

When Do Opposition Political Parties Resort to Post-election Violence?

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Abstract

Allegations of electoral fraud provide opposition parties with two pathways: legal alternatives such as conceding defeat or petitioning the courts and illegal options like post-election violence. This research paper examines why in the face of alleged fraud, some opposition political parties resort to violence while others do not. Using V-Dem, NELDA, and ECAV data on 4,040 post-election violent events in 40 Sub-Saharan African countries, I find that opposition parties are more likely to resort to violence when their support is geographically concentrated and polarized. These findings are robust when logic models are alternated with probit models. The study enhances our understanding of the role of mobilization structures and political opportunities in shaping collective action and post-election violence. A comparative case study of Kenya (2007-2008) and Ghana (2012) also illustrates how geographically polarized and concentrated party support contributes to post-election violence. The paper aims to guide policymaking on electoral violence prevention and mitigation.

Keywords: post-election violence, electoral fraud, opposition parties, political mobilization and opportunities, regional polarization, and concentration.

Fraudulent elections stall democratization and risk political instability and civil unrest. When elections are alleged to be marred by massive electoral fraud, the political party that alleges fraud faces several legal and illegal alternatives to choose from in response to electoral disputes. The opposition party may choose from legal alternatives such as conceding, requesting a recount or petitioning the courts. On the other hand, the opposition may choose from illegal alternatives such as employing violence to contest electoral outcomes. In some elections, while the opposition resorts to large-scale post-election violence in response to incumbent fraud, other opposition political parties either boycott elections, concede defeat or petition the courts. Why

do some opposition political parties resort to post-election violence following fraudulent elections while others do not?

Owing to current literature and substantive knowledge on elections, we know that not all elections alleged of massive fraud turn violent (Daxecker, 2012, 2014; Norris et al., 2015). While political elites in some countries may turn to legal alternatives to seek redress, others engage in large-scale post-electoral violence to contest elections (Bekoe, 2012; Burchard, 2015; Straus & Taylor, 2009). Research on elections has focused on the motivation for elites and party supporters to engage in post-election violence rather than the enabling factors that make violent contestation possible. The literature falls short of explaining the mobilization potential of political parties to engage in post-election violence in the face of electoral dissent. As a result, we seem to understand the motivation behind opposition-sponsored post-election violence but do not know the other conditions under which they successfully deploy violence. This research paper seeks to contribute an explanation to the question - when do political parties resort to post-election violence?

The contentious politics literature particularly Tilly (1978) and Tarrow (2011) emphasizes that mobilization structures and political opportunities shape collective action. Similar to Tilly's (1978) 'repertoires of contention,' when political parties allege fraud, parties are faced with a set of alternatives that may have been historically peculiar to political parties in the context in which elections are contested. Also, McAdam's (1982) political process model points to the strength of organizational networks and the availability of political opportunities to shape groups' ability to mobilize effectively for contentious collective action. In addition, the literature highlights the role of numbers in shaping the viability and impact of violent mobilization (Chenoweth, 2011; DeNardo, 1985). Owing to this literature, it seems that in the context of post-election violence, political parties in countries with high levels of party polarization and concentration regionally may have the mobilization structures that render them prone to resorting to violence following fraudulent elections than in contexts characterized by regionally diffused political party support.

This paper argues that post-electoral violence is not only shaped by a motivation to resort to violence but also the mobilization potential to employ violent means of expressing grievances regardless of repression. I argue that the more geographically concentrated and polarized political party support is within a few regions of a country relative to several other regions, the more likely the political parties in question would resort to post-election violence in the face of electoral fraud. The study uses regionalism as well as geographically polarized and

concentrated political party support interchangeably to reference the same concept. Using V-dem, NELDA, and ECAV data on 4,040 post-election violent events collected on 279 electoral rounds within 40 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, I find that opposition political parties are more likely to resort to violence after alleged incumbent fraud when party support is geographically polarized and concentrated sub-nationally.

This study advances our understanding of post-election violence in Sub-Saharan Africa by focusing on the role of geographic concentration of party support in shaping violent alternatives to fraudulent elections. It bridges a gap in the literature by examining the mobilization capabilities of political parties aside from the motivation to engage in post-election violence. The findings have significant implications for policy and democracy promotion efforts. It provides insights into predicting and potentially mitigating post-election violence, especially when political party support is geographically polarized and concentrated.

The Timing of Election Violence

Election violence manifests in three phases within the electioneering period. It either manifests as pre-election violence, election-day violence or post-election violence (Angerbrandt, 2018; Bekoe, 2012; Birch et al., 2020; Fjelde, 2020; Wahman & Goldring, 2020). While some causes of election violence are common across phases, others are directly related to specific phases of election violence. Concerning pre-electoral violence, recent studies in Zambia and Malawi show that geographically polarized electoral districts are more prone to campaign violence due to the intent of political elites to restrain opponents from capturing voters within their strongholds (Wahman, 2023; Wahman & Goldring, 2020). Also, the anticipated presence of international election observers (IEOs) and their condemnation if fraud is detected may encourage elites to perpetrate violence during the campaign period before the arrival of IEOs (Daxecker, 2014).

The goal of election-day violence is to manipulate the immediate outcome of an election. Studies show that incumbents are often culpable for violence on election day, however, opposition supporters are also complicit especially in opposition strongholds (Fjelde & Höglund, 2016a; Hafner-Burton et al., 2014, 2018; Onapajo, 2014; Rauschenbach & Paula, 2019). Violent tactics used on election day include but are not limited to intimidating voters, attacking polling stations, and obstructing access to polling stations. In Nigeria, while

incumbents use election violence to rig elections on election – day, the opposition may use violence to contest state repression (Onapajo, 2014). Violent manipulations often follow strategic calculations of electoral defeat in certain areas. In areas where political elites lack support, they may use violence to reduce voter turnout or delegitimize the voting process entirely (Gutiérrez-Romero & LeBas, 2020; Hafner-Burton et al., 2014). While election-day violence intends to manipulate electoral outcomes violently, post-election violence may occur as a function of alleged fraud, grievances, or a continuation of pre-election violence.

Unlike pre-election violence and election-day violence which may be small, medium, or large-scale, post-election violence is often large-scale and widespread turmoil in response to alleged fraud or government repression (Allison, 2010; Angerbrandt, 2018; Daxecker, 2012). Post-election can take the form of violent protests, and physical attacks including killings of political elites and civilians as well as communal clashes. In Kenya, the widespread violence that ensued between supporters of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), led by Raila Odinga, and the Party of National Unity (PNU), led by the incumbent president, Mwai Kibaki was a result of alleged electoral fraud by the ODM (Angerbrandt, 2018). In Zimbabwe, post-election violence is often a result of state-sponsored repression against the opposition to consolidate political power (Hickman, 2011). Since tensions are always at their peak during poll counting and declaration, post-election violence events may manifest deadlier than pre-election or election-day violence.

Why Does the Opposition Engage in Post-election Violence?

Scholars provide several reasons for post-election violence. First, alleged electoral fraud by the opposition, and intent by the incumbent to conceal fraud can cause the opposition to use violence as a response while the incumbent uses violence to suppress dissent (Hafner-Burton et al., 2014, 2018; Harvey & Mukherjee, 2020; Smidt, 2016). The 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya reflects a clear example of both incumbent and opposition violence in response to electoral fraud and the incumbent strategic motive to suppress the opposition. Second, incumbents' refusal to concede electoral defeat and hand over political power to the opposition often results in post-election violence (Hafner-Burton et al., 2018; Nyamutata, 2012). For example, in Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe's hold on power after losing the 2008 presidential election to opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai led to a violent crackdown of opposition supporters by state security and Zanu-PF loyalists (Nyamutata, 2012).

Furthermore, international election observers usually from Western democratic institutions condemn fraudulent elections with good intentions yet legitimize the use of violence by the opposition (Kelley, 2012; Smidt, 2016; von Borzyskowski, 2019). Smidt (2016) argues that opposition groups exploit the presence and condemnation of election observers to express their grievances and force incumbents to hand over power. Logit models using data on post-election violence in sub-Saharan Africa from 1990 to 2008 show similar results that internationally condemned elections are more likely to turn violent than not-condemned elections (von Borzyskowski, 2019).

In some cases, the lack of legal avenues to seek redress for fraudulent elections increases the likelihood that parties may resort to violence (Birch & Muchlinski, 2018; Chernykh, 2014; Fjelde, 2020). Strong electoral institutions and the rule of law can instill confidence in the opposition to petition the courts to settle electoral disputes rather than resorting to violence (Chernykh, 2014). Other scholars also support this assertion. Birch & Muchlinski (2018) emphasizes that effective electoral violence prevention strategies such as electoral institutions reform contribute to maintaining peace during elections. These studies point to the importance of legal avenues in preventing post-election violence.

So far, the literature on opposition-sponsored post-election violence explains the motivation behind post-election violence. However, we lack understanding of when opposition political parties' resort to violence when the motivation for violent contestation exists. In other words, there is clarity on the motivations for violence but not the resource potential and political opportunities that make post-election violence a viable means of experiencing electoral grievances. Since not all opposition groups respond violently following fraudulent elections, we are inclined to question the conditions under which parties engage in violent contestation and vice versa.

In the following section, I present a theory that explains why some opposition parties use violence following fraudulent elections while others do not.

Geographically Polarized and Concentrated Political Party Support

I theorize opposition-sponsored post-election violence from an electoral geography perspective. I argue that while alleged or evidence of fraud may motivate elites and supporters to contest electoral outcomes violently, the decision to choose violent contestation rather than

peaceful alternatives to electoral disputes is rooted in the strength of collective action. Following fraudulent elections, regionally polarized and concentrated political party support shapes the decision of opposition political parties to engage in post-election violence by providing human resource mobilization and political opportunities necessary for large-scale collective action against the state.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, political party support is often structured based on regional cleavages (Wahman, 2023; Wahman & Goldring, 2020). These regional cleavages that form the basis of voter mobilization are not necessarily ethnic but may include religious affiliations or shared geographical interests. While in some countries, party support along regional cleavages is geographically diffused, it is polarized and concentrated in others (Sjögren & Angerbrandt, 2019; Wahman, 2023; Wahman & Boone, 2018). Geographically diffused regional cleavages imply that support especially for the main political parties is relatively spread across various regions of the country. On the contrary, a country with polarized and concentrated party support is characterized by heavily localized party support in a few regions and supplementary support in several others.

Regionally polarized and concentrated political party support shapes post-election violent contestation in ways that are unlike regionally diffused political party support. After alleged fraudulent elections, the runner-up political party is faced with both legal and illegal alternatives as a response to electoral fraud. I argue that regionally polarized and concentrated party supports shape the opposition's decision to employ violent contestation in two ways: 1) by providing a concentrated base of loyal supporters who can be rapidly mobilized for election violence, and 2) by enhancing grievances and perceived injustice among supporters who feel their regional interests is undermined by fraudulent elections (Cederman et al., 2010, 2013; Wahman, 2017). These two mechanisms may offer social groups the ability to defeat collective action problems, especially in contexts where the costs of repression are relatively high (Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 1978).

Where political support is concentrated, opposition elites can mobilize supporters more effectively. Though not all post-election violent events are sanctioned by political elites, the effect of numbers and proximity also applies to grassroots and civilian-sanctioned violence. Mobilization structures - formal and informal networks that facilitate collective action are essential for violent contestation sanctioned by either the party elite or supporters (McAdam et al., 2003). In regionally polarized and concentrated party support, these structures may be local

party offices, community organizations, or deep clientelist and loyalty networks that coordinate collective action. These dense local networks in party strongholds facilitate the speedy flow of information about electoral fraud and the call to violent action in response to fraud (McAdam et al., 2003; Tilly, 2006).

As we have observed in contexts such as Zimbabwe and Uganda, incumbents that seek to hold on to political power are most likely to deploy the full force of police and military against opposition elites and civilians even at the protest level (Bratton & Masunungure, 2007; Curtice & Behlendorf, 2020). In that sense, the cost of repression is high usually in post-electoral settings. Opposition party supporters therefore require a strong motive to follow through with plans to use violence and stick with each other along the way. In regionally polarized and concentrated political party support, the perceived threat to regional interests assures that other party members will contribute in numbers to a violent overthrow of the incumbent (Cederman et al., 2010; Chenoweth, 2011; DeNardo, 1985; Tarrow, 2011). Such assurances increase the perceived regional strength of the opposition and the possibility of gaining concessions from the state or electoral management bodies. Even at a high price to inquire for rebellion, one may follow through with violence if there is reason to believe that collective action by many people in proximity to each other can fix electoral fraud. Following this argument, I hypothesize that:

After fraudulent elections, opposition-sponsored post-election violence is more likely in countries characterized by regionally polarized and concentrated political party support.

Research Design

I test the above hypothesis using event-based data from 1990 to 2012 for 4,040 violent events during elections in 40 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The unit of observation is violent events that occurred during executive elections. Sub-Saharan Africa is the sampling frame for this study. Since most countries in this subregion returned to multiparty democracy around 1990, it provides an ideal comparison of countries with similar socio-political trajectories. Though they may be similar in certain ways, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa vary significantly in terms of regional concentration and polarization and the frequency of election violence. Also, similar studies have considered Sub-Saharan Africa as an ideal sample for studying election violence due to the availability of granular data (Smidt, 2016; von Borzyskowski, 2019). I use logistic regression models to test the association between party polarization and concentration across

regions and opposition-sponsored post-election violence. The dependent variable is binary (presence or absence of post-election violence), hence, a logistic regression is ideal for estimating the likelihood of post-election violence when the theoretical condition is met.

The main dependent variable is post-election violence (threat or actual physical force) acquired from the Electoral Contention and Violence (ECAV) dataset. ECAV originally coded this as 'Event Violence'. Similar to most studies on election violence, I define post-election violence as violent acts that happen after election day and not later than 3 months after elections (Bekoe, 2012; Burchard, 2015). Since I use event-based data, post-election violence is 1 if physical force was used against either elites, voters, or property in any election. According to ECAV data, violent election events include but are not limited to protests, demonstrations, strikes, arrests, detention, attacks, killings, riots, and coups (Daxecker et al., 2019). The variable is coded 0 when such an event is not recorded. Country-level election violence events are often not independent of each other due to the possibility that violent events are shaped by the same factors over time. To account for the potential correlation of violent events within the same country over time, I use binary logit models with robust standard errors clustered by country for the regression analysis. This approach helps control intra-country correlations and provides more accurate standard error estimates.

The key independent variable is regionally polarized and concentrated political party support (v2pscomprg) taken from the V-Dem dataset. V-Dem codes this variable between -3 to +2 to reflect the geographical concentration or dispersion of party support across different regions of a country. Negative values imply that most major parties are competitive in only one or two regions of the country, i.e., their support is heavily concentrated in a few areas (Coppedge et al., 2021). More positive values signal that major parties are competitive in most regions of the country and political support is dispersed (Coppedge et al., 2021). The more geographically polarized and concentrated regions in a country are, the less score such countries receive for this variable.

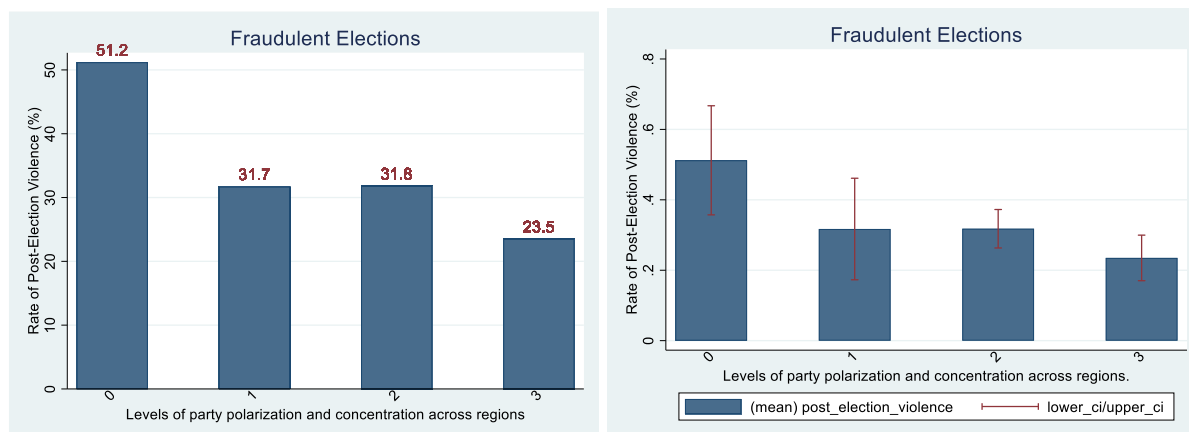


Figure 1. *Association between levels of party polarization and concentration and opposition-sponsored post-election violence.*

Since I intend to test a theory on when fraudulent elections turn violent, I include a variable on alleged fraud from the National Elections Across Democracies and Autocracies (NELDA) dataset. The alleged fraud variable is binary and codes 1 for elections that were fraudulent to the extent of triggering public protest and 0 if alleged fraud associated with protest did not occur. By measuring alleged fraud that motivated public protests, I can test the proposed theory only using allegations of fraud that were relatively strong and widespread. It selects out minor cases of fraud that sometimes may be perceived by losers even if elections were credible. The alleged fraud variable is not included in the logistic regression analysis but rather used as a conditional to the regression models. I run regression models on the condition that alleged fraud associated with public protests occurred in an electoral round.

Before discussing covariates, I present a bivariate analysis to show the association between regional polarization and concentration of political party support and opposition-sponsored post-election violence in cases where elections were allegedly fraudulent. Figure 1 provides preliminary support for the hypothesis that, when elections are alleged to be fraudulent, the opposition political party is likely to engage in post-election violence when party polarization and concentration across regions are high. The graph on the right-hand side shows the mean rate of post-election violence by categories of party polarization and concentration at a 95 % confidence interval. Figure 1 demonstrates that elections in the context of more polarized and concentrated country regions are associated with an increased rate of post-election violence where fraud is alleged. At a 95 % confidence interval, the bars depicting party polarization and concentration at points 0 and 3 (highest and lowest respectively) are statistically significant.

From the NELDA data, I include as covariates *western observers condemned elections*, *leader tenure* (has incumbent extended tenure beyond the legal limit in the past), and *perceived economic crisis* (before the elections)¹. Studies find that elections condemned by Western election observers are more likely to turn violent than non-condemned elections (Smidt, 2016; von Borzyskowski, 2019). Also, the literature finds leader tenure to be associated with post-election violence. Davenport et al. (2022) shows that tyrants often use repression and violence as a strategy to consolidate power. Furthermore, elites may easily manipulate party support to use violence post-elections in countries with higher levels of unemployment, inflation, and other related economic crisis (Awofeso & Irabor, 2022; Harish & Little, 2017). I also include institutional constraints on the executive, type of electoral system, voter turnout, and the runner-up vote share as co-variables owing to existing literature (Burchard, 2020; Fjelde & Höglund, 2016a; Hafner-Burton et al., 2014; International IDEA, 2008; Letsa, 2017)². I also include other country-level co-variables that often shape political instability; electoral restrictions, gross domestic product per capita, and the level of electoral democracy in a country (Bogaards et al., 2010; Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 2020; Korotayev et al., 2017; Norris, 2015).

To complement the quantitative approach employed in this study, I present a brief case study of post-election violence in Kenya (2007 – 2008) and Ghana (2012) in the discussion section. The Gha case offers an example of alleged massive fraudulent elections by the opposition that ended up in court to be contested legally. The Kenyan case seem popular and have featured in several studies on election violence. However, it applies to the theory posited in this study and can contribute to our understanding of when political parties are more likely to use post-election violence. A mixed methods approach would benefit this study by validating and contextualizing the broad patterns identified through the quantitative analysis.

The study includes robustness checks. I employ the probit model as an alternative to the logistic regression model. Though probit and logit models are appropriate for variables with binary outcomes, they treat the assumptions regarding the distribution of error terms differently. Probit models would allow me to verify that the results from the logit models are not sensitive to the choice of the link function ³.

¹ Western election observers have been found more credible and influential than other international observers ((von Borzyskowski, 2019).

² I omit pre-election violence and election-day violence as covariates due to issue of multicollinearity with post-election violence.

³ More on robustness checks after APSA Conference. I would have some good feedback for extra robustness checks.

Results and Discussion

Models:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Opposition – Sponsored Post-Election Violence if alleged fraud = 1						
Post-Election Violence						
Regionalism	-0.576*** (0.175)	-0.495** (0.233)	-0.484*** (0.181)	-0.806*** (0.176)	-0.758*** (0.195)	-0.634*** (0.228)
Western Condemnation		-0.711 (0.536)	-0.477 (0.515)	0.072 (0.338)	0.145 (0.347)	0.635 (0.593)
Runner-up vote share			0.038*** (0.013)	0.051*** (0.015)	0.048*** (0.017)	0.098** (0.044)
Leader ext. tenure				2.355*** (0.593)	2.848*** (0.548)	3.096 (1.961)
Poll system					0.153 (0.250)	0.511 (0.671)
Voter turnout						-0.079** (0.035)
Perc. Economic crisis						-0.259 (1.082)
Executive constraints						0.988 (4.140)
GDP per Capita						0.378

						(0.449)
Electoral democracy						-2.286 (5.324)
Electoral restrictions						-1.575** (0.749)
Constant	-0.469*	-0.177	-1.584***	-2.317***	-2.419***	1.796 (3.475)
Observations	531	472	440	440	348	347
Pseudo R2	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.11	0.13	0.22
ROC	0.66	0.69	0.69	0.73	0.74	0.81
Percent correctly classified	69.68	68.01	72.95	75.00	77.59	78.96

Standard errors in parentheses
 * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

In Table 1 above, I present logistic regression estimates of the effects between regionally polarized and concentrated political party support and opposition-sponsored post-election violence. Across all six models, the results support the hypothesis for the study. The estimates are negative and statistically significant across all models ($p < 0.01$ except for Model 2 which is $p < 0.05$). Model 1 is a bivariate logistic regression between the main independent variable and the dependent variable. In Models 2 to 5, I include election-based co-variables often associated with post-election violence. In the final model, Model 6, I also include country-based co-variables. After the inclusion of all co-variables, the negative and significant coefficients indicate that the likelihood of post-election violence increases as party regional polarization and concentration increase (lower values on the scale indicate higher levels of the phenomenon). As mentioned previously, across all models, I run regression models conditional on the fact that there was alleged fraud significant enough to trigger post-elections public protest. The pseudo- R^2 value of 0.22 implies that about 22 percent of the variation in opposition-sponsored post-election violence is explained by Model 6 in Table 1.

In Models 2 – 5, I observe that the effects that Western condemnation of elections has on opposition-sponsored post-election violence are not statistically significant once regional polarization and concentration are included as an explanatory variable (Smidt, 2016). This seems to corroborate the theoretical argument made in this study that the ability of opposition political parties to engage in large-scale election violence is also conditional on their ability to mobilize for collective action, especially in a context where the cost of repression is high. Though international condemnation of elections legitimizes claims of the opposition that massive voter fraud occurred, the opposition may need dense local networks of like-minded supporters to channel condemnation into action.

Table 1 also shows a consistent positive and statistically significant effect between the votes garnered by the percentage share of the runner-up to the election and the likelihood that the opposition will use violence if the elections are alleged to be fraudulent. The results support the assertion in the literature that higher electoral competitiveness measured by a stronger performance by the runner-up can shape the occurrence of post-election violence (Hafner-Burton et al., 2018). A competitive opposition increases the stakes of the elections and the grievances that give motive for violent alternatives. I also observe that higher voter turnouts reduce the likelihood of opposition-sponsored post-election violence. I expect that when more people show up to vote, the results are likely a reflection of a broader spectrum of the

electorate's views. This can also moderate extreme positions and reduce political polarization. High voter turnout which also indicates higher levels of suffrage, may also enhance the perceived legitimacy of the electoral process and outcome of elections.

Lastly, candidates' restrictions by ethnicity, race, religion, or language also show a negative and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on opposition-sponsored post-election violence. V-dem codes the existence of statutory restrictions as 0 and the absence as 1 hence, one can infer that the more candidates are excluded based on social background, the higher the likelihood of opposition-sponsored post-election violence. This finding is supported by existing literature (Bogaards et al., 2010; Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 2020). For instance, Bogaards et al. (2010) find that ethnic party bans meant to reduce the likelihood of ethnic-related electoral conflict could rather result in political instability by offering ethnic opposition groups a reason to rebel.

To test the robustness and reliability of these findings, I replace logit models with probit regression models in the Appendix. Logit models assume that the error term follows a logistic distribution while a probit model assumes that the error term follows a normal distribution. I intend to provide a complimentary check of the findings above through different underlying statistical assumptions. Across all probit models, regionalism increases the likelihood of opposition-sponsored post-election violence and the results are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. However, the co-efficient for model 6 (all covariates included) reduces from -0.634 to -0.335 ($p < 0.01$) in the probit models. These results demonstrate the reliability of the relationship between regionalism and post-election violence when other covariates linked to post-election violence are accounted for.

Contentious Politics in Geographically – Polarized and Concentrated Electoral Areas

These findings resonate with the core themes in the contentious politics literature as well as the geographical distribution of election violence (McAdam et al., 2003; Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 2006; Wahman, 2023). The findings that geographically polarized and concentrated political party support increases the likelihood of post-election violence contribute to our understanding of how political geography shapes collective action despite significant obstacles and incumbent repression. Similar to Tarrow's (2011) argument, citizens who ordinarily do not have the power to engage in contentious politics may find political opportunities through electoral fraud and morale to preserve regional interest defeat the problems of collective action, and engage in extra-constitutional activities. Galvanized by symbols of regional interest, both opposition

political elites and influential citizens can mobilize co-party members to challenge electoral outcomes with violence rather than conceding, petitioning the courts, or engaging in peaceful protests.

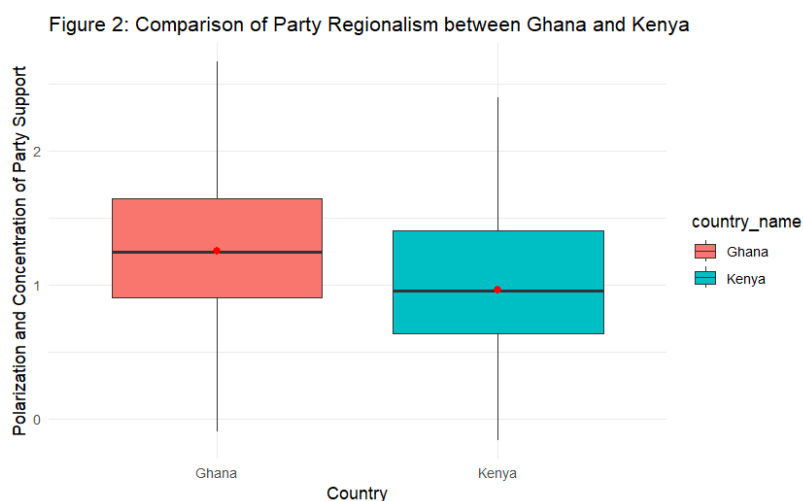
The likelihood of post-election violence in geographically polarized and concentrated electoral systems could also explain Wahman's (2023) the dilemma of why less competitive electoral areas also experience election violence contrary to expectations in a large body of literature on election violence (Hafner-Burton et al., 2014; Straus & Taylor, 2009). Regionally dominant constituencies, which are often less electorally competitive, may create a strong sense of local political identity and increase perceptions of injustice when faced with unfavorable election results. Following these findings, one may ask, are swing regions less likely to experience post-election violence as compared to regions strongly affiliated to the incumbent or opposition? A couple of factors point to why this may be the case; a) swing regions lack a dominant political identity and affiliations and hence are less likely to be motivated by perceived threats to group interests, and b) the dense clientelistic and social networks that facilitate the mobilization for violent collective action may not exist in swing regions.

While this may be a point for further inquiry into the geographical distribution of post-election violence, this study contributes to the literature on regional identities and national politics in many African states (Angerbrandt, 2018; Choi & Raleigh, 2021; von Borzyskowski, 2019; Wahman, 2023; Wahman & Goldring, 2020). Regional dynamics seem to shape post-election violence in Africa more than the role of international election observers. Including regionalism as a covariate in the logistic regression resulted in a non-statistically significant relationship between international condemnation of elections and opposition-sponsored post-election violence. While it may be the case that international condemnation of elections motivates opposition groups to engage in post-election violence (Smidt, 2016), the mobilization potential to act contentiously may depend on the nature of regional identities.

To illustrate the practical implications of these findings, I consider two historical cases in Sub-Saharan to support the theoretical assumptions proposed in this study. I analyze the 2012 Ghana presidential elections versus the 2007-2008 Kenya presidential elections. Despite accusations of incumbent fraud in both elections, Kenya's election started with highly intense post-election violence (later ended up in court) while Ghana's opposition party in 2012 immediately announced that the opposition would seek constitutional redress to alleged electoral fraud. In Table 3 (see Appendix), I run a Welch Two-Sample T-test to ascertain mean levels of regionalism in Kenya and Ghana. The Welch Two-Sample T-test results show that Kenya

exhibits significantly higher levels of regionalism compared to Ghana. The mean difference is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Figure 2 above also illustrates that political party support in Kenya is more polarized and concentrated in Kenya as compared to Ghana. The median regionalism score is higher in Ghana as compared to Kenya. Since lower levels of this variable indicate more polarization and concentration, the results indicate that Kenya is more geographically polarized and concentrated compared to Ghana. The whiskers for Kenya are further down reinforcing the idea that Kenya has a greater range of more polarized and concentrated regionalism scores than Ghana.



Kenya 2007 – 2008 Post – Elections Violence

The post-election violence of Kenya 2007- 2008 was shaped by a myriad of factors that include but are not limited to geographically polarized and concentrated political party support and perceptions that the elections were rigged. The existence of weak democratic institutions, and land grievances amongst others also contributed to the loss of over 1,000 lives and the displacement of about 350,000 people (Hafner-Burton et al., 2014; Hickman, 2011; Klaus & Mitchell, 2015; Rutten & Owuor, 2009). During the 2007 Kenya elections, the country's political landscape was deeply polarized regionally not only amongst the Kikuyu and Luo, but also amongst ethnic minorities such as the Kalenjin and Luhya.

These geographically polarized regional blocs made the opposition targets of state repression but also provided the leverage to engage in mass violent contestation (Okia, 2011). The European Union Election Observation Mission asserts that ‘the campaign atmosphere was characterized by a strong ethnopolitical polarization between the two main contenders in the presidential election and their alliances, leading to a generally tense atmosphere in their respective regional stronghold towards the other side (EU-EOM, 2008 as cited in Rutten & Owuor, 2009, p. 317). Strong regional support bases existed for the two contenders: Raila Odinga’s Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and Mwai Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU). Raila Odinga’s Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) benefited from substantial backing from the Luo in Nyanza Province and the Kalenjin in the Rift Valley while Mwai Kibaki, the incumbent, had his stronghold among the Kikuyu in Central Province and parts of Nairobi.

When the elections were disputed, these regional blocs became fertile grounds for post-election violence by party supporters who did not lack collective action and felt a strong urge to intervene (Rutten & Owuor, 2009). Post-election violence started almost immediately after the results of the perceived fraudulent elections that declared Mwai Kibaki the winner of the presidential election on December 30, 2007, came out. Though the violence that ensued was not only perpetuated by the opposition, the ability of the opposition to contribute to post-election violence on such a large scale against the government underscores the essence of geographically polarized and concentrated party support.

Geographically concentrated Rift Valley and Nyanza became epicenters of the conflict because the local population was not only opposition supporters but also perceived a threat to their regional interest following electoral fraud (Dercon & Gutiérrez-Romero, 2012). The spontaneous protests and violence, undeniably started by the opposition ODM supporters, rapidly degenerated into more organized attacks and revenge killings by individuals, groups of people, and militia groups (Dercon & Gutiérrez-Romero, 2012; Rutten & Owuor, 2009, p. 318). In the face of perceived injustice, it was easier to mobilize ODM supporters to engage in violent contestation in response to the ruling party's alleged electoral fraud and state repression (Okia, 2011).

The rapid escalation of violence following this announcement could be attributed to the opposition leaders' ability to mobilize party supporters through dense local and clientelist networks. Klaus & Mitchell (2015) discuss how political elites use conflict over land in these polarized regions to mobilize support for violence. In other instances, violent mobilization does

not necessarily accompany immediate rewards. The framing of political issues is sometimes sufficient to escalate tensions after elections. For example, in the Rift Valley, the media and opposition elites framed the elections as an existential threat to the local communities (Somerville, 2009). The political rhetoric coupled with an already polarized and geographically concentrated region facilitated the organization's large-scale, coordinated violence.

After the opposition in Kenya alleged electoral fraud, violence was not the only alternative for mediation. Legal avenues existed but Raila Odinga and the opposition party refused to pursue legal alternatives due to mistrust in the judicial system but also the availability of human resources and political opportunities that make violent methods possible (Hafner-Burton et al., 2018; Rutten & Owuor, 2009). After the deaths and destruction that ensued, both political parties ended up in court and agreed to a coalition government. The Kenyan case demonstrates how alleged fraud shapes post-election violence in a country characterized by geographically polarized and concentrated political party systems.

Ghana's 2012 Elections and the Supreme Court Election Petition

In 2012, the opposition leader of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo – Addo lost the general elections to the incumbent party, the National Democratic Congress led by then-President John Dramani Mahama in an election marred by electoral fraud. Nana Akuffo Addo and the NPP gaining 47.74% of the total ballots cast and placing second announced that his party would petition the courts to overturn the election results due to allegations of electoral fraud (Brierley & Ofosu, 2014). Though the Supreme Court acknowledged some electoral malpractice in its final verdict, it maintained that ballots from affected polling stations made no difference in the outcome of the presidential elections. NPP supporters who are almost half of the country's political party support across Ghana were disappointed the second time (Alidu, 2014). On both occasions, the party refused to pursue extra-constitutional means to challenge the verdict even though tensions were very high.

One ought to acknowledge that Ghana's democracy has grown stronger since the first peaceful transfer of power in the year 2000 following several coup d'états in the past. Though Ghana has learned from its dark political history and continues to build strong state institutions to prevent violent elections, these efforts have also been sustained by the political geography of Ghana (Omotola, 2010). The first decade of the 21st century saw highly concentrated political party support in the Ashanti Region, affiliated to the NPP and Volta Region, linked to the NDC (Bob-

Milliar & Paller, 2018). However, over the years, both parties have begun to make gains in their opponents' regions. This has caused both political parties to look towards other regions for sufficient votes to win elections. Indeed, in recent times, political party support in Ghana has increasingly become diffused and elections continue to become highly competitive across regions (Whitfield, 2009).

The diffused nature of political party support in Ghana's political landscape has created two outcomes. First, there is less strong motivation to pursue regional interests at the expense of national peace and stability. Ghanaians are increasingly becoming more nationalistic and less regional or ethnic. The concept of 'club goods' seems to be fading away since political parties need to satisfy several regions to win elections (Fridy, 2009; Lindberg & Morrison, 2008; Wahman, 2017). Second, with less motivation to identify as a regional persona, mobilization structures and social networks that facilitate immediate mobilization of party members to perpetuate post-election violence are bringing down (Wahman, 2017). This could be attributed to the mix and co-existence of both NPP and NDC supporters across many Ghanaian communities. It seems that these factors contributed to the inability or unwillingness of the NPP to contend the 2012 election with violence.

Conclusion

The conclusion follows after revisions.

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Appendix

Table 2. Probit Regression of Regionalism and Opposition – Sponsored Post – Election Violence.

	(1) Post- Election Violence	(2) Post- Election Violence	(3) Post- Election Violence	(4) Post- Election Violence	(5) Post- Election Violence	(6) Post- Election Violence
Post-Election Violence						
party_regional	-0.355*** (0.105)	-0.309** (0.141)	-0.294*** (0.100)	-0.467*** (0.084)	-0.452*** (0.108)	-0.335*** (0.108)
west_condemn		-0.426 (0.324)	-0.300 (0.300)	0.005 (0.205)	0.038 (0.209)	0.169 (0.256)
runnerup_votes hare			0.022*** (0.007)	0.028*** (0.007)	0.026*** (0.008)	0.040** (0.018)
ext_tenure				1.352*** (0.332)	1.672*** (0.244)	1.737* (1.048)
poll_system					0.088 (0.143)	0.191 (0.326)
perc_e_crisis						-0.172 (0.595)
exec_constraint s						-0.560

						(2.195)
e_gdppc						0.123 (0.219)
v2eltrnout						-0.042** (0.018)
electoral_democ racy						0.269 (3.075)
v2elrstrct						-0.794* (0.456)
Constant	-0.289* (0.170)	-0.113 (0.253)	-0.936*** (0.223)	-1.294*** (0.244)	-1.320*** (0.414)	1.594 (1.826)
Observations	531	472	440	440	348	347
Pseudo R2	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.11	0.13	0.21
Percent correctly classified	69.68	68.01	72.95	75.00	77.01	77.52

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3. Welch Two-Sample T-test	
Levels of Regionalism in Ghana and Kenya.	
Statistic	Value
t-value	5.6937
Degrees of Freedom (df)	30
p-value	3.292e-06
95% Confidence Interval	0.1906 to 0.4038
Mean (Ghana)	1.2542
Mean (Kenya)	0.957
Alternative Hypothesis	True difference in means is not equal to 0