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1

Introduction

Puzzle: Why Do Bloodstained Parties Win Postwar Elections?

In Guatemala, Efraín Ríos Montt, a “merciless” and “born-again butcher,” led the country’s armed forces as they perpetrated 86,000 murders and 90 percent of the civil war’s widespread atrocities. After the war ended, Ríos Montt’s party, the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), competed in the 1999 presidential and legislative elections that founded the country’s postwar political order. U.S. expectations of the outcome are revealed in declassified U.S. diplomatic cables: “An [electoral] victory of Rios would prove very difficult given his reputation as a major human rights violator.” The Truth Commissions had publicized the facts of the brutality; a genocide case had been filed against Ríos Montt. And yet Ríos Montt’s FRG party won in elections seen as “free and fair,” defeating a competitive opposition party that was untainted by the bloody past. Ríos Montt himself became president of Congress. FRG won a majority in every province, even, astoundingly, in the indigenous zones that had suffered the most from Ríos Montt’s scorched-earth tactics. “Witnesses to and even survivors of the massacres that had taken place under his administration”—an estimated 47 percent of victims—voted for the executioner-turned-democrat.

Similarly in El Salvador in 1994, the ARENA party, the “aboveground alter ego of the notorious ‘death squad’ networks,” won free democratic elections, besting the far less violent FMLN rebel party and an opposition party unimplicated in the country’s carnage. Although the death squads had been responsible, with the armed forces, for 95 percent of the war’s 70,000 political killings, ARENA secured the votes of 40 percent of victims, including 40 percent of displaced victims. Votes for ARENA were collected even in
areas most brutalized by state violence, in elections widely seen as “orderly, peaceful, and transparent . . . which permitted the popular will of the Salvadoran people to be expressed . . . without fear of violent incidents.”

In Colombia, the party of President Álvaro Uribe, who faced hundreds of investigations for ties to illegal paramilitaries, and a spree of extrajudicial killings labeled “one of the worst episodes of mass atrocity in the Western Hemisphere in recent decades,” also won multiparty postwar democratic elections. After the paramilitary armies had demobilized, politicians linked to them won a third of the country’s congressional seats and hundreds of local elected offices. Even in places terrorized by paramilitary massacres, assassinations, and disappearances, where citizens historically had backed the guerrillas, 88 percent of the population deemed the presence of the paramilitaries positive and 41 percent viewed the ex-paramilitaries as protectors. “Being a paramilitary victim or non-victim [was] not a characteristic that [could] determine if the [paramilitary politicians would] win more or less support,” in an environment in which “everyone [knew] . . . [which politicians had] paramilitary connections.”

How could this happen? Yet these cases are not aberrations. Around the world, after episodes of mass political violence in war, citizens choose who will govern their countries in posttransition elections that are critical to peace, justice, democracy, and governance. In these elections, astonishingly large numbers of citizens vote for political parties that have deep roots in the blood-stained organizations of the past, even those most guilty of heinous atrocities. These belligerent successors often outperform nonbelligerent parties and win clean elections; they attract votes not only from their core supporters but also from swing voters and even from the victims of their wartime violence.

The electoral successes of bloodstained parties cannot be understood with conventional explanations. Across postwar elections globally, parties that proved electorally successful were not those that had been more restrained in their wartime violence; the votes they won came not just from people who were their beneficiaries or at least not victims of their transgressions. Instead, belligerents that committed high levels of wartime brutality and that won militarily performed well in the elections; they performed just as well as war victors that had refrained from extensive atrocities. Votes for belligerents’ successors in regions that had been terrorized were comparable to votes in regions left unscathed by the belligerents’ wartime campaigns. Victims themselves voted as often for their perpetrators as for parties unstained by war.

This cannot be explained by the fog of war, or that voters did not know what had happened during wartime. While this fog was still lifting, in many places
elections followed widely publicized reports of truth commissions, so voters could well have known whom to blame for the violence before casting their votes. It also cannot be explained by an argument that these belligerent successor parties won only coerced votes in nondemocratic elections, or only agreed to elections they believed they could win. They also won abundant freely cast votes in postwar elections, widely seen as free and fair, and held in the aftermath of nearly every armed conflict. Although alternative explanations based in well-established determinants of political behavior, such as economic voting, clientelism, and partisanship, can account for partial patterns of the elections, they leave significant variation in political life after war unexplained.

This book illuminates that critical unexplained share of the vote delivered to bloodstained wartime belligerents by looking to the experiences, outcomes, and legacies of significant violence in war. Using the tools of political behavior, it joins an important body of international relations scholarship that leverages these tools to understand public opinion toward the use of force and to explain the electoral drivers and consequences of security in its international and domestic manifestations.

The Argument in Brief: Violent Victors Secure the Future

Why do parties that have engaged in violent atrocities in civil war perform well in postwar democratic elections? How do parties guilty of violence against the civilian population seek that population's votes? Why would a victimized population elect its tormentors to govern it? This book develops a counterintuitive answer: these bloodstained parties, if victorious in war, successfully present themselves as the most credible providers of social peace.

War outcomes, then, can tell us what to expect of the electoral prospects of militarily belligerent successor parties. Belligerents' electoral opponents might seem to have an advantage: parties without roots in the violent organizations of the war can claim a cleaner human rights record and show themselves in a positive light compared to the successors of belligerent transgressors. Their civilian elites assert that they can oblige the government to control itself, and this claim is made more credible by their record of abiding by the rules designed to protect the population's civil liberties.

The victorious or stalemated belligerent must counter the attention to its dismal human rights record that would raise doubt about its ability to control its use of coercive power against the population. A winner in war earns and
may deploy a potent electoral weapon: credit for ceasing the wartime violence. To adroitly play the strategic game of postwar politics, it may leverage this weapon in order to alter how voters judge the past and predict the future. Specifically, it may seek electoral rewards for not inflicting continued war against the population and for instead ending the population’s suffering and giving it the security of peace. Such credit for war termination may lend it a cloak of immunity under which a bloodstained party’s record of coercion becomes not an electoral liability but an asset, bolstering its reputation for competence on security. It can argue that its record uniquely positions it to provide sustained stability: that it alone is powerful enough to “overawe” others who might threaten disorder, and thus that it alone can “enable the government to control the governed.” To counter valid suspicions that it could use its power to repeat its past offenses, it makes a show of purging rights abusers from its ranks, but not the strongman who exemplifies its security credentials. It also moderates programmatically and promises to serve and protect the broader electorate as its constituency.

Both the nonbelligerent and belligerent parties seek to harness the power of media to propagate their respective messages and persuade the citizenry of their claims to restrained protection, a valence issue for voters. These voters, battered by a “war of all against all,” crave security—particularly those who are victims, direct and indirect, of the conflict’s violence. They weigh which party they can trust to handle the tasks of securing their future. As the establishment of political order from war is decided through elections, these voters wrestle with the foundational questions of human collective life: who can seek to establish the “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force”? Who is best at wielding coercion to curb societal violence?

In this dilemma, I argue, voters are more persuaded by the victorious combatant party than by less violent belligerents that lost the war, or by nonbelligerents who are untainted by war. They reward the war winner for the stability of peace, rather than punishing it for the atrocity of war. As a result, they deem the war winner better able than its less tainted rivals to preserve societal order going forward. A Madisonian variant of Hobbes wins out and core, swing, and even victim voters elect what I call “Restrained Leviathans” to govern them.

The electoral performance of the heir to the militarily vanquished belligerent, meanwhile, is constrained by its inferior war outcome, and such a party generally makes a poor showing in the election: it is blamed for past violence, while it lacks credibility as a provider of future security. If, however, it
apologizes for its transgressions and advances a nonmainstream, nonsecurity platform, it might earn a small foothold in postwar politics and a reputation that can help it in future elections.

I test this explanation for the electoral success of violent victors with a rich empirical design, combining extensive fieldwork; individual-level experimental data from an original survey in Colombia; party-level archival evidence from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua; and cross-national evidence from data on all 205 belligerent parties around the world that transitioned from war between 1970 and 2015.

Implications for Peace, Democracy, Justice, and Governance

This book explains why people vote for the very political actors guilty of violence against the civilian population. It argues that war outcomes influence the results of founding postwar elections by guiding party strategy and voter behavior. The selection of bloodstained parties in these pivotal elections is highly consequential for fundamental questions of postwar peace and war recurrence, democracy and political development, justice and reconciliation, the rule of law, and public goods provision. In such postwar elections, voters tend to opt for an end to armed conflict, but at the price of justice, liberalism, and welfare.

War and Peace

The elections at the center of this book constitute a linchpin in theories of whether war resumes or peace consolidates. Scholars herald such elections as conducive to sustained conflict termination by establishing institutionalized channels for opposition, which tend to dampen subsequent violent conflicts and limit social unrest. An open political system and access to political participation have been found to inoculate a society against a return to civil conflict, and to bestow legitimacy upon the postwar political order. Allowing ballots should diminish any resort to bullets. At the same time, the advent of elections in postwar societies also brings risk. There is concern, specifically, that, as Dawn Brancati and Jack Snyder warn, electoral “losers will refuse to accept the results peacefully” and return to war. This concern has motivated a robust body of scholarship aimed at determining how to harness the benefits of democracy for peace while
mitigating democracy’s perils; among the proposed tools are inclusive elections (with provisions for rebel participation), delaying the elections, deploying international election monitors, and institutionalizing power sharing.

The book departs from this pioneering scholarship by focusing not on such structural features of the pivotal founding elections but instead on their results. In so doing, it opens the black box of the elections themselves and illuminates the relationship between how well belligerents perform in the elections and the decision to remilitarize.

The book’s argument implies that postwar elections, in and of themselves, are not likely to lead to a return to violence. Instead, such elections should be stabilizing if the balance of military power remains constant after war. The prevalence of security voting gives war victors the upper hand in the elections, and these victorious belligerent parties emerge as the most capable of both suppressing their own violence and deterring their opponents—the losers—from remilitarizing. With an unaltered distribution of military power after war, there exists little reason for either the war winner or war loser to reintiate violence; the election results reflect this underlying power balance, and a new war would be unlikely to yield a different outcome. “Negative peace” should thus hold. Such stability, in turn, facilitates economic recovery.

However, if the balance of power instead inverts after war’s end and if the electorate, using the heuristic of war outcomes to guide their votes, chooses the now weaker war winner, electoral results become misaligned with military power and the newly empowered war loser has electoral incentives to return to war. This is because the strong correlation between war outcomes and electoral performance in the first postwar political contest creates perverse incentives for belligerents: a return to war becomes beneficial rather than costly for a newly strengthened war loser. This belligerent may reinitiate fighting to take advantage of the power change, hoping to try its hand at the polls again in the future from a position of a superior war outcome. The founding selection of bloodstained parties therefore has critical implications for whether war recurs or peace sustains.

**Democracy**

The war-to-peace transitions that are central to this book also strongly influence the prospects for democracy. Studies by Elisabeth Jean Wood, Virginia Page Fortna, and Reyko Huang tell when to anticipate democratization to
emerge from war. The work of Thomas Flores and Irfan Nooruddin, Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, Aila Matanock, and Leonard Wantchekon underscores the fragility of such democratic elections where there is a history of violent conflict.

This book’s examination and explanation of why and how bloodstained parties perform well in postwar elections offer vital answers to questions of democratization. Adapting the logic of Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John Stephens, the book suggests that such election results, although perhaps surprising, may actually facilitate democratic stability because “those who have only to gain from democracy”—here, war-winning belligerent parties well positioned to succeed in elections—“will be its most reliable promoters and defenders.”

Many such parties born in the ashes of war prove durable, particularly if they are able to respond as voters’ more diverse nonsecurity concerns proliferate and if the parties are able to cultivate political machines to mobilize voters and distribute patronage. War and revolutionary uprisings consolidated many of the world’s strong parties. Election to office in the founding elections may thereby transform these parties into stable democratic actors, cementing the political party system around them. (Indeed, the book reveals significant path dependency for political development triggered by the critical juncture of the founding electoral contests). At the same time, like former autocrats following negotiated democratic transitions, these belligerent participants, while often sustaining a minimalist version of democracy, tend not to advance a more liberal variant. At times, they cause or allow later democratic backsliding.

Justice

Postwar elections are the book’s centerpiece. They reflect a critical tension between the goal of sustaining the termination of violence and the goal of holding the perpetrators of rights violations legally accountable. What is necessary electorally to avert instability and recurrent war may also protect human rights abusers. By enshrining amnesties, the elections may prevent countries from effectively closing the books on their nightmare pasts.

This implication of the book joins the “peace-versus-justice” debate among scholars and practitioners of international transitional justice. At the macro level, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink advance a “logic of appropriateness,” arguing that there is a moral and legal imperative to hold perpetrators...
swiftly to account criminally. By this logic, security is the fruit of justice. This “prosecute and punish” solution to what Samuel Huntington called the “torturer problem” is echoed in micro-level studies of transitional justice across generations, which find, time after time, that descendants of victims seek political retribution against their perpetrators.

On the other side of the debate, Monika Nalepa, Jack Snyder, and Leslie Vinjamuri advance a “logic of consequences,” whereby possibilities for legal accountability are constrained as a practical matter by power balances, self-interest, and feasibility. By this logic, justice is the fruit of security. This accords with the realist tradition that identifies systems of norms and justice as the products of power politics and argues that great powers determine the standards of morality that best suit their interests. So, too, in the domestic arena, powerful political players lock in the legal regimes that best protect their own interests.

The argument that peace and order constitute preconditions for justice, rather than the other way around, finds robust support in the micro-level literature on transitional justice in the immediate aftermath of war. Surveys conducted in diverse environments around the world show that victims do not primarily seek truth, punishment, and reparations; rather, they pursue security first, under which they can get on with their lives, disregard the past, and focus on other concerns such as power and jobs.

In line with the latter approach, the implication of this book’s argument is that, by voting perpetrators of atrocities into office, citizens reward rather than punish the past violence of the winning side. Armed with legitimate political power, the former abusers may engage in regressive justice and lock in their impunity, at least in the short to medium term. Their whitewashing of the violent past in their rhetoric and official historiography leaves a lasting scar by distorting national memory and the pursuit of truth. However, as peace consolidates, citizens gain breathing room from heightened insecurity and possibilities for justice may increase.

**Governance**

The book’s theory of “violent victors” has implications for governance, particularly social welfare and security provision. It suggests that the citizenry is likely to gain in the near term in the domain in which the militarily successful belligerent has a comparative advantage, competence, and expertise, and that is the security domain. However, because the belligerent successor party...
prioritizes law and order over other social and development expenditures, voters’ electoral choices tend to lead to the sacrifice of social welfare. This is consistent with scholarship revealing how budget reallocation to defense cannibalizes spending on social services, degrading development outcomes. It also aligns with research documenting the trade-off when ironfisted security policy has priority over alternative crime-reduction strategies, such as human capital enhancement, showing that, as a result, both rule of law and the provision of public goods degrade over time.

In sum, the book’s theory and findings about why and how violent victors win postwar elections have critical implications, previously understudied, for our understanding of war recurrence, democratization, justice, security, and welfare over both the short term and the long term.

Security and Political Behavior

This book uses the analytical tools of political behavior to answer important questions in international relations about war and peace. It also demonstrates the value of bringing security issues at the core of international relations more centrally into the study of political behavior.

By building a theory of the electoral consequences of use of force in war, drawing upon the toolbox of political behavior, I join scholars including Joshua Kertzer, Jon Pevehouse, Mike Tomz, Jessica Weeks, Keren Yarhi-Milo, and Thomas Zeitzoff, among others, who bring developments in domestic politics into the study of international relations and identify the significant electoral drivers and effects of security and defense policies. A well-established literature illuminates the effects of war, belligerence, and casualties on domestic audiences and vote outcomes; it has focused predominantly on U.S. public opinion and electoral behavior surrounding America’s international use of force.

This book studies voter attitudes and behavior surrounding the use of force domestically in intrastate war. The importance of these attitudes and behavior to determining postwar political order has rendered elections a central focus of many international relations theories of conflict termination and recurrence, although, with few exceptions, they leave the strategic interactions of parties and voters underexplored. The study of political behavior helps shed new light on patterns of postwar peace and war.

The resulting argument is that war outcomes affect who will rule the country after civil conflict, through the process of parties vying to own the salient
security issue and voters choosing candidates, based on security grounds. By identifying the political legacies of different forms of conflict termination, the book adds to scholarship on how wars end.73 In emphasizing how military outcomes influence public reaction to belligerence and atrocity, the book accords with the work of Alexander Downes, Richard Eichenberg, Peter Feaver, Christopher Gelpi, and Jason Reifler, and Daryl Press, Scott Sagan, and Benjamin Valentino; they find that citizens respond positively to the use of force when it achieves decisive victory,74 battlefield success,75 or military utility.76 In emphasizing party strategies, the book aligns with the work of Matthew Baum and Tim Groeling, Adam Berinsky, Elizabeth Saunders, and John Zaller on how political framing,77 issue ownership,78 and top-down elite cues79 mediate mass opinion toward and voting on security issues. The book thereby brings the electoral consequences of use of force and military success in intrastate wars into dialogue with the significant scholarship on the domestic politics of belligerence in interstate war and intervention. It also motivates a research agenda that integrates the two, which I spell out in the book’s conclusion.

Security Voting

By studying security with the repertoire of political behavior models, the book shows how these models can apply to noneconomic issues. In the canonical theory of democratic political behavior, voters “reward the [parties] for good times, punish [them] for bad.”80 Voters’ choices are also based on their predictions about the parties’ management of salient issues in the future.81

Theories of political behavior acknowledge that nonmaterial variables factor into vote choice.82 Ferejohn (1986) writes, “If the incumbent administration has been successful in promoting economic growth and avoiding major wars, it will tend to be rewarded at the polls.” Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope (2003) state that “election outcomes depend on the ‘fundamentals,’ especially peace and prosperity.” Despite this acknowledgment of the importance of security, the literature’s emphasis on material assessments has led most to refer to its canonical voting logic as “economic voting theory.” This is largely because theories of electoral politics tend to concentrate on richer and more economically developed democracies, contexts that, in recent times, have not experienced widespread insecurity from full-scale international and civil wars, rampant crime, or brutal repression.

In lower- and middle-income democracies, economic voting is also manifested,83 but insecurity is not rare, geographically or demographically isolated,
or distant. In fact, one and a half billion people face the threat of violence as armed conflicts ravage large swaths of the developing world. State-based armed conflicts, the focus of this book, have taken place in 157 places globally since World War II and have stolen the lives of sixteen million people. Over forty million people across the globe have become forcibly displaced or refugees of intrastate war and violence; millions more have suffered extortion, captivity, torture, and sexual violence. With attention to interstate wars, terrorism, and organized crime as well, it becomes clear that security issues may be highly salient for many voters globally and therefore likely influence their political behavior.

This book shows that well-studied frameworks of party and voter behavior have significant explanatory power under such conditions: how parties script their programs, recruit their elites, target their voters, and campaign when security issues are paramount and how, under these conditions, voters make their electoral choices. In so doing, the book joins research on the effects of other forms of insecurity on political behavior, including terrorism, high-casualty interstate wars, crime, military service, and international interventions.

Its conclusions align with studies that find that both victims and nonvictims facing threats of disorder tend to place less importance on civil liberties and prove more willing to accept repressive measures and ironfisted strongmen. By shedding light on why victimized populations elect tormentor victors to office, the book contributes to the study of a broader phenomenon of political behavior: why people in democracies vote for “bad guys,” people with known ties to violent criminals, militias, warlords, and corruption.

Road Map: How This Book Is Organized

The book is organized in ten chapters. The first part of the book presents the building blocks of the argument and shows how they are assembled into an explanation for why bloodstained parties win postwar elections. Chapter 2 sets the political stage for the theory chapter by defining the backdrop of postwar democratic elections; the cast of characters, comprising nonbelligerent parties and rebel and government belligerent successors under various war outcomes; and the audience, conflict-affected populations for whom security is a highly salient issue. Chapter 3 presents the book’s theory of how war outcomes influence electoral performance through party strategies and voter behavior. It outlines how, against the backdrop of the war-to-peace transition, nonbelligerent,
war-winning, and war-losing parties devise their respective programs and platforms, reckon with the violent past, build and target their constituencies, and retain and recruit (or expel) members of their elites. It delineates how voters emerging from war evaluate parties’ competencies and formulate their political attitudes and behavior, and as a result elect civil war tormentors as they seek to secure their future during the pivotal foundation of postwar political order. Chapter 3 concludes by laying out the observable implications derived from the theory and from alternative accounts and describing how each is evaluated in the book’s subsequent empirical chapters (4–9).

Chapter 4 tests the book’s individual-voter-level hypotheses with experimental evidence from an original survey of fifteen hundred victims and non-victims in Colombia. It evaluates whether war winners as candidates are able to shift voters’ references points so as to launder these candidates’ violent pasts and to cultivate a reputation for security, while losing belligerents cannot. With a series of survey experiments, the chapter then evaluates the party strategy of what I call a Restrained Leviathan, comprising military and civilian candidates, a platform convergent on the interests of the moderate voter, and a focus on the security valence issue, and assesses whether such a strategy does, as predicted, prove more successful for the militarily advantaged belligerent. I examine whether the political strategy of what I call the Tactical Immoderate, comprising civilian candidates, an immoderate platform, and nonsecurity valence priorities, proves more successful for the militarily disadvantaged belligerent. The original survey also enables me to experimentally evaluate alternative mechanisms of voter coercion and voter ignorance. I use the observational survey data to assess the robustness of security voting in actual elections against other drivers of political behavior: economic voting, clientelism, and partisanship.

The survey findings reveal what types of strategies would likely be optimal for different types of parties. Based on more than two cumulative years of fieldwork in Colombia; 350 interviews with victimizers and victims, campaign strategists, and candidates; text analysis of party programs and more than half a million Twitter posts from politicians’ feeds; and review of daily press coverage and actual voting results, I examine the specifics of the political campaigns in the 2018 Colombian elections to explore, briefly, whether the parties followed or diverged from these optimal strategies, why, and with which electoral implications.

From the theory’s voter-level underpinnings, Chapters 5 to 7 turn to its party-level ones, examining them in the context of Central America, which
experienced the full range of war outcomes. Chapter 5 examines a military draw in El Salvador; Chapter 6, government victory in Guatemala; and Chapter 7, rebel victory in Nicaragua. To reconstruct how each party developed its strategy, I conducted in-depth interviews with former presidents, presidential candidates, campaign strategists, senators of all political colors, and military commanders. I collected and analyzed, both with natural language processing and with qualitative review, the parties’ political platforms, speeches, campaign advertisements, and rhetoric from multiple archives of newspaper, radio, television, and campaign data. I identified the war background of the candidates of each (belligerent and nonbelligerent) party and reviewed declassified U.S. embassy cables on the electoral contests. Each chapter looks at the effects of the parties’ strategies on public opinion and voting behavior, using survey data collected contemporaneously during the elections. I use these survey data, together with municipal-level election data, to evaluate alternative explanations based on victimization, coercion, ideology, and economic voting. In each of these three case studies, I consider the implications of the founding elections for peace, democracy, party stability, rule of law, and justice. While the survey evidence and case material of Chapters 4 to 7 support the theory’s observable implications, they also confirm that the real world proves more complex than a few variables can describe.

Chapter 8 examines the phenomenon of violent actors who win votes on a global scale to understand the generalizability and limitations of the theory. It uses an original dataset, the Civil War Successor Party (CWSP) cross-national dataset, which encompasses the full universe of belligerents around the world that transitioned from civil war between 1970 and 2015. The dataset traces the postwar political trajectories of the civil war belligerents, identifies their successor parties, charts their electoral performance, and identifies their nonbelligerent opponents. It shows that, consistent with the theory of the rest of the book, parties with violent pasts tend to dominate the elections and that war outcomes are powerful predictors of belligerent party performance, irrespective of the belligerents’ use of mass atrocities. If militarily winning, abusive belligerent parties perform well, even where elections are clean, free, and fair. The CWSP dataset also enables an evaluation of factors that might, in theory, confound the relationship between war outcomes and election results: incumbency status, popular support, mobilization capacity, provision of public goods, organizational cohesion, and financing.

Chapter 8 then turns from cross-national data to newly assembled subnational data on violence, war outcomes, and voting. It shows that successor
parties’ vote shares remain relatively constant whether the belligerents were responsible for all or none of the atrocities at the local level, but that these vote shares track with whether the belligerents militarily won or lost the war locally. The chapter concludes by investigating whether and how the logic works in contexts where the framework’s assumptions hold more loosely: where ethnicity is a dominant cleavage, security is not highly salient, victimization is bounded geographically or demographically, electorates are bifurcated by secession, or politics are centered on patronage rather than programs.

Chapter 9 explores the implications of elections of bloodstained parties for war recurrence, transitional justice, democracy, and governance. To do so, it uses new global data that reveal not only whether a conflict resumed but also, through belligerent-level coding, who reinitiated the fighting. It shows that postwar elections increase the chance of renewed war if there is an inversion or reversal of the military balance of power after war, and if the war loser has performed poorly in the elections. If, instead, relative military power remains stable, civil war actors are unlikely to remilitarize if they lose the elections. The chapter then combines the book’s CWSP cross-national data with information on amnesties and liberal democracy in an analysis that suggests the tragic (even if potentially temporary) trade-offs between peace and justice, and between peace and liberalism. To probe governance implications of the elections of violence-tied actors, the chapter analyzes an original database of 784 paramilitary mayors, based on over 42,000 pages of Colombian Supreme Court sentencing documents, to compare the administrations of paramilitary mayors who barely won with those who barely lost the elections along dimensions of security and public goods outcomes. It shows that the election of belligerent politicians generated a reduction in common crime but had pernicious effects on the provision of other public goods. The politicians’ prioritization of security crowded out resources for social welfare.

The book concludes in Chapter 10 by specifying avenues for future research on political behavior and security, and beyond the temporal and geographic scope examined here. The book closes by touching on the policy implications for practitioners aiming to prevent atrocities and to promote peace, liberalism, and human rights after violence. It highlights how interventions aimed at buttressing the balance of power, reducing the urgency of security issues, bolstering nonbelligerent parties, and countering historical distortion may speed up the normalization of politics, dampening the perverse electoral potency of war outcomes, and amplifying opportunities for justice and democracy after war.
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