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1

Introduction

In 2001 the populist Thaksin Shinawatra came to power in Thailand, vowing to reform the country's corrupt political system. His period of rule was characterized by heightened political tension, repression, and human rights violations. During this time, elections changed from being opportunities for power brokering among provincial bosses to high-stakes contests between the ruthless president and his opponents (Kongkirati 2014). The 2001 and 2005 Thai elections resulted in 26 and 30 deaths respectively, a dramatic increase from the pre-2001 period when election-related fatalities were rare (Callahan 2000; Callahan and McCargo 1996; Kongkirati 2014; McCargo and Desatová 2016). The aim of this book is to develop an enhanced understanding of the causes of electoral violence such as that witnessed in Thailand, and to assess strategies best suited to preventing conflict from disrupting the vote. In recent decades, more countries have begun to hold elections, but many of these events have been beset by the use of force, which undermines states' core economic, social, and political functions. In some contexts elections have helped to move nascent democracies toward accountable participatory modes of governance, whereas in other settings the democratic potential of elections has been distorted by manipulation and the use of coercion. In the aftermath of the Kenyan polls of 2007, an estimated 1133 people died, 3561 were injured, and 350,000 were displaced (CIPEV 2008). The Côte d'Ivoire election of 2010 led to conflict that killed an estimated 3000 people and displaced a million in late 2010 and early 2011 (Bekoe 2012a). At least 400 people were killed during the 2014 elections in

Bangladesh, a figure which is not atypical for this country (Macdonald 2016; cf. Akhter 2001), and close to 200 died in a series of violent attacks that took place in the run-up to the Pakistani election of 2018 (EU 2018). A recent surge in studies of electoral misconduct has gone some way toward helping scholars and practitioners to understand many forms of electoral manipulation, but scholarship on electoral violence is somewhat more fragmentary, with the majority of existing studies focusing on individual states or regions.

There is reason to believe that electoral violence is a serious global problem. The available data suggest that globally approximately 88 percent of elections in the 1995–2013 period were afflicted by one or more politically motivated, violent attacks during the electoral cycle. Moreover, electoral violence is not confined to fragile democracies and authoritarian states. Even established democracies are not immune to conflictual elections, as evidenced by the clashes between far-right and antiracist groups that took place at campaign events in the run-up to the 2019 European Parliament elections in the United Kingdom, the pipe bombs posted to prominent political figures in advance of the 2018 US midterm election, and the violence that broke out during and after the controversial Catalan independence vote of 2017.

Why are elections in some places generally peaceful, whereas other societies regularly experience conflictual polls? Why is one election in a country peaceful and the next violent? This book aims to provide a comprehensive account of the use of force to manipulate competitive electoral processes, with a particular emphasis on national-level elections held during peacetime in the post–Second World War period. The focus of analysis is on the strategic behavior of incumbent and opposition actors—also referred to here as state and nonstate actors—with particular (but not exclusive) emphasis on electoral authoritarian and hybrid states.[1] Some previous analyses have argued that opposition groups and other actors outside the state are those most likely to undertake salient forms of electoral violence (e.g. Collier and Vicente 2012, 2014; Daxecker 2012). However, the data collected for this study suggest that across the globe, the majority of electoral violence is committed by state actors, and there are strong theoretical reasons to believe that the settings in which force is employed during electoral processes are shaped mainly by the state. The analyses presented here will frame electoral violence in terms of the incentives inherent in power structures of different types and will seek to ascertain the circumstances under which these institutions allow violence to occur, as well as the ways in which violence interacts with other forms of electoral manipulation. An argument is developed about electoral violence as a tool for regulating political exclusion, which is then tested on a range of quantitative and qualitative data from around the world using estimation techniques that enable the analysis of cross-sectional and longitudinal predictors of electoral violence simultaneously. The investigation also assesses the most efficacious approaches that can be taken by internal and external actors to mitigate this phenomenon.

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[1] The terms "incumbent" and "state" actors will largely be used interchangeably throughout this study, as will "opposition" and "nonstate." In some cases it will be necessary to distinguish between state actors who are autonomous and partisan incumbents (for example, autonomous electoral administrators or courts), but in the political contexts assessed here, politicization of the state is common, so in most electoral contexts "state" actors are effectively coextensive with political "incumbents." Where this is not the case, attention will be drawn to relevant distinctions. Nonstate actors always include many groups and individuals who are not part of the formal opposition, and this will be acknowledged where relevant, but in the context of electoral violence, actors not allied with incumbents tend to be the targets of violence, so for broad analytic purposes the state:nonstate::incumbent:opposition relationship is valid. There will of course be numerous occasions on which it will make sense to make more finely grained distinctions, and when this is the case the discussion will adopt appropriate language that reflects the nuances of particular situations.

Context and Argument

Peaceful, democratic elections are central to a fair society. Elections are institutions that establish a means of gaining power and legitimacy. But there are many ways in which competitive elections can be won: through open competition on the basis of alternative policy proposals, by means of vote buying and other types of electoral manipulation, or through the use of force. This volume provides a general investigation of the circumstances under which political actors will select combinations of these options.

Though the study of electoral violence remains underdeveloped, the problem is receiving increasing attention from students of comparative politics. Acts of peacetime violence have been the subject of human rights research for over 30 years now (Mitchell and McCormick 1988; Poe and Tate 1994), where the focus has been primarily on the violations of rights to physical integrity. More recently a number of scholars have considered the relationship between political violence, civil conflict, and the holding of elections.[2] There have also been a number of studies devoted specifically to violence that is directed at the electoral process itself, which is the topic of this study. Much of the existing empirical research has sought to identify the range of factors associated with electoral violence. These have been found by scholars to include socioeconomic variables, such as economic development and/or inequality,[3] and ethnic divisions or inequalities across ethnic groups.[4] Also found in many studies to be relevant are political factors such as competitive dynamics and closeness of the race,[5] electoral integrity,[6] electoral and other political institutions,[7] level of democracy,[8] informal institutions,[9] and international election observation.[10] A history of conflict has likewise been linked in several studies to levels of conflict in elections.[11] Other work has considered the timing of violence.[12] A further strand of research on electoral violence has focused on the actors involved, including strategies of mobilization and demobilization.[13] Despite the recent surge of interest in the interactions between electoral processes and conflict processes, much work remains to be done in this emergent subfield, given that there are also many questions left unanswered by these analyses, as well as findings that would profit from testing in a wider context.

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[2] Askoy 2014; Bakke and Wibbels 2006; Birnir and Gohdes 2018; Brancati and Snyder 2012; Cederman, Gleditsch, and Hug 2012, 2013; Cheibub and Hayes 2017; Collier 2009; Condra et al. 2018; Flores and Nooruddin 2012, 2016, 2018; Goldsmith 2015; Harish and Little 2017; Harish and Toha 2018; Mansfield and Snyder 2005; Matanock 2017a, b; Salehyan and Linebarger 2015; J. Snyder 2000; Steele 2011.

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3. Boone 2011; Boone and Kriger 2012; Fjelde and Höglund 2016; Klaus and Mitchell 2015; Salehyan and Linebarger 2015; Sisk 2012.

4. Brosché, Fjelde, and Höglund 2020; Claes 2016; Fjelde and Höglund 2016; Klaus and Mitchell 2015; Kuhn 2015; Mochtak 2018a; Mueller 2011, 2012; Wilkinson 2004; Wilkinson and Haid 2009.

5. Asunka et al. 2017; Claes 2016; Collier and Vicente 2014; Goldring and Wahman 2018; Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2014; Höglund 2009; Salehyan and Linebarger 2015; C. Taylor, Pevehouse, and Straus 2017; Wilkinson 2004.

6. Boone and Kriger 2012; Dercon and Guttiérez-Romero 2012; Höglund 2009; Höglund, Jarstad, and Söderberg Kovacs 2009; Opitz, Fjelde, and Höglund 2013; Reilly 2011; Salehyan and Linebarger 2015.

7. Alesina, Piccolo, and Pinotti 2018; Burchard 2015; Claes 2016; Daxecker 2020; Fjelde 2020; Fjelde and Höglund 2016; Höglund 2009; Malik 2018; Reilly 2001; Wilkinson 2004.

8. Burchard 2015; Fjelde and Höglund 2016; Klaus and Mitchell 2015; Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2015; Salehyan and Linebarger 2015.

9. Alesina, Picollo, and Pinotti 2018; Berenschot 2018a; Boone 2011; Boone and Kriger 2012; Burchard 2015; Fjelde and Höglund 2016; Höglund 2009; Mares and Young 2016; Mueller 2011, 2012; Sisk 2012.

10. Asunka et al. 2017; Daxecker 2012; Smidt 2016.

11. Borzyskowski 2019; Harish and Toha 2018; Höglund, Jarstad, and Söderberg Kovacs 2009; Mueller 2012; Van Ham and Lindberg 2015; Wilkinson 2004.

12. Bhasin and Gandhi 2013; Davenport 1997; Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2014; Straus and Taylor 2012.

13. Asunka et al. 2017; Bhasin and Gandhi 2013; Chaturvedi 2005; Christensen and Utas 2008; Collier and Vicente 2012, 2014; Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2014, 2018; LeBas 2006; Straus and Taylor 2012; Young 2017.

Two of the main areas that would benefit from more extensive investigation are the power structures most conducive to electoral violence in a society in general, and the role of violence in the arsenal of strategies at the disposal of those involved in particular electoral contests that take place in that society. Though a number of previous analyses have touched on these topics, they have mostly either been based on individual case studies or regional investigations, or been large-*N* comparisons designed to ascertain general trends rather than to probe context-specific strategies. By drawing on a range of data sources and employing a variety of methods, this study develops and tests a novel integrated theory of electoral violence that links and elaborates on a number of propositions about the contextual determinants of this phenomenon. It also goes beyond existing work in shedding new light on the impact of interventions intended to reduce electoral conflict.

I start from the proposition that political violence is a tool for regulating political exclusion, and that when weak democratic institutions are combined with dysfunctional informal institutions, the scene is set for violent elections. The corollary of this argument is that violence can be avoided if democratic and/or informal institutions are so configured as to provide leaders with the incentives and the means to limit themselves to alternative electoral strategies. Let us unpack these claims. Violence is used by state actors (and their proxies) mainly as a tool to exclude other actors from political power in competitive elections, and violence is used by nonstate actors largely as a means of contesting such exclusion and seeking access to power. Elections are high-stakes affairs in states with weak democratic institutions and strong informal institutions of clientelism, patronage, and corruption. In such contexts, those in power control economic and legal as well as political resources, such that incumbents have ample reason to fear loss of power. In addition, they have reason to fear that if they lose a crucial election they will themselves be permanently excluded from ruling, as the victors may be reluctant to allow genuinely competitive contests in future. Political orders characterized by high levels of corruption and ineffectual democratic institutions are therefore ones that are strongly conducive to electoral violence. If electoral violence is largely a function of the way power is structured in different political orders, it follows that violence will no longer be such a viable strategy when corruption falls and democratic institutions are strengthened.

But if the structure of power determines whether violence is a viable electoral strategy, the use of force is only ever one of several tools that can be employed to regulate exclusion in the electoral sphere. The second core component of my argument is that violence is typically used in order to backstop other types of electoral manipulation. When there are insufficient disincentives to the use of force, state actors will most commonly use it as a means of supplementing and supporting electoral misconduct (the manipulation of electoral rules and procedures), as these are both cost-effective tools that state actors have at their disposal. Lacking access to misconduct, nonstate actors will often react by coupling the use of violence with vote buying and by seeking to use violence as a mobilizational device.

When force is used to skew electoral processes, this has a number of serious consequences for the political and social lives of the polities in question. Electoral violence remains a persistent obstacle to democratic consolidation; it can also have destabilizing effects on economic and political institutions (Alihodzic 2012; GCEDS 2012; Staniland 2014). The most obvious impact of electoral violence is the effect it has on elections themselves, undermining democratic decision making and potentially altering outcomes (Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2018; Hickman 2009; Wilkinson and Haid 2009). Rather than being times of intense collective deliberation and discussion, elections can come to be viewed by the citizenry and the political elite alike as periods of attentive fear, which does not even appear in most cases to enhance levels of political knowledge (Söderström 2017). Evidence suggests that voters are strongly averse to the use of force in elections (Bratton 2008; Gutiérrez-Romero and LeBas 2020; Rosenzweig 2016), and voter concerns about electoral violence can, under certain circumstances, depress both turnout and support for democracy (Bratton 2008; Bekoe and Burchard 2017; Burchard 2015, 2018; Condra et al. 2018; Höglund and Piyarathne 2009; Gutiérrez-Romero and LeBas 2020). Commenting on the Filipino case, Patino and Velasco noted the effect of violence on citizen attitudes toward democracy: “In areas where violence is not an issue, voters choose among the best performers. Where violence proliferates, voters either cast their vote in view of ensuring their survival, or stay away from elections altogether. With violence and fraud, election loses credibility as a democratic exercise” (2004, 9). There is, in addition, evidence that electoral violence can alter the behavior of politicians. Alesina, Piccolo, and Pinotti (2018) found that in Italy the election-related use of force by organized crime syndicates impacted on politicians’ willingness to discuss organized crime in the legislature. And it can under certain circumstances shape citizen attitudes, affecting in-group and out-group identifications (Gutiérrez-Romero 2014; Ishiyama, Gomez, and Stewart 2016; Wilkinson and Haid 2009).

Electoral violence can also lead to other types of instability. Several authors have shown that elections held in the wake of armed conflict can (re)activate political cleavages and stoke explosive unrest (Brancati and Snyder 2012; Chacón, Robinson, and Torvik 2011; Flores and Nooruddin 2012, 2016; J. Snyder 2000). This happened, for example, in Angola, where the 1992 election result prompted Jonas Savimbi and his National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) movement to reignite a simmering civil conflict (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Fischer 2002; UNDP 2009). A similar process was observed in Congo (Brazzaville) in the mid-1990s, where electoral disputes sparked civil war (Fleischhacker 1999), and in Burundi where the country descended into civil war following the fraught 2015 elections (Söderberg Kovacs 2018). The use of force during elections is therefore a problem with wide ramifications for regime stability and political development.

Definition and Typology

Though citizens in contemporary democracies tend to associate elections with the peaceful resolution of political differences, violence has long lurked in the shadows of electoral processes. In nineteenth-century England, parties hired bands of ruffians to intimidate the supporters of their rivals (Tilly 1978). Mid-nineteenth-century Ireland saw priests attacked for seeking to exert electoral pressure on their parishioners (Hoppen 1996). Argentinean elections in the late nineteenth century were so violent that virtually all voters went armed to the polls and businesses closed for several days in advance of voting (Alonso 1996), while in early twentieth-century Costa Rica, President Ascención Esquivel at one point jailed a third of all electors in order to prevent them from exercising their franchise (Lehoucq 2004). In the 1960s, violent attacks were used to obstruct voter registration campaigns in the US Deep South following the full legal enfranchisement of African-Americans through the 1965 Voting Rights Act (L. McDonald 2003). And in contemporary Italy, force is used by organized criminal groups to sway electoral results (Alesina, Piccolo and Pinotti 2018).

WHAT IS ELECTORAL VIOLENCE?

Staniland (2014) noted that electoral violence suffers from poor conceptualization in the literature, with different authors meaning different things by the term. It therefore makes sense to start with an attempt to cut through the conceptual underbrush and map out what is intended by "electoral violence" and how the varieties of this phenomenon are conceptually related.

Force is used both strategically and nonstrategically in electoral contexts (Burchard 2015). This study will be concerned mainly with the strategic, or instrumental, use of violence in order to achieve desired ends. Not only is instrumental force more amenable to theorizing and analysis, it is also the case that eruptions of electoral violence that appear spontaneous are often in fact the result of strategic calculations by actors (Wilkinson 2004; Wilkinson and Haid 2009).

For the purpose of this investigation, electoral violence includes political violence that takes place during the electoral cycle and is linked causally to electoral processes, or, more formally, *coercive force, directed toward electoral actors and/or objects, that occurs in connection with electoral competition*, where "coercive force" includes *threats, unlawful detention, forcible curtailment of movement or displacement, and attacks that cause actual bodily harm.* The terms "electoral violence" and "electoral conflict" will be used interchangeably in this study.

It is worth commenting on a plausible objection to this definition: it incorporates all violence connected to the electoral process and involving electoral actors that occurs during the electoral period, regardless of whether the *stated* motive of the perpetrator was to interfere with the electoral process. Given that at election time the range of electoral actors is extensive, this might appear to be an overexpansive definition. The justification for casting the definitional net wide is that, regardless of intent, violence that occurs in the context of an election is likely to impinge on the election in some way, by shaping expectations of political processes, or by altering perceptions of relevant actors. Moreover, given that one can never be sure of the intention of the perpetrator of an act, it is more practical to specify the political relevance of that act with regard to its likely effect on the political process. Ursula Daxecker maintains that most forms of collective violence that occur during the electoral period have political motives (Daxecker 2014; cf. EC-UNDP Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance 2011), but it is sufficient for our purposes to argue that they will in all probability *affect* the electoral process in some way. Finally, if we acknowledge that virtually all forms of collective violence in a society are likely to be affected by the electoral process, it is also necessary to recognize that the electoral process is bound to be affected by political conflict that is endemic in a society. The approach adopted here thus relies on both a temporal and a causal link between elections and violence, in keeping with other definitions of this phenomenon that have been offered in the literature.[14] It is, however, worth noting what this definition does *not* include: it does not encompass ordinary criminal activity that takes place during the electoral process, or opportunistic violence that may take place in the aftermath of elections as citizens take advantage of the postelectoral political hiatus to plunder and settle scores.[15]

As will be detailed at greater length in chapter 2, strategic violence typically includes the obstruction of some aspect of the electoral process, actions whose aim is instilling fear, or protest. This can involve efforts:

- to prevent people from contesting elections (through threats and intimidation, arbitrary detention, or incapacitating physical attacks, including murder)
- to disrupt electoral campaigns (through threats and intimidation, forcible interference in campaign activities, destruction of campaign materials, or incapacitating physical attacks on activists and supporters)
- to prevent people from voting (through threats and intimidation, displacement, disrupting of polling)
- to prevent aggrieved parties from pursuing legal challenges to declared electoral results or to impede public protests against fraudulent elections
- to impede the conduct of elections (through attacks on polling places, polling staff, or polling materials, or threats and intimidation)
- to protest against electoral irregularities.

In this sense, violence is generally designed to lock selected actors out of the benefits of open electoral competition or to protest against exclusion attempts of this type. Less commonly, violence is used in order to force people to vote and/or force them to support a particular candidate/party, though a survey of existing studies of electoral violence suggests that this is unusual as ballot secrecy raises the cost of monitoring compliance.[16]

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[14] See, for example, Birch and Muchlinski (2019), Daxecker (2014), Höglund (2009), Söderberg Kovacs (2018), and Straus and Taylor (2012).

[15] I thank an anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to think through this aspect of my definition.

[16] An example of the use of violence to alter vote choice comes from Sierra Leone, where Christensen and Utas documented self-reports from the perpetrators of violence of their aims. One informant explained his motives as follows: “You know, we have to make people understand how to vote. We have so many illiterates, they know nothing about politics and they don’t know their rights. Their understanding is slow. That’s why we tell them how to vote. . . . [I]t’s like sensitization. If we don’t do it by force they will never understand. I am fed up with violence, but for now I am

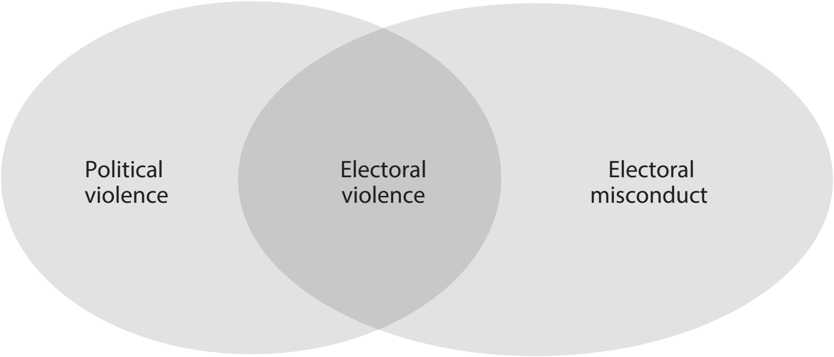

FIGURE 1.1. Electoral violence and electoral misconduct

VARIETIES OF ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

In order better to categorize electoral violence, it makes sense to situate it in terms of other political concepts. Conceptually, electoral violence is located at the intersection of electoral misconduct and political violence. Electoral misconduct, also known as electoral malpractice, is "the manipulation of electoral processes and outcomes so as to substitute personal or partisan benefit for the public interest" (Birch 2011, 14). It takes both violent and nonviolent forms, though it is most often nonviolent. Most but not all forms of political violence that take place during the electoral period constitute electoral violence, and some but not all electoral misconduct is violent (see figure 1.1).

For the purposes of analysis, it is convenient to subdivide electoral violence directed at people into threats and coercion on the one hand, and attacks causing actual bodily harm (lethal or nonlethal) on the other. Threats and coercion interfere directly with the electoral process by depriving people of their political rights and impeding their ability to take part freely in electoral (and other) activities. Physical attacks are forms of violence that are typically more severe, in that they cause physical suffering to the victims, and in this sense they fall more neatly into traditional typologies of political violence and conflict.[17] A third politically relevant form of electoral violence is attacks on property and other objects, including, for example, the

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left with no choice. If they don't vote for the APC, they will have no rights in the end. They will continue to be second-class citizens" (quoted in Christensen and Utas 2008, 535).

[17] That said, some forms of coercion can be of comparable or even greater severity to victims, such as forced displacement that deprives them of their homes.

TABLE 1-1. Examples of Electoral Violence by Type

	Threats and Coercion	Attacks	Violence against Objects or Property
State-perpetrated	Obstruction of voter access to polling stations by state proxies (hired thugs)	Violent police disruption of opposition campaign rallies	Destruction of opposition campaign materials by state actors
Nonstate-perpetrated	Threats of violence against rival candidates	Murder of a rival candidate	Torching of polling stations; electorally motivated rioting

destruction of polling places and the vandalism of campaign materials. Most of the data sources employed in this study include information only on the two forms of violence perpetrated against people—threats and coercion, and attacks—which will therefore be the primary focus of this analysis, though violence directed against objects will also be discussed in case studies and examples. This typology can be illustrated by the matrix in table 1.1, which includes examples of each type of violence.

A final conceptual distinction that is difficult to operationalize precisely but that is theoretically relevant for understanding electoral violence is the distinction between electoral contexts where violence is unexpected and those where it is expected. In most polities, elections are generally peaceful events that are only occasionally marred by widespread violence. It is undoubtedly the case that in any election there are isolated instances of coercive force being used in connection with the electoral process, but widespread electoral violence is uncommon in most contemporary states. There are, however, a number of states—examples include the Philippines, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone—where violence is woven into the fabric of electoral traditions, and widespread conflict involving numerous deaths takes place each time there is an election. Under these circumstances, violence is a mode of competition, a campaign tool. Another slightly different case is that of Mexico prior to the mid-1990s, where the preelectoral and electoral periods were generally calm, but rioting invariably erupted after the results of the election were announced, as opponents of the dominant Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) sought to gain minor concessions through the use of mass force in events commonly known as *concertacesiones* (Eisenstadt 2006). In all these cases, violence was expected, and it played an integral part of elections-as-usual. The expectations and strategies of actors in the electoral process will invariably be affected by the level of uncertainty surrounding the occurrence of violence, a point that will be addressed when electoral strategies are discussed. I will make an analytic distinction between contexts in which electoral violence is endemic, those where it is rare, and those where it is episodic, bearing in mind that in reality cases are spread across a gradient ranging from situations in which elections are almost certain to contain major violence to those in which violence is extremely unlikely to occur.

It will by now have become clear that patterns in the use of force vary considerably from country to country; it thus makes sense at this point to provide a number of concrete examples. In some contexts electoral violence takes on distinct regional or temporal patterns. For example, elections in Tanzania tend to be relatively peaceful, with the exception of the islands of Zanzibar, where eruptions of electoral violence are common. Historically, elections in Northern Ireland have also been at risk of conflict, though campaigning and voting has for the most part been conducted peacefully in other parts of the United Kingdom since the mid-nineteenth century. Côte d'Ivoire has since the early 1990s experienced some of the most violent elections anywhere in the world, yet it is largely free of the violence that accompanies the candidate nomination process in many parts of Africa (Goldring and Wahman 2018; Mac Giollabhui 2018; Reeder and Seeberg 2018; Seeberg, Wahman, and Skaaning 2018; Wanyama and Elklit 2018).

As with many forms of contentious politics, electoral violence tends to follow established repertoires (Tilly 1978), which are available to actors over successive elections. Not all elements of the repertoire will be employed in each electoral contest, but the range of likely uses of force is generally known to all major actors. There are, of course, unexpected eruptions of new forms of violence that occasionally intrude into elections in ways that few participants had anticipated, as, for example, when the Madrid train bombings killed 191 people days before the 2004 Spanish election. But the range of likely types of electoral violence tends to remain relatively stable over time in given electoral contexts.

In states such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Colombia, the forced displacement of voters by political leaders and security services is a common means of preventing citizens from exercising their franchise (Boone and Kriger 2012; LeBas 2006; Steele 2011), while in countries such as Zimbabwe, Egypt, Fiji, and Jamaica, state actors generally engage in subtler forms of harassment such as intimidation designed to discourage voting for specific candidates or to make citizens wary of attending the polls altogether (Blaydes 2011; Boone and Kriger 2012; Figueroa and Sives 2002; Fischer 2002). In states such as Belarus, Indonesia, Russia, Togo, Ukraine, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, candidates for election have often been victims of violent attacks (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Harish and Toha 2017; C. Ross 2011; UNDP 2009; Wilson 2005b), whereas in Chad, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda, violence has been observed in particular during the candidate nomination process (Seeberg, Wahman, and Skaaning 2018). In some cases such attacks have resulted in the death or near death of prominent political figures, as when former prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto was killed in 2007 while on the campaign trail, when Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko was poisoned during the 2004 electoral campaign (Wilson 2005a), when Togolese military forces loyal to President Eyadéma shot prodemocracy campaigners and took the prime minister hostage in the run-up to the elections of 1993 (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997), or when two presidential candidates were assassinated prior to the Haitian elections of 1987 and on election day itself troops killed several dozen voters lining up to cast their ballots (O'Neill 1993). Confrontations between the supporters of rival parties during electoral campaigns have been very common since the introduction of competitive elections, and they have featured prominently in contexts as diverse as Yemen, Benin, Uganda, Fiji, the Seychelles, Pakistan, and the Gambia (Fischer 2002). Such conflicts take place at virtually every election in countries such as the Philippines and India (Fischer 2002; Patino and Velasco 2004; Wilkinson 2004; UNDP 2009). In Bangladesh and Pakistan, polling stations have frequently been torched on election day, and polling officials kidnapped (Akhter 2001; Staniland 2014, 2015). In Indonesia, violence against state officials such as electoral administrators is also common (Harish and Toha 2017). In Latin American countries such as Colombia and Guatemala, drug lords use violence to ensure electoral outcomes that will enable them to pursue their trade unfettered by the formal institutions of the state (Creative Associates International 2009, 2013; S. Taylor 2009); the Italian Mafia uses similar tactics (Alesina, Piccolo, and Pinotti 2018). The severity of the phenomenon can vary from the mild voter intimidation that is common across a large variety of electoral contexts to large-scale murder and maiming that have been witnessed, for example, in Sierra Leone, where at the time of the 1996 election electors' fingers, hands, noses, and lips were cut off in order to prevent them from voting (Fischer 2002). Postelection violence such as that witnessed in Thailand (2001), Kenya (2007/8), Ethiopia (2005), Côte d'Ivoire (2010), Haiti (2010), Nigeria (2011), and Honduras

(2017) has also been frequent following disputed polls (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Claes and Stephan 2018; EC-UNDP Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance 2011; Fischer 2002; Höglund 2009).

As these examples attest, there is a huge diversity in the forms taken by electoral violence, and a wide range of different actors can perpetrate it. As noted above, actors will be divided into state and nonstate in this study. State actors include public servants (electoral officials, civil servants, members of the security services), as well as incumbent politicians and affiliates of the party/parties in power. State actors also include proxies such as thugs hired to intimidate voters or disrupt campaign rallies. Nonstate actors include the affiliates of opposition parties, civil society groups, and eligible voters. International actors can also in theory be involved in electoral violence, as, for example, when international electoral observers are attacked, or when the citizens of foreign countries get caught up in electoral conflict, but the numbers of international actors involved in such episodes tend to be so small as to make this category difficult to analyze empirically.

Data and Global Patterns

Until recently, political scientists had very limited ability to study electoral violence cross-nationally, using the standard quantitative tools of the trade. Yet in recent years a number of new data sets have been released covering aspects of this phenomenon in different regions and/or countries of the world. These data sets are based on media reports (Daxecker, Amicarelli, and Jung 2019; Raleigh et al. 2010; Salehyan et al. 2012), election observation reports (Birch 2011; Borzyskowski and Wahman 2019), and expert and mass surveys (Inglehart et al. 2014; Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma 2014).

For the purpose of this study, global data are required, however. Fortunately, several cross-national data sets are now available that greatly expand the options open to comparative scholars of electoral violence. Though some of the indicators contained in these data sets are based on slightly different ontologies of electoral violence than that offered here, they provide useful measures that go a long way toward capturing the underlying phenomenon analyzed in this investigation. All these measures include violence that takes place during the electoral period and is connected to the electoral process, which are the core elements of the definition set out above.

One such source is the National Elections across Democracies and Autocracies (NELDA) data set (Hyde and Marinov 2012, 2015), which includes a dichotomous indicator of whether or not there was "significant violence involving civilian deaths immediately before, during, or after the election" (*Nelda33*), as well as an indicator of government harassment of the opposition, *Nelda15*, which codes responses to the question "Is there evidence that the government harassed the opposition?" In the version 4 release of this data set, 19.79 percent of elections held between 1995 and 2012 were coded as having significant violence, and opposition harassment was recorded in 17.01 percent of cases.

The other useful source of global comparative data on electoral violence is the Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) data set (Coppedge et al. 2018a, b), which covers the 1900–2017 period and is based on expert assessments.[18] The V-DEM data are for this reason not as vulnerable as the NELDA data to the systematic biases known to affect electoral-violence data based on media reports (Borzyskowski and Wahman 2019). Relevant indicators in this data set are those for intimidation and violence of the opposition by state officials, *v2elintim* (answers to the question "In this national election, were opposition candidates/parties/campaign workers subjected to repression, intimidation, violence, or harassment *by the government, the ruling party, or their agents*?"), and an indicator for violence by nonstate actors, *v2elpeace* (answers to the question "In this national election, was the campaign period, election day, and postelection process free from other types (*not by the government, the ruling party, or their agents*) of violence related to the conduct of the election and the campaigns (but not conducted by the government and its agents)?"). On these measures, 44.56 percent of elections between 1995 and 2012 were recorded as having at least some violence by nonstate actors, with 2.70 percent of cases displaying "widespread" violence and a further 6.35 percent experiencing "significant" levels of violence. A total of 50.83 percent of elections during this period experienced at least some state intimidation of the opposition, with "systematic, frequent and violent harassment and intimidation of the opposition by the government or its agents" recorded in 3.83 percent of elections, and "periodic, not systematic, but possibly centrally coordinated—harassment and intimidation of the opposition by the government or its agents" found in 8.01 percent of all contests. It must be noted, however, that the highest level of state intimidation on the *v2elintim* scale reflects a situation where "repression and intimidation by the government or its agents was so strong that the entire period was quiet," making this an imperfect measure of state-initiated violence per se (Coppedge et al. 2018a). In the version of the *v2elintim* indicator employed in this study, the top category on the scale is recoded to 0 such that the scale more accurately reflects the actual level of violence that occurred in a given electoral context.

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[18] Version 8 of the V-DEM data set is used in this analysis.

The NELDA and V-DEM data sets are useful sources of information, and they will both be used in the analyses presented in this volume. Yet these data sets aggregate electoral violence to relatively high levels. For this reason, the Countries at Risk of Electoral Violence data set (CREV) will also be used in analyses of more recent elections (Birch and Muchlinski 2019). The CREV is aggregated from event data, and as such it provides counts of events of specific types for every election to provide a more fine-grained coding of electoral violence than other data sources. The CREV covers legislative and executive elections in 101 states between 1995 and 2013 and is compiled on the basis of event data extracted from the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) data set (Boschee et al. 2015). Events are aggregated into two categories according to the typology set out above: major threats and acts of coercion, and physical attacks, each of which is coded by actor, specifically state versus nonstate. For the purposes of this data set, state actors are defined as those who are part of the institutions of the state or government, as well as governing parties and holders of executive offices such as presidents or kings. Nonstate actors are defined as those affiliated with opposition parties as well as members of groups outside the state.[19] The CREV data are disaggregated by month of the electoral cycle, including the six months before each election, the month of the election, and three months following the election.[20] According to these data, there were during the 1995–2012 period a mean of 86 violent acts initiated by state actors and their proxies against nonstate actors, and 68 acts by nonstate actors against state actors. It appears from both the V-DEM and the CREV data that state-initiated violence is more prevalent at elections than violence initiated by nonstate actors throughout the majority of this period.

The versions of these data sets used in this study exclude country-years in which the country in question was engaged in either a civil war or an interstate war.[21] This is partly because violence committed as part of the war effort is bound to contaminate the data, and partly because the dynamics of electoral competition during wartime differ in fundamental ways from those of peacetime competition (Flores and Noorudin 2018; Steele and Schubiger 2018). Each of the indicators of electoral violence considered here measures the phenomenon in a different way and each offers useful information. Despite the slightly different understandings of electoral violence subtending these different indicators, previous research has indicated that the measures are correlated (Birch and Muchlinski 2019).[22] The data sets will be thus used in combination in the pages that follow, though, as we shall see, certain data sets are better suited to some analyses than others.[23]

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[19] The CREV also includes data for international actors (as both perpetrators and victims of violence), but the analyses carried out here will focus on state and nonstate actors alone, as violence by or against international actors in most cases constitutes a negligible proportion of overall violence.

[20] For full details of CREV construction, see Birch and Muchlinski (2019).

[21] The V-DEM variables *e_miinterc* (armed conflict, internal) and *e_miinteco* (armed conflict, international) are used to filter countries at war. The original source of these data is the European Union Clio Infra data set, http://www.clio-infra.eu/ (accessed July 23, 2017). In addition, Syria

In this study, the unit of analysis is the election cycle, and statistical analyses will, where relevant, use data points from the first round of multiround elections.[24] The first round was selected for analysis as it marks the end of the preelection period and the start of a postelection period (in relation to the first round). Interround violence and violence occurring after the second round are captured by most of the empirical measures employed here, and the use of a single round reduces intraelectoral dependencies in the data.

I start my overview of global patterns in electoral violence with a sweeping panorama of patterns between 1945 and 2012, as evidenced in the NELDA and V-DEM data sets, both of which cover this entire period. As shown in figures 1.2 and 1.3, both data sets indicate that electoral violence is a significant global problem; however, they exhibit distinct patterns, reflecting different variable definitions and measurement approaches.

2012 is removed from the data set; though it is not coded as having been at war in this data set, the country was at the time of the 2012 elections experiencing considerable internal strife.

[22] The biserial correlation between *Nelda33* and the CREV measure of aggregate attacks is .53; the correlation between *Nelda15* and the CREV measure of state threats and coercion is .23; both relationships are highly significant statistically. The polyserial correlation between the V-DEM *v2elintim* measure and the aggregate CREV measure of state-to-nonstate violence is .20. The polyserial correlation between the V-DEM *v2elpeace* indicator and the CREV aggregate measure of attacks is .35 and that between *v2elpeace* and nonstate-to-state attacks is .32. Again, all associations are highly significant statistically (Birch and Muchlinski 2019). See Birch and Muchlinski (2019) for detailed comparative analyses of the CREV data and regional data sets.

[23] There are also several other event data sets that cover electoral violence, including the Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset (ACLED; Raleigh et al. 2010), Social Conflict in Africa (SCAD; Salehyan et al. 2012), and Electoral Contention and Violence (ECAV; Daxecker, Amicarelli, and Jung 2019). These data sets are less well suited to the purposes of this analysis, however, owing to lack of global coverage. Moreover, given that the main variables of interest in this study are national-level characteristics of states and elections, it makes sense to employ national-level data.

[24] When lags are included in models, these lags will thus refer to the (first round of) the previous election held in the country in question. Only 260 of the 2,083 elections (12.5 percent) included in the 1945–2012 data set are multiround elections.

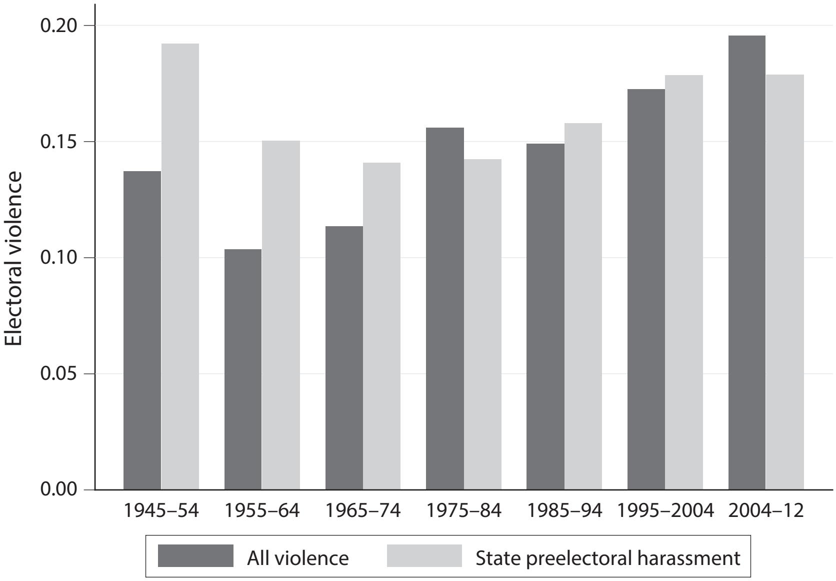

FIGURE 1.2. Trends in NELDA indicators of electoral violence (share of elections exhibiting the form of violence in question), 1945–2012

According to the NELDA data (figure 1.2), which pick up the most egregious forms of overall electoral violence and preelectoral harassment by state actors, elections became more peaceful between the end of the Second World War and the late 1960s, before increasing gradually in violence in the subsequent period—which includes the phenomenon commonly referred to as the "third wave" of democratization, starting in 1974 (Huntington 1991). The V-DEM nonstate-violence indicator remains broadly stable over the entire period, while the state-intimidation variable exhibits a decline over more recent decades (figure 1.3). These varying trends can undoubtedly be attributed to conceptual differences in the variables being measured as well as methodological differences in data collection. The reliance of the NELDA data on media reports may partly account for why an increase in both types of violence is observed in recent years; political liberalization, economic development, and technological change may have led to an increased number of violent incidents being *reported* in the latter period, especially in the final years when social media was increasingly being used to crowdsource allegations of electoral wrongdoing.[25]

[25] A recent paper by Borzyskowski and Wahman (2019) points to similar effects that generate biases in media-based electoral-violence data.

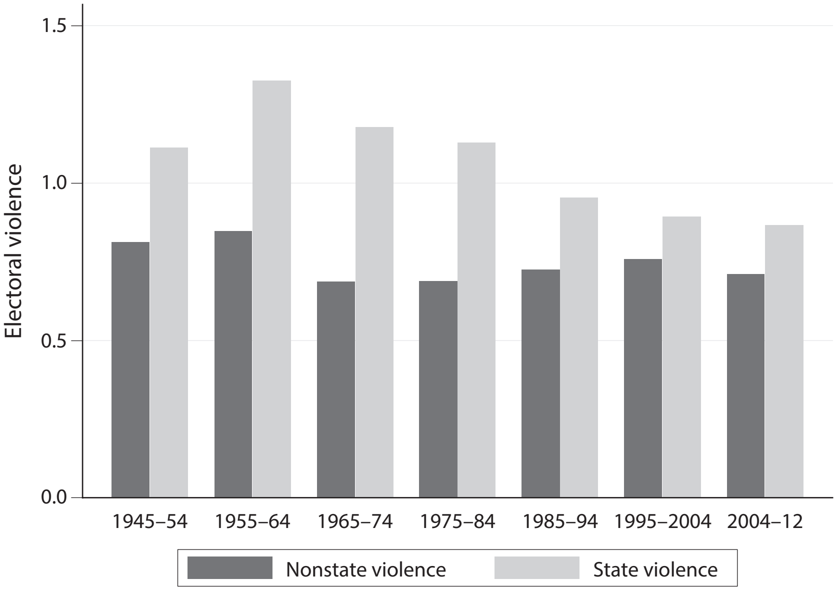

FIGURE 1.3. Trends in V-DEM indicators of electoral violence, 1945–2012

NB: The ordinal versions of these variables are used to enhance ease of interpretation; both variables are inverted such that a higher score corresponds to greater levels of violence.

Common to both data sets is the relative *stability* of global rates of electoral violence; the temporal variations reported here cover at most 15 percent of the range of the respective variables. Thus, despite the dramatic global changes associated with postwar decolonization, Cold War superpower rivalry, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the third wave of democratization, and the digital revolution, electoral violence has played a major role in a relatively steady portion of the world's elections during the entire modern era.

In addition to trends over time, it also makes sense to consider the global distribution of electoral violence. The preponderance of academic writing on this topic takes as its geographic focus the African continent, and from reading the literature one could be forgiven for thinking that electoral violence was mainly an African phenomenon. Yet examination of the cross-national data tells another story. Table 1.2 displays mean electoral-violence scores from the three global data sets—NELDA, V-DEM, and CREV—broken down by world region. The data are presented both for the maximum available time period for each indicator and for the most recent decade (2003–12), in order to provide a snapshot of contemporary patterns.

TABLE 1-2. Distribution of Electoral Violence by Political Region

	NELDA Overall Violence[b]		V-DEM Mean Violence[c]		CREV Mean Violence[d]	
World Region[a]	1945–2012	2003–12	1945–2012	2003–12	1995–2012	2003–12
Former communist Eastern Europe and Central Asia	.074	.093	0.816	0.610	1.644	1.549
Latin America	.209	.187	0.997	0.635	3.156	2.681
The Middle East and North Africa	.240	.403	0.994	0.897	3.969	2.904
Sub-Saharan Africa	.213	.203	1.406	1.308	3.485	3.339
Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand	.016	.027	0.050	0	0.633	0.697
East Asia	.033	.043	0.957	0.375	0.365	0.349
Southeast Asia	.291	.219	1.221	0.931	4.967	4.952
South Asia	.519	.600	1.500	1.536	7.653	6.766
The Pacific	.294	.750	0.412	1.000	1.399	1.437
The Caribbean	.212	.143	0.864	0.286	2.764	N/A

Figures in cells are regional means calculated on the basis of country means, to ensure each country is weighted equally.

[a] The definition of regions used here follows the 'political regions' indicator that forms part of the Quality of Government data set (Teorell et al. 2017).

[b] Using *Nelda33*.

[c] Mean of *v2elintim* and *v2elpeace*.

[d] State-to-nonstate + nonstate-to-state (as % of events recorded).

There is a remarkable similarity in the tales told by these three data sets, given the variations in country coverage and measurement strategy subtending them. According to all three measures, South Asia stands out as the region of the world where elections have been the most violent in recent decades, and Southeast Asia is also an area where the use of force is prevalent at election time. Sub-Saharan Africa is the second most violent region in the V-DEM data set, though it places only third in the CREV data set and fifth in the NELDA regional rankings. In all three data sets, the Caribbean is shown to have relatively high levels of violence over the more extended time periods, although electoral conflict appears to have abated in recent years. Though Latin America sits in the middle of all three rankings, violence in this region is notably higher than it is in other areas of the world where competitive, credible elections predominate, such as western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and East Asia. Not surprisingly, the Middle East and North Africa also have relatively high levels of electoral

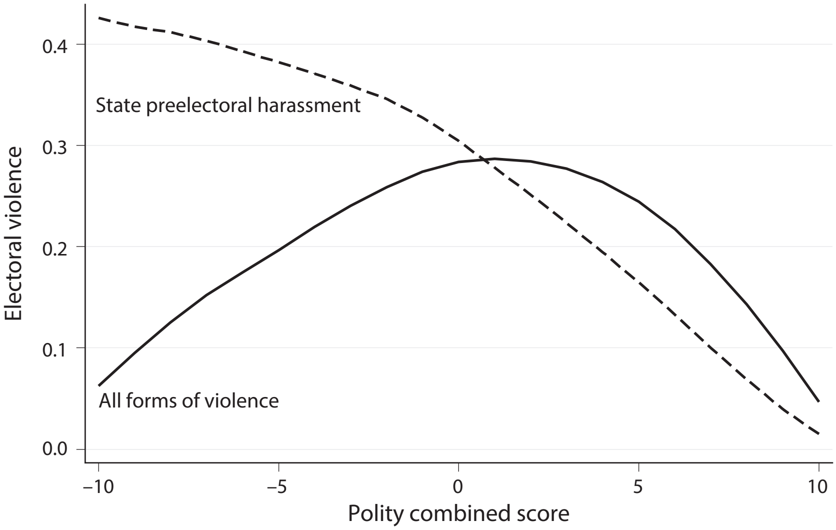

FIGURE 1.4. Patterns of electoral violence by level of democracy (NELDA), 1945–2012

conflict, whereas elections in the Pacific region have been carried out in relative peace in recent decades according to two of the three measures. All in all, these data suggest that electoral violence displays strong regional characteristics, and that heavy focus in the existing academic literature on Africa has led to a neglect of other areas where elections are also conflictual. It is worth noting too that though levels of violence are on all three scales low in East Asia, as well as in Europe, the Americas, and Australasia, there is no world region where elections have been entirely peaceful for an extended period. The use of force to interfere with electoral processes is a truly global phenomenon that warrants systematic comparative analysis such as that undertaken in this volume.

It is in addition constructive to consider patterns of violence at different levels of democracy. Previous research has identified a connection between political violence and democratic competition in countries that are poor (Collier and Rohner 2008; Flores and Nooruddin 2016; Hegre et al. 2001; Salehyan and Linebarger 2015) and those that have weak states (Brancati and Snyder 2012; Fein 1995; Mansfield and Snyder 2005), which are often in practice the same countries. In studies of electoral conduct, a link between hybrid regimes and violent elections has also been noted by some scholars. Fjelde and Höglund (2016) found a curvilinear relationship between democracy and electoral violence, while Norris, Frank, and Martinéz i Coma (2015) underlined the risk of violence in elections held in hybrid states; this pattern

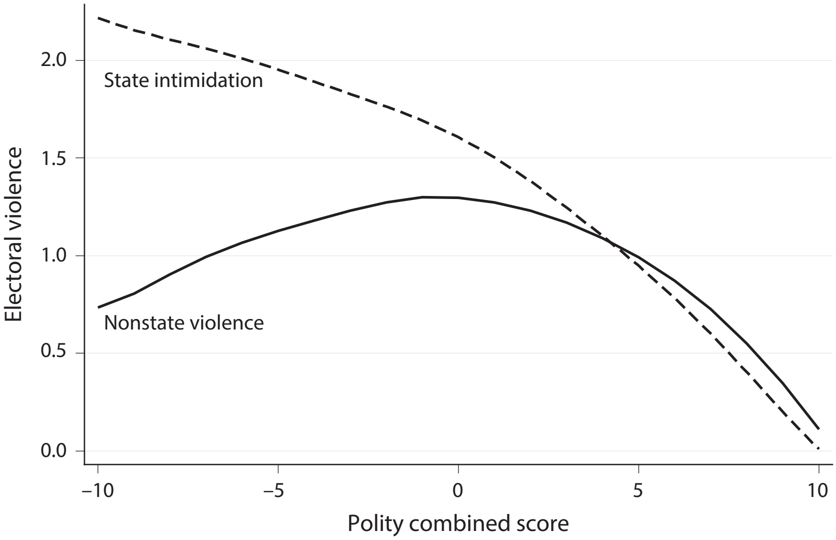

FIGURE 1.5. Patterns of electoral violence by level of democracy (V-DEM), 1945–2012

was found also in a detailed study of electoral violence in postcommunist Europe by Mochtak (2018b).[26]

Analysis of the three data sets employed here confirms this finding, but with some important nuances. Figure 1.4 plots the NELDA overall-violence measure (*Nelda33*) and the preelection state-violence measure (*Nelda15*) against the Polity IV combined "polity" score, which ranges from –10 in the most autocratic states to 10 in the most democratic (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2016). Figure 1.5 plots the V-DEM state- and nonstate-violence measures against the same scale. These figures exhibit a marked similarity; in both cases, state-initiated electoral violence declines monotonically with increases in democracy. The NELDA overall-violence measure and the V-DEM nonstate-violence indicator show an inverted-U-shaped pattern that peaks in the upper half of the Polity scale. The CREV data, depicted in figure 1.6, also indicate that elections tend to experience more violence in hybrid and transitional states than is the case either in established democracies or in authoritarian regimes; the patterns for all four types of violence are similar, though state threats peak at a lower level of democracy than

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[26] Burchard (2015), however, found a monotonic relationship between levels of authoritarianism and levels of electoral violence in the African context. Van Ham and Lindberg (2015) also failed to find a curvilinear relationship between government intimidation at election time and democratization in Africa.

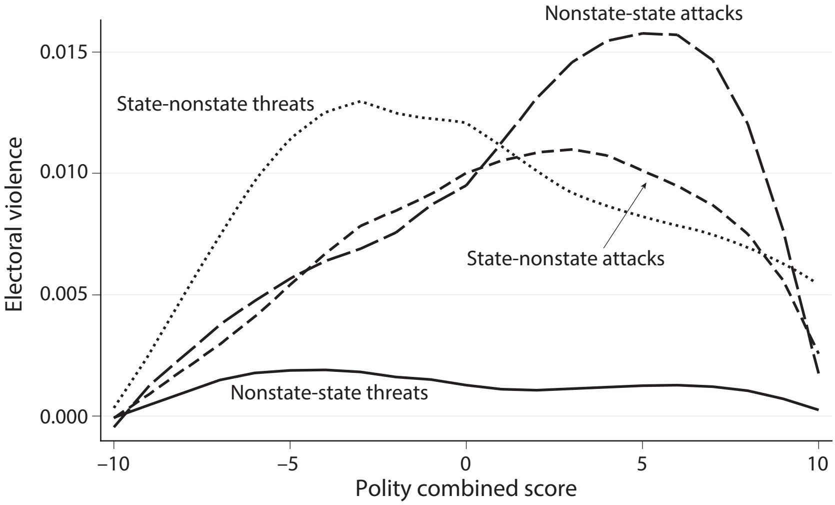

FIGURE 1.6. Patterns of electoral violence by level of democracy (CREV), 1995–2012
NB: Data are for electoral-violence events as a proportion of all reported events.

attacks by either state or nonstate actors, and threats by nonstate actors are less sensitive to level of democracy than the other three measures. We can summarize these findings by saying that electoral violence exhibits clear patterns that vary by regime type, suggesting a link between electoral strategy and modes of rule that will be explored in greater detail in the following two chapters. The analyses in these chapters will also break down the broad syndrome of democracy into its component parts in order better to assess their relationship to violent elections.

Chapter Preview

Following the initial overview of the topic of electoral violence and descriptive account of this phenomenon presented in this chapter, chapter 2 develops the study's main argument as to the incentives under which state and nonstate actors will employ violent means of shaping electoral outcomes, in addition to alternatives such as vote buying, fraud, or programmatic competition. This argument posits that electoral violence is shaped by the balance of democratic institutions and corruption, which conditions the costs of being excluded from power and the benefits of winning office. The chapter will also set out an account of why violence might be used to amplify and/or complement other types of electoral manipulation, including vote buying and misconduct. The observable implications of this argument are detailed in the form of a series of testable hypotheses.

The hypotheses regarding state violence are elaborated in chapter 3 with respect to the choice situations faced by leaders at election time, and tested empirically on the basis of global data sets of electoral violence and covariates drawn from a variety of sources, supplemented by case studies based on qualitative data. The quantitative analyses carried out in this chapter confirm the connection between the structure of power (the relative strength of democratic and informal institutions) and electoral violence, and find also a strong empirical link between state-initiated violence and electoral misconduct in contexts where democratic constraints are lacking. Case studies of Zimbabwe, Syria, Belarus, and Paraguay show how state-initiated electoral violence forms part of political economies regulated by informal institutions of corruption and patronage.

Chapter 4 tests the argument's expectations vis-à-vis nonstate violence, again demonstrating a strong and consistent empirical association between violence committed by nonstate actors and corruption, together with a link between this form of violence and vote buying suggestive of carrot-and-stick tactics. This chapter also explores the use made by nonstate actors of violent electoral protest as a mobilizational device, and the techniques whereby politicians enlist vigilante groups and proxies to carry out high-risk forms of violence. Case studies of Pakistan, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, and Côte d'Ivoire help to probe these casual mechanisms and to analyze the production of electoral violence.

Chapter 5 turns from the study of global patterns to a focus on the strategic dynamics inherent in different geographic contexts and different time periods. The chapter considers variations in electoral violence across the electoral cycle, over time, and across regions within countries. The analysis of strategic interactions between actors over the course of the electoral cycle suggests that retaliation can be a factor in the use of physical force, especially in the two months leading up to polling day. Case studies of the Philippines, Tanzania, Jamaica, and Ukraine demonstrate that uneven state capacity and the geography of partisanship help to account for geographic variations within countries in levels of electoral violence. The Tanzanian and Jamaican case studies also show how the way in which leaders and citizenries respond to each other's behavior over time can generate cycles of violence that reforms often fail to fully break.

Implicit in the academic study of electoral violence is the assumption that it is a problem to be addressed by programs specifically designed to reduce conflict. It is thus necessary in any comprehensive account of this phenomenon to devote careful consideration to the strategies that have been employed to mitigate electoral violence. This topic is taken up in chapter 6 by means of quantitative data analysis and case studies of electoral-violence-prevention techniques. In quantitative analysis, the chapter finds that electoral governance matters more than formal institutional design in efforts to contain electoral violence. Macedonia and Haiti are the focus of case studies that serve to deepen our understanding of these patterns, demonstrating the importance of electoral-authority capacity and political will in enabling effective violence control strategies.

The concluding chapter, chapter 7, summarizes the main findings of the volume and draws out their implications for political science as well as for policies on institutional design, electoral administration, electoral assistance, and diplomacy. The chapter considers the circumstances under which different strategies of electoral-violence prevention are likely to be successful and it provides a series of empirically grounded recommendations for the policy and practitioner communities.

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