (Murambiwa 2014). Youth supporters were also used to weed out potential dissidents, ensure support from the local population, and finally to mete out violence against those who refused to comply with ZANU/ZANLA rules. Altogether, an estimated 50,000 *mujibas* were engaged during the Liberation War (Murambiwa 2014).

Second, ZANU/ZANLA established village committees, which functioned as party cells during the civil war. These were formally included into the liberation party's internal documentation as an integral part of its organizational structure (Bhebe 1999). Committees were organized hierarchically: several village committees would be under the control of a base committee, which would in turn be supervised by district and then provincial committees. The most vibrant political activity occurred at the village level, where village committees were tasked with collecting materials in support of the war effort and to ensure that the entire community was committed to the war (Jeche 2014). Within the rebel governance theoretical framework, village committees were informal institutions instrumental to both politicization and rebel organization.

Third, all-night *pungwes* were mandatory community politicization events that socialized civilians into participating in, and accepting, coercive rebel practices. Culturally, *pungwes* are a Zimbabwean tradition of all-night vigils for community celebrations. During the Liberation War, ZANU/ZANLA used *pungwes* to teach civilians about ideology, to sing liberation songs, and to mete out punishment against dissenters. These ideological meetings relied on youth supporters' and the village committees' efforts: when ZANU/ZANLA soldiers planned to hold *pungwes*, youth supporters would relay the message to the village committees, who would prepare by organizing the community, collecting food, and ensuring smooth execution. Both village committee members and youth supporters jointly were responsible for ensuring community attendance. *Pungwes* were, crucially, spaces of punishment: during the event, youth supporters would denounce "sell-outs" to be punished;

nonattendees were also, by default, branded as dissenters. Overall, while *pungwes* were characterized by some civilians as enjoyable gatherings to drink beer and sing liberation songs, other civilians considered these events to be coercive because participation was not voluntary and many were forced to join or risk punishment (Kriger 1991).

### Coercion in politics after war

I now turn to postwar politics, focusing on how rebel-civilian ties and rebel practices are reproduced after war to exert control. The qualitative evidence demonstrates how socialization has supported institutionalization and vice versa.

**Socialization.** The victor's wartime practices continue to be carried out postwar, socializing people into accepting violent practices during peacetime politics. Socialization occurs first through the repeated use of wartime rituals and second by commemorating ZANU-PF's role in the Liberation War. These efforts are linked to youth militias, veterans organizations, and party cells—all wartime organizations that were subsequently institutionalized in Zimbabwean politics.

Wartime practices were reproduced immediately postwar: in 1980, ZANU renamed itself ZANU-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and won the elections by a landslide. The newly independent nation's first elections established how coercive strategies, carried over from war, would be used for electioneering in the long run. During the 1980 campaign period, ZANU-PF continued to draw on supporters in strongholds for assistance and political support. Rather than complying with cease-fire restrictions and staying out of the elections, ZANU-PF ex-combatants colluded with *mujibas* to remain in rural areas and "maintain the party's military and political dominance" (Kriger 2005, 4). *Mujibas* prevented others from campaigning in ZANU-PF strongholds (Ndlovu 2010), limiting the opposition party's influence. By successfully translating wartime strategies for establishing social control over communities into a viable postwar strategy to win elections, ZANU-PF laid the foundation for the continued use of such tactics in subsequent elections.

Once in power, ZANU-PF continued to use violence that reflected wartime tactics. As part of counterinsurgency efforts from 1982 to 1987, ZANU-PF carried out the Gukurahundi, mass violence against the minority ethnic group living in the ZAPU/ZIPRA-supporting Matabeleland provinces. An important aspect of this mass violence were the rituals and practices deployed during the Liberation War—now once again used to exert control over suspected opposition supporters. In particular, ZANU-PF forced civilians to participate in *pungwes* and to sing liberation songs in Shona during

the mass killings—reflecting the continuity of tactics used during rebel governance.

Today, socialization continues as liberation-related *pungwes* are still forced on the rural population. During elections, they are led by local supporters who sing wartime revolutionary songs, hold war reenactments in old war sites, and use war imagery in political rallies and state media (Marongwe 2013; Mashingaidze 2015). Veterans and party workers force civilians to attend these *pungwes* and to provide food and drink (LeBas 2006)—just as they had done during war. The use of wartime music and imagery extends beyond electoral politics: in the 2017 coup that replaced Robert Mugabe, ZANU-PF-controlled media routinely played music from the Liberation War to remind people of successor Emmerson Mnangagwa's war veteran status.

Such violent tactics explicitly link the ruling party to the country's liberation, emphasizing the instrumental aspects of socialization. The use of *pungwes* and liberation songs for political purposes has continued throughout the decades, highlighting the coercion that undergirded a rebel governance practice once considered a mode of empowerment for ZANU's wartime supporters. In short, while *pungwes* were framed positively in ZANU-PF strongholds during the Liberation War, their reproduction today highlights the coercive current underlying such politicization. Unsurprisingly, the continued use of wartime imagery and reenactments most affects citizens who live in strongholds, since these were areas where these events took place during war.

**Institutionalization.** Politics has certainly evolved postindependence: ZANU-PF has built new institutions for control through the decades and faced new challengers. Yet, wartime practices still pervade ZANU-PF's postwar strategies for intimidation in various ways.

First, ZANU-PF has incorporated youth supporters and war veterans organizations into its strategy for exerting control and winning elections (Kriger 2005). While many authoritarian parties use youth wings to repress, ZANU-PF not only maintains a party youth wing but also created national youth militias whose organizational structure and activities have clear wartime roots. In 1982, Mugabe first called on wartime youth supporters and attempted to assemble a Zimbabwe People's Militia. Although disbanded a few years later, youth militias resurface when the ruling party faces electoral challenges. When a new opposition party proved popular in 2000, for example, Border Gezi, ZANU-PF's Minister for Gender, Youth, and Employment, created the National Youth Service. Gezi was a *mujiba* who rose up in the party's ranks postwar, exemplifying how key individuals institutionalize wartime strategies. The



National Youth Service's training materials highlight socialization, seeking to "foster 'patriotism,' as founded on memories of the liberation struggle, among youth who had not experienced the war" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009, 954).

Second, institutionalized coercion goes beyond youth militias: today, organizations such as the Zimbabwe Liberators and War Collaborators Association and the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association continue to help the ruling party with violent electioneering. These organizations illustrate the longevity of wartime legacies because they have secured their place in politics and now define the rules of the game. War collaborators and veterans, as explicit wartime roles that are reproduced after war, once again highlight how socialization and institutionalization are intertwined. Members of these organizations today have no explicit ties to the Liberation War—many would not have been old enough to participate in war. Yet, the continued recognition of *mujibas* and war veterans as distinct political identities making up pro-state organizations institutionalize such roles in local political life. These organizations today continue to perform supporting roles for the government as *mujibas* had done during war: to patrol, mobilize civilian support particularly during election times, and coerce opposition supporters.

Third, ZANU-PF's wartime village committees have been institutionalized in rural politics, reproducing authoritarian practices. I highlight ZANU-PF party cells in particular, which were folded into the state administrative hierarchy in the early 1980s in the village committees' image (Liu 2022). These were set up under the pretence of implementing decentralized democratic development but primarily served to facilitate ZANU-PF control. Wartime committees have been reproduced in various other forms throughout the decades, and today the cells themselves are also formally part of the ZANU-PF party structure as "the vanguard of the Party at the level of the village and the community, expressing its aspiration and mobilizing the membership to work together for their area's development" (ZANU PF 2023). These cells ensure ZANU-PF presence and exert influence over both local political and economic life as hubs of patronage and coercion.

**Electoral dominance in strongholds today.** Today, ZANU-PF still remains strongest in its wartime strongholds, and the watchfulness of civilians as a legacy of war is still instrumental to its governing strategy. Youth militias, war veteran organizations, and ZANU-PF cells are particularly strong in the rural areas where ZANU-PF had established wartime local control, and they contribute significantly to the party's continued electoral dominance in these areas decades later (Mwonzora and Mandikwaza 2019). While ZANU-PF uses coercion

throughout Zimbabwe, "all available data suggest that violence was more serious and more systematically organized in ZANU-PF strongholds" (LeBas 2006, 428).

The ruling party's dominance in its wartime strongholds is reflected in election practices and results in the long run. While ZAPU was the main opposition party after independence, ZANU-PF had consolidated power and eliminated ZAPU by 1987 in part using the coercive strategies outlined above (Liu 2022). From 1987 to 1999, while ZANU-PF faced growing discontent from citizens, it maintained electoral dominance by ensuring little space for a true opposition party.

In 1999, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) emerged as a labor union-grown opposition party comprising younger leaders. By then, political cleavages ought to have shifted, yet electoral support still roughly mirrors wartime divisions. This is in part because the ruling party is organized and pervasive. Supporters prevent the MDC from organizing in wartime strongholds—as they had done during the first post-independence elections. Today, the opposition is strongest in the west and in urban centers, where ZANU-PF had been weak since war. ZANU-PF continues to enjoy electoral success within the rural regions along the east, where its institutions of political control remain the strongest.

It is, however, not the case that opposition supporters do not exist in ZANU-PF strongholds.<sup>2</sup> Rather, opposition supporters in these areas may be less likely to vote due to fear (Young 2019). Common tactics include selectively withholding goods and services to voters during election periods and also larger forms of aid such as food aid or agricultural inputs. Youth militias employ violence against those without ZANU-PF party cards. Traditional and party leaders force villagers to attend political events and to walk to polling stations as a group on election day. In a country with exceptionally high literacy rates, voters are forced to feign illiteracy so that they can be accompanied by a government agent into the voting booth (Mwonzora and Mandikwaza 2019).

The 2013 election results (fig. 2) are an illustrative example. This particular election was notable for electioneering under the threat of violence (while featuring low overt violence), which provides some evidence that the ruling party's capacity for local coercive control is correlated with subsequent electoral success. While MDC-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) won in the west, ZANU-PF commands electoral dominance along the east—mirroring ZANU-PF's wartime operations and social control. Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Events Dataset Project (ACLED) show overt violence against civilians clustered

2. As I show quantitatively later, the support for the ruling party within its strongholds is not differentially higher than the rest of the country.

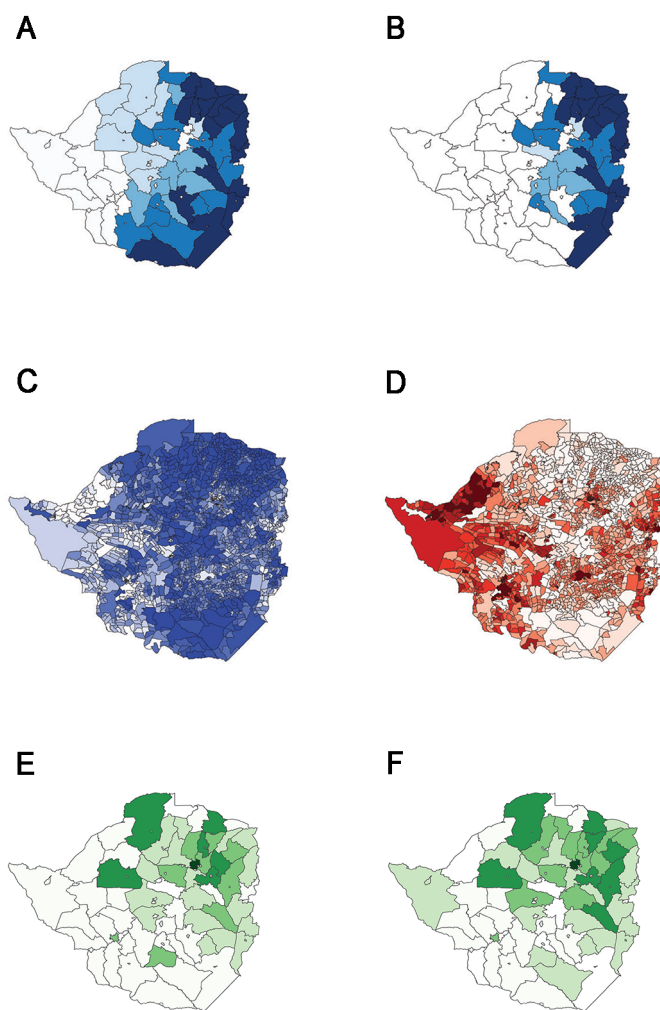


Figure 2. *A*, Intensity of ZANU’s military presence during the war; *B*, districts in which ZANU/ZANLA was the only rebel group present (i.e., that ZAPU did not conduct military operations in those areas). Darker shades indicate greater intensity in ZANU/ZANLA military presence during the Liberation War. *C*, 2013 votes for ZANU-PF; *D*, 2013 votes for MDC-T. The 2013 presidential elections are particularly instructive for understanding state coercive capacity. After widespread violence in 2008, the ruling party was careful not to use overt violence to win elections in 2013. Elections in 2013 thus featured significant covert intimidation—through local intermediaries—to garner votes. *E*, All years (1997–2019); *F*, election years (2002, 2008, 2013, 2018). District-level government violence against civilians was perpetrated by the following actors: Chipangano, Children of Zimbabwe War Veterans Association, Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association, Zimbabwe National Youth Service, the government of Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF, Police Forces of Zimbabwe/Zimbabwe Republic Police, and Military Forces of Zimbabwe.

primarily within wartime strongholds.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note, however, that ACLED’s recorded violence undercounts ZANU-PF intimidation as it omits other forms of nonphysically violent and coercive tactics of intimidation famously employed in the 2013 elections (Mwonzora and Mandikwaza 2019). However, the data accord with the argument that wartime social control helped to shape postwar political control under the ruling party.

3. There is also more government activity in the northernmost district Hurungwe and the contentious central district Gokwe, both important areas that saw less ZANU/ZANLA activity during war but were subject to significant ZANU-PF co-optation efforts in the decade after civil war.

#### QUANTITATIVE DATA AND EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

If coercion continues to be strongest in wartime strongholds, there ought to be subnational variation in citizen experiences with politics today. I show evidence for this quantitatively.

#### Identifying areas of operation

Under the colonial regime, most black Zimbabweans in rural areas lived in designated reservations, comprising communal lands and lands purchasable by wealthier families.<sup>4</sup> It was primarily within these rural regions that the guerrillas

4. Communal lands still remain under rural administration.

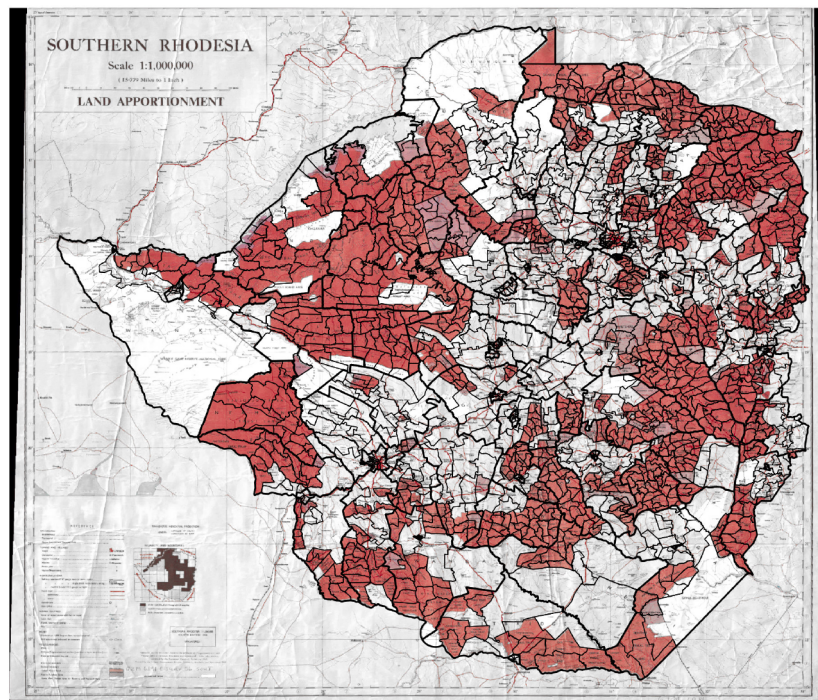


Figure 3. Land designations under colonial Rhodesia are highlighted. Current-day wards are outlined in black

would have attempted to politicize and control civilian life. To capture long-run effects on communal and purchase areas specifically, I match current-day wards to whether they fall within these reservations. Zimbabwe's government administration runs through the provincial, district, and then the ward level. Because the government did not redraw boundaries after independence, ward boundaries today continue to fall closely along the lines of colonial land designations. Figure 3 depicts a colonial land apportionment map. Shaded areas are communal and purchase lands, and I outline ward boundaries in black. In total, 59.1% of the wards in Zimbabwe today fall at least partially within colonial reservations. Of the 59.1%, 92.4% of them fall completely within their borders.

#### **ZANU/ZANLA wartime strongholds**

I use data on wartime rebel presence within the civilian population in Zimbabwe from Liu (2022). In the data, for both ZANU and ZAPU, a district receives the value 0 if its army maintained no presence, 1 if it maintained strong and constant presence, and various increments of 0.25 in between. Figures 4A and 4B show the intensity of troop presence for each rural district, where darker shades indicate greater presence. I then consider whether the fighters would have been able to exert control and engage in rebel governance, which requires (at minimum) both sustained presence and longer time horizons for rebels and civilians. Areas where both ZANU

and ZAPU fought were less likely to have sustained these favorable conditions since social control would have been contested or segmented. I err on the conservative side and code ZANU/ZANLA control using the strength of wartime governance within the areas where not only it maintained a strong presence but further ZAPU had no presence. In these areas, contestation between the two groups—both militarily and for civilian support—was low, allowing ZANU to build wartime institutions for local governance and social control.<sup>5</sup> Figure 4C depicts these districts.

#### **Outcome variables**

The continuation of coercion for control and electoral dominance has consequences for how civilians experience politics. If wartime social control increases coercive political control primarily in wartime strongholds, then (1) civilians living in areas under ZANU-PF's wartime social control should report lesser political freedoms and greater fear today, and (2) they should be more complicit in contributing to the ruling party's electoral dominance, regardless of whether they actually support the ruling party. I examine these observable implications using all available rounds with location-level

5. In reality, control may not be delineated along district lines; rather, both groups may have maintained control over parts of the district. If so, this method of coding may bias results toward zero.

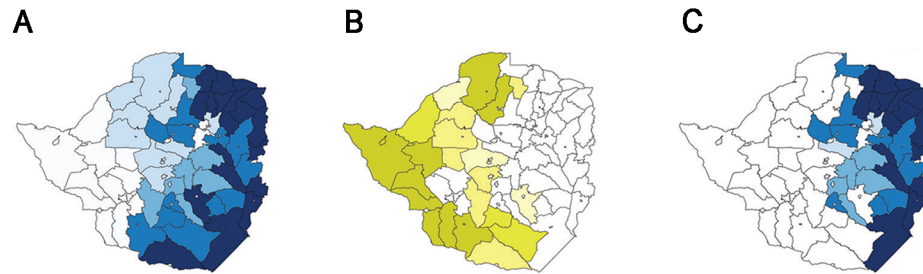


Figure 4. Coding ZANU/ZANLA wartime strongholds: A, ZANU/ZANLA presence; B, ZAPU/ZIPRA presence; C, ZANU/ZANLA social control

data in the Afrobarometer surveys (rounds 1–7) as outcome variables.<sup>6</sup> I geocode respondents at the ward level and then match them to rural communal lands.

First, I examine wartime control’s effects on current participation in formal political channels as measured by questions about attending rallies or political meetings or gathering votes on behalf of a candidate. I then show results for engaging in protest politics, such as attending demonstrations or protests, joining others in raising issues, or refusing to pay taxes or fees to the government. I expect coefficients on formal politics to be positive but protest politics to be negative, indicating that people living in wartime strongholds visibly support the ruling party today.

Next, I show results consistent with my argument that political participation in strongholds runs through political control and fear of coercion. I create an index for respondents’ perceptions about the political restrictions in the country (political freedoms). This index can be separated into two sub-indexes: first, “free to speak” is an index of variables that measure whether respondents believe they can speak freely or express their politics beliefs through membership in political organizations; second, “votes are real” is an index of questions on whether the respondent have been targets of clientelism and whether they believe they have the freedom to choose the preferred candidates.

I then seek evidence against alternative explanations. Political control aside, we may see electoral dominance simply because people support ZANU-PF (trust the government). Trust in the government may either be explicitly trust in the ruling party and institutions associated with it, or respondents may vote because they trust their MP or local government (trust representatives). Alternatively, respondents in wartime strongholds may be more politically aware and active because of wartime politicization. They may therefore be more cognizant (and critical) of illiberal institutions rather than disproportionately experiencing them because of ruling party control. For political awareness, I check whether respondents in

wartime strongholds are more likely to consume political news, report being interested in public affairs, or are more likely to contact the government or media to make their views known (contacts for issues). To measure preferences for democratic institutions, I include indexes that combine questions measuring whether respondents disproportionately support government accountability, reject authoritarianism and support political competition.

### Empirical strategy

In my main specification, I subset the data to respondents living in communal and purchase lands, since that is where rebel control occurred. I estimate

$$\text{Outcome}_{i,b,y,w} = \tau \text{ZANU control}_w + X_1 \gamma_i + X_2 \eta_w + \kappa_b + \zeta_y + \varepsilon_{i,b,y,w},$$

where  $w$  denotes the ward. I control for ethnicity ( $X_1 \gamma_i$ ) and ward-level controls: the logged distance to the capital Harare as a proxy for Rhodesian state capacity, logged ward population, and the logged ward area ( $X_2 \eta_w$ ). I include an indicator for whether the respondent was born after the war ( $\kappa_b$ ), and survey year fixed effects  $\zeta_y$ , to account for time-specific events such as survey year proximity to elections. Standard errors are clustered at the district level.

One potential threat to inference is that ZANU/ZANLA may have chosen to establish control over communities most easily accessible during war because of factors such as distance to wartime bases or border entry points or ease of travel between different communal areas. I thus also present results using an IV approach that leverages an exogenous shift in ZANU’s theater of operations. ZANU’s operational zone was shaped significantly by Mozambique opening its borders in 1975 since, after winning independence in Mozambique, the new ruling party in Mozambique invited one of the two rebel groups to operate along the Mozambique-Zimbabwe border. ZANU, as the smaller and less established rebellion at the time, relocated its operations to Mozambique. From then onward, ZAPU/ZIPRA focused on the western border, while ZANU/ZANLA operated from the east. The two groups’ control was

6. The full list of underlying Afrobarometer questions making up the outcome indexes is in app. sec. A.5.

strongest along the exterior provinces and decreased toward central Zimbabwe, where the groups contested for control over civilians.

To capture the effect of this shift for ZANU, I instrument wartime ZANU control with the ward centroid’s logged distance to the Mozambique border. The endogenous variable is ZANU control, and the exogenous intent-to-treat variable is distance. The first- and second-stage equations are

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Predicted ZANU control}_w &= \tau \text{ distance}_w + X_1\gamma_i \\ &\quad + X_2\eta_w + \kappa_b + \zeta_y + \varepsilon_{i,b,y,w}; \\ \text{Outcome}_{i,b,y,w} &= \tau \text{ Predicted ZANU control}_w \\ &\quad + X_1\gamma_i + X_2\eta_w + \kappa_b + \zeta_y \\ &\quad + \varepsilon_{i,b,y,w}. \end{aligned}$$

Under standard IV assumptions, the relationship can only be causally interpreted if the exclusion violation is not violated—a difficult proposition in this political context. Nevertheless, I show some evidence against exclusion restriction violations in appendix section A.6, where I examine pretreatment balance using variables for geographic features and vegetation

type. All variables are balanced with the exception of bare lands and wetlands. As a robustness check, I confirm that results hold with the inclusion of wetlands as an additional control (app. sec. A.9). Overall, we must be cautious in interpreting the results from both the linear regression and the IV approach. However, similar results across both estimation approaches would point to ZANU’s wartime control affecting postwar politics in ways ascribed by the theory.

**RESULTS**

I present both OLS and IV results, with effect sizes standardized for comparability across outcomes. Table 1, panel A, shows support for the overall argument—that areas that were under ZANU’s wartime control are more likely to be under the ruling party’s political control today. In table 1, both OLS and IV estimates show a positive effect of wartime control on participation through formal politics, which captures whether respondents attend party rallies and meetings or campaign on behalf of a party or candidate. While I cannot disentangle organizing for ZANU-PF versus the opposition, visible political activities are less likely to be attributable to opposition

Table 1. Political Participation and Perceptions of Political Freedoms

	IV Estimates			OLS Estimates		
	Formal Politics (1)	Protest Politics (2)		Formal Politics (3)	Protest Politics (4)	
<b>A.</b>						
ZANU control	.307*** (.082)	-.126** (.059)		.146** (.058)	-.092* (.047)	
Observations	2,063	2,920		2,063	2,920	
F-statistic	91.014	81.498				
	Political Freedoms (1)	Freedom to Speak (2)	Votes Are Real (3)	Political Freedoms (4)	Freedom to Speak (5)	Votes Are Real (6)
<b>B.</b>						
ZANU control	-0.251* (0.128)	-0.213** (.100)	-0.259** (.132)	-0.142* (.073)	-0.125* (.069)	-0.138* (.072)
Observations	2,917	2,917	2,904	2,917	2,917	2,904
F-statistic	81.450	81.450	81.327			

Note. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses. Sample includes Afrobarometer (rounds 1–7) respondents in communal and purchase lands. Regression includes survey year, postwar birth, and ethnicity fixed effects. Controls include logged distance to Harare, the ward’s size (logged km<sup>2</sup>), logged population size, and fear in answering the survey.

\*  $p < .1$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .05$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 2. Trust in the Ruling Party and Local Government

	IV Estimates			OLS Estimates		
	Trust in Government (1)	Trust in ZANU-PF (2)	Trust in Representatives (3)	Trust in Government (4)	Trust in ZANU-PF (5)	Trust in Representatives (6)
ZANU control	.013 (.146)	.028 (.154)	-.041 (.092)	.011 (.075)	-.010 (.083)	.066 (.059)
Observations	2,902	2,900	2,867	2,902	2,900	2,867
F-statistic	81.518	81.616	81.884			

Note. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses. Sample includes Afrobarometer (rounds 1–7) respondents in communal and purchase lands. Regression includes survey year, postwar birth, and ethnicity fixed effects. Controls include logged distance to Harare, the ward’s size (logged km<sup>2</sup>), logged population size, and fear in answering the survey.

\*  $p < .1$ .

\*\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

campaigning in rural government strongholds. This is not because there are no opposition supporters but because authoritarian control significantly increases the psychological barriers to such activities (Young 2019). In line with this, I show results for engagement in protest politics. If respondents are visibly participating to support the opposition, they would have also likely engaged in protests, rallies, or demonstrations. Results indicate this is not the case.

Table 1, panel B, shows evidence consistent with coercive control as a means to sustaining electoral dominance within wartime strongholds. People today are more likely to respond that they have (1) no political freedoms. Broken down into variables measuring (2) freedom of speech and (3) fairness of voting, results indicate fear of the ruling party and general distrust of the electoral process. These results accord with qualitative evidence of ZANU-PF’s penetration into local communities, where key political brokers coerce votes on behalf of the ruling party. In appendix section A.8, I show evidence of institutionalization and continued socialization: these effects do not differ between people who experienced the war and those who did not. That postwar birth does not elicit heterogeneous effects suggests that wartime social control’s effects are not generational.

I examine two alternative explanations. First, respondents may participate more in formal politics because of actual support (not fear) for ZANU-PF. While coercive control can coexist with greater partisanship, table 2 shows that the ruling party’s support base is not as strong as electoral results would suggest. I find no differential (1) trust in government. I break this down further into (2) trust in institutions associated with the ruling party (the president, party, police, or army) and

(3) trust in local government officials or Members of Parliaments. Estimates are all statistically insignificant and close to zero, suggesting that true support for ZANU-PF in wartime strongholds has waned significantly.

Second, respondents in ZANU-PF’s wartime strongholds may simply be more politically aware and therefore are more critical of the state. This may be an alternative explanation for results on formal political participation but would not explain the reduced likelihood of participation in protests. Nonetheless, I show in table 3 that there are no differential effects of wartime control on current-day political awareness or preferences for democratic institutions. Respondents are not more likely to consume politics, not more interested in public affairs, and not more likely to contact government offices or media to raise issues. There are no treatment effects on whether the government should be held accountable (by law, opposition parties, and media), rejection of authoritarian governments, and support for political competition through multiparty politics.

These results are robust to alternative specifications (app. sec. A.9). First, ethnicity may be a posttreatment covariate, as neither liberation army was ethnic in character at its outset.<sup>7</sup> To account for the concern that ethnicity is a “bad control,” I show that results are robust to excluding ethnicity controls. I also control for imbalanced prewar geographical features, add birth year fixed effects, and run a restrictive specification subsetting the data to only include areas where ZANU/ZANLA operated during the war—comparing only (1) areas where they

7. ZANU’s shift to Mozambique increased its affiliation with the Shona during war, while ZAPU’s bases in Zambia and move to Botswana increased recruitment from the Ndebele.

Table 3. Interest in Politics and Political Socialization

	Consume Political News (1)	Interested in Public Affairs (2)	Contacts for Issues (3)	Support Government Accountability (4)	Reject Authoritarian Regimes (5)	Support Political Competition (6)
IV estimates:						
ZANU control	.000 (.085)	-.044 (.070)	.048 (.092)	.005 (.092)	.070 (.085)	.035 (.094)
<i>F</i> -statistic	81.624	73.220	77.149	82.546	84.834	81.755
OLS estimates:						
ZANU control	-.039 (.056)	-.089 (.056)	-.008 (.061)	-.015 (.076)	-.027 (.064)	.082 (.053)
Observations	2,921	2,215	2,029	2,870	2,823	2,910

Note. Robust standard errors clustered at the district level in parentheses. Sample includes Afrobarometer (rounds 1–7) respondents in communal and purchase lands. Regression includes survey year, postwar births, and ethnicity fixed effects. Controls include logged distance to Harare, the ward's size (logged km<sup>2</sup>), logged population size, and fear in answering the survey.

\*  $p < .1$ .

\*\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

established wartime social control to (2) areas where they operated but did not establish control. Finally, I exclude wards within 50 km of Harare to ensure effects are not confounded with ease of repression.

Finally, prewar factors may affect results: if institutional strength under the colonial Rhodesian government covaries with ZANU wartime strongholds, then wartime effects may be confounded. Absent detailed subnational measures of colonial state capacity, I explore one indirect measure: prewar voter registration. Before independence, people were registered to vote at birth (Dendere 2015). I thus subset respondents to those born before 1979 and examine voter registration status as an indirect measure of prewar state capacity. Appendix section A.10 shows no differences in voter registration rates, as estimates are statistically insignificant and close to zero.

## CONCLUSION

This article has examined the long-term effects of rebel governance after rebel victory. To remain in power, rebel victors are likely to build on successful wartime strategies. Their dominance in electoral politics can therefore in part be traced back to their wartime experiences, which employ coercion. I provide mixed-methods evidence from Zimbabwe to show that (1) the dominant rebel victor's wartime rebel governance strategies pervaded postwar governance through mechanisms of socialization and institutionalization, and (2) the use of coercion to sustain dominance is, today, still most felt by civilians living in wartime strongholds.

These results add to our existing understanding of rebel governance, rebel victory, and postwar politics. Civil war produces multiple distinct pathways depending on wartime processes, the rebel groups involved, and how conflict ends. Differentiating these outcomes is a worthy exercise for understanding politics after war. The article's findings suggest that, while rebel victories may increase state stability, they may produce illiberal regimes in the long run. This argument adds the legacies of rebel governance to existing research on revolutionary regimes' authoritarian outcomes.

Other conflict processes and termination patterns may produce different outcomes. For example, where rebel parties must play by the rules and where civil society has greater voice, rebel governance may instead produce democratizing effects as civilians can collectively make demands of their elected officials (Huang 2016). Alternatively, where rebel groups are not integrated into the government, legacies of rebel governance may persist outside of the formal political system after war (Daly 2016). Finally, not all rebel victories are created equally, nor is rebel governance always a cohesive strategy. If the rebel group's command is fragmented and rebel governing strategies vary by midlevel commanders, then rebel governance strategies may serve against—rather than for—state interests if these commanders are kept out of the ruling coalition (Martin 2022).

This article's findings offer two paths for future research. First, this article has focused primarily on coercion, but rebel governance involves a large menu of services and institutions (Huang 2016). Are there continuity in these other development

and governing strategies, how might they be deployed post-war, and to what effect? Second, the article primarily examined coercion within elections, yet challenges to political dominance arrive in many forms including internal party splits and the threat of conflict recurrence. Future research should consider how the types of political challenge rebel victors face may lead to different strategies for governance.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Leonardo Arriola, Antonella Bandiera, Justine Davis, Chipo Dendere, Jeffrey Frieden, Jessica Gottlieb, Reyko Huang, Horacio Larreguy, Gabriella Levy, Philip Martin, Gwyneth McClendon, Pia Raffler, Joan Ricart-Huguet, Nicholas Sambanis, and Martha Wilfahrt for helpful feedback, as well as other participants of meetings at the International Studies Association 2021, the Statebuilding and Political Development Conference, Midwest Political Science Association 2023, American Political Science Association 2023, and the Africa Workshop at University of California, Berkeley. Many thanks also to Gerald Mandisodza, Rachel Raps, and Chikwava Sigauke for excellent research assistance.

## REFERENCES

- Aalen, Lise, Aslak Orre, and Ragnhild L. Muriaas. 2022. *Post-war Ruling Parties and Their Youth Wings*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.
- Aponte González, Andrés F., Daniel Hirschel-Burns, and Andres D. Uribe. 2024. "Contestation, Governance, and the Production of Violence against Civilians: Coercive Political Order in Rural Colombia." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 68 (4): 616–41.
- Arjona, Ana. 2016. *Rebelocracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arjona, Ana, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Rebel Governance in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arriola, Leonardo R., Jed Devaro, and Anne Meng. 2021. "Democratic Subversion: Elite Cooptation and Opposition Fragmentation." *American Political Science Review* 115 (4): 1358–72.
- Balcells, Laia. 2011. "Continuation of Politics by Two Means: Direct and Indirect Violence in Civil War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55 (3): 397–422.
- Balcells, Laia. 2017. *Rivalry and Revenge: The Politics of Violence during Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bandiera, Antonella, Lelys Dinarte, Juan Miguel Jimenez, Sandra Roza, and Maria Sviatschi. 2022. "Rebel Governance and Development: The Persistent Effects of Guerrillas in El Salvador." Working paper.
- Barceló, Joan. 2021. "The Long-Term Effects of War Exposure on Civic Engagement." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118 (6): e2015539118.
- Bhebe, Ngwabi. 1999. *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe*. Zimbabwe: Mambo.
- Checkel, Jeffrey T. 2017. "Socialization and Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 54 (5): 592–605.
- Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Carl Knutsen, Staffan Lindberg, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Steven Fish, Adam Glynn, and Allen Hicken. 2020. V-Dem Dataset V10. <https://v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/>.
- Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2016. *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Daly, Sarah Zukerman. 2022. *Violent Victors: Why Bloodstained Parties Win Postwar Elections*, vol. 196. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Dendere, Chipo. 2015. "The Impact of Voter Exit on Party Survival: Evidence from Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF." PhD diss., Georgia State University.
- Gilbert, Danielle. 2022. "The Logic of Kidnapping in Civil War: Evidence from Colombia." *American Political Science Review* 116 (4): 1226–41.
- Haass, Felix, and Martin Ottmann. 2022. "The Effect of Wartime Legacies on Electoral Mobilization after Civil War." *Journal of Politics* 84 (3): 1322–36.
- Hägerdal, Nils. 2019. "Ethnic Cleansing and The Politics of Restraint: Violence and Coexistence in the Lebanese Civil War." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63 (1): 59–84.
- Huang, Reyko. 2016. *The Wartime Origins of Democratization: Civil War, Rebel Governance, and Political Regimes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ishiyama, John, and Michael Marshall. 2015. "Candidate Recruitment and Former Rebel Parties." *Party Politics* 21 (4): 591–602.
- Jeche, Anna. 2014. "Capturing Fading National Memory." Interview, National Archives of Zimbabwe, Oral History Department.
- Jenkins, Sarah. 2020. "The Politics of Fear and the Securitization of African Elections." *Democratization* 27 (5): 836–53.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kruger, Norma. 2005. "ZANU (PF) Strategies in General Elections, 1980–2000: Discourse and Coercion." *African Affairs* 104 (414): 1–34.
- Kruger, Norma J. 1991. *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LeBas, Adrienne. 2006. "Polarization as Craft: Party Formation and State Violence in Zimbabwe." *Comparative Politics* 38 (4): 419–38.
- Letsa, Natalie Wenzell. 2019. "The Political Geography of Electoral Autocracies: The Influence of Party Strongholds on Political Beliefs in Africa." *Electoral Studies* 60:102047.
- Lewis, Janet I. 2020. *How Insurgency Begins: Rebel Group Formation in Uganda and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Liu, Shelley X. 2022. "Control, Coercion, and Cooptation: How Rebels Govern after Winning Civil War." *World Politics* 74 (1): 37–76.
- Liu, Shelley X. 2023. "Legacies of Victimization: Evidence from Forced Resettlement in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, forthcoming.
- Liu, Shelley X. 2024. *Governing after War: Rebel Victories and Post-war Statebuilding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lyons, Terrence. 2016. "From Victorious Rebels to Strong Authoritarian Parties: Prospects for Post-war Democratization." *Democratization* 23 (6): 1026–41.
- Mampilly, Zachariah, and Megan A. Stewart. 2021. "A Typology of Rebel Political Institutional Arrangements." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65 (1): 15–45.
- Mampilly, Zachariah Chierian. 2011. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mares, Isabela, and Lauren E. Young. 2018. "The Core Voter's Curse: Clientelistic Threats and Promises in Hungarian Elections." *Comparative Political Studies* 51 (11): 1441–71.
- Marongwe, Ngonidzashé. 2013. "Political Aesthetics, the Third Chimurenga, and the ZANU-PF Mobilization in Shurugwi District of Zimbabwe." *Journal of Developing Societies* 29 (4): 457–85.
- Martin, Philip. 2021. "Commander-Community Ties after Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 58 (4): 778–93.
- Martin, Philip A. 2022. "Insurgent Armies: Military Obedience and State Formation after Rebel Victory." *International Security* 46 (3): 87–127.
- Mashingaidze, Terence M. 2015. "Nationalism and Its Discontents: The Liberation Struggle Legacies in Post-colonial Zimbabwe's Contested Political Spaces." *African Journal of Democracy and Governance* 2 (3–4): 117–38.
- Meng, Anne, and Jack Paine. 2022. "Power Sharing and Authoritarian Stability: How Rebel Regimes Solve the Guardianship Dilemma." *American Political Science Review* 116 (4): 1208–25.



- Migdal, Joel S. 1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Murambiwa, Austin. 2014. "Capturing Fading National Memory." Interview, National Archives of Zimbabwe, Oral History Department.
- Mwonzora, Gift, and Edknowledge Mandikwaza. 2019. "The Menu of Electoral Manipulation in Zimbabwe: Food Handouts, Violence, Memory, and Fear—Case of Mwenezi East and Bikita West 2017 By-Elections." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 54 (8): 1128–44.
- Ndlovu, Thadeus Parks. 2010. "Zenzo Nkobi Photographic Archive, AL3291/B15." Mafela Trust.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J., and Wendy Willems. 2009. "Making Sense of Cultural Nationalism and the Politics of Commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35 (4): 945–65.
- Revkin, Mara Redlich. 2021. "Competitive Governance and Displacement Decisions under Rebel Rule: Evidence from the Islamic State in Iraq." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65 (1): 46–80.
- Ricart-Huguet, Joan. 2022. "Why Do Different Cultures Form and Persist? Learning from the Case of Makerere University." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 60 (4): 429–56.
- Rickard, Kit, and Kristin M. Bakke. 2021. "Legacies of Wartime Order: Punishment Attacks and Social Control in Northern Ireland." *Security Studies* 30 (4): 603–36.
- Sindre, Gyda Marås. 2016. "Internal Party Democracy in Former Rebel Parties." *Party Politics* 22 (4): 501–11.
- Staniland, Paul. 2014. "Violence and Democracy." *Comparative Politics* 47 (1): 99–118.
- Stewart, Megan A. 2018. "Civil War as State-Making: Strategic Governance in Civil War." *International Organization* 72 (1): 205–26.
- Stewart, Megan A. 2021. *Governing for Revolution: Social Transformation in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, Charles, Jon Pevehouse, and Scott Straus. 2017. "Perils of Pluralism: Electoral Violence and Incumbency in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Journal of Peace Research* 54 (3): 397–411.
- Thaler, Kai M. 2017. "Mixed Methods Research in the Study of Political and Social Violence and Conflict." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 11 (1): 59–76.
- Toft, Monica Duffy. 2010. "Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?" *International Security* 34 (4): 7–36.
- van Baalen, Sebastian. 2023. "Polls of Fear? Electoral Violence, Incumbent Strength, and Voter Turnout in Côte d'Ivoire." *Journal of Peace Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221147938>.
- Wang, Yuhua. 2021. "The Political Legacy of Violence during China's Cultural Revolution." *British Journal of Political Science* 51 (2): 463–87.
- Wittig, Katrin. 2016. "Politics in the Shadow of the Gun: Revisiting the Literature on 'Rebel-to-Party Transformations' through the Case of Burundi." *Civil Wars* 18 (2): 137–59.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2008. "The Social Processes of Civil War: The War-time Transformation of Social Networks." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11:539–61.
- Young, Lauren E. 2019. "The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe." *American Political Science Review* 113 (1): 140–55.
- ZANU PF. 2023. "Our Structure: The Party Organs." <https://zanupf.org.zw/party-organs>.