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COERCION AND CAPTURE IN DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

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Abstract

Armed non-state actors frequently intervene in democratic politics, producing waves of political violence against voters, candidates, and elected officials. How do we understand these interventions? In democracies, the power to enact a political agenda, channel rents, and punish opponents is vested in legislative and executive institutions. Armed challengers who wish to discredit the state's political project or enact their own thus face powerful incentives to displace or capture those institutions. How they choose to intervene in the democratic process is, I argue, a function of two variables: how compatible the group's goals are with the democratic process, and how much coercive power the group can bring to bear against voters and elected officials.

The combinations of these variables generate a set of four ideal-typical strategies, each of which prescribes a distinct course of violent and nonviolent behavior. Violent organizations with democracy-compatible goals seek to capture democratic institutions. Where they have the coercive wherewithal to demand compliance from voters and elected officials, they appropriate legislative and policymaking processes to fit their political aims; where they do not, they offer corrupt agreements to sympathetic politicians. Armed groups with democracy-incompatible goals instead use violence to discredit and delegitimize democracy, impeding elections through terrorism and, when they enjoy coercive dominance, evicting elected officials and uprooting the democratic state altogether. Groups with a mixture of compatible and incompatible goals attempt to square this circle by publicly attacking high-profile democratic institutions while quietly colluding with local authorities to implement their political agenda.

I evaluate these predictions against quantitative, computational, and archival evidence from Latin America. I first examine a low-compatibility armed actor in Sendero Luminoso, a Peruvian Maoist insurgent group. In communities it dominated, Sendero Luminoso impeded

elections, evicted local elected leaders, and replaced municipal governments with revolutionary popular councils. These interventions had lasting effects on public trust and participation in democracy. I then turn to a medium-compatibility organization in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The FARC railed against Colombian democracy but also sought to influence it from within, quietly coercing mayors and seizing state bureaucracies. A final case study turns to a set of democracy-compatible Mexican criminal organizations. These groups secured the cooperation of national politicians through bribery and threatened vulnerable local politicians with violence. These interventions paid off: capture of local governments led to increased rates of extortion and theft from public coffers.

These results have important implications for theories of political violence and democratic politics. They provide an explanation for a widespread but little-theorized form of violence: that enacted by armed actors against mayors, legislators, and other elected officials. They also propose a new means of state-building for aspiring political authorities, showing that these groups can appropriate state institutions rather than construct their own. For analysts of democratic politics, they suggest that models of democracy that ignore the influence of coercive actors often miss a key shaper of policy outcomes and an important threat to public faith in democracy. Finally, they underscore the vital importance of accounting for ideological commitments in models of contentious politics.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

On May 17, 1980, five masked men descended on the Peruvian highlands town of Chuschi and burned its ballot boxes and electoral registries. The five militants belonged to a Maoist insurgent group, Sendero Luminoso, which sought to violently overthrow the democratic Peruvian state and replace it with a communist society. As the attack on Chuschi suggested, a key target of the group's violence was Peru's democratic system itself. Sendero Luminoso's leader, Abimael Guzmán, argued that electoral democracy was a "'constitutionalist illusion' [...] bourgeoisie trickery to fool the masses into believing they had a voice" (Starn & La Serna, 2019, 20). Over the course of the war, the insurgents orchestrated hundreds of attacks against democratic institutions, targeting elections and voters, candidates and parties, and elected officials. Though some Marxist political parties expressed sympathy for Sendero Luminoso's goals, the insurgents had no interest in making alliances with the "legal left." In fact, they focused much of their violence against these potential allies: from 1983-96, Sendero Luminoso assassinated 291 leftist candidates, elected officials, community organizers, and activists (Ron, 2001).

At the same time, the Colombian state confronted its own challenger. Marxist rebels under the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) had been waging an insurgent campaign since 1964. Like Sendero Luminoso, the FARC called for the revolutionary overthrow of the state; like Sendero Luminoso, it publicly rejected the democratic system as illegitimate and targeted politicians, elections, and democratic institutions with threats and violence. Yet the FARC's intervention in democratic politics diverged from Sendero Luminoso's. In contrast to their Peruvian counterpart's all-out war on elected officials, the FARC quietly collaborated with local leaders, governing through and alongside elected town councils. They often permitted and sometimes encouraged voters to turn out in elections, and even fielded their own political party in the late 1980s.

The sharp divergence in strategies between Sendero Luminoso and the FARC presents

a puzzle. By conventional categorizations of militant organizations, the two appear similar: both were militarily powerful, rurally-based communist insurgents committed to the armed overthrow of their respective states, medium-capacity democracies neighboring each other in the northern Andes. What explains the strikingly different ways in which they engaged with democratic institutions? More generally, why and how do non-state armed actors like the FARC and Sendero Luminoso intervene in democratic politics? That is the question this dissertation sets out to answer.

1.2 The phenomenon of violent intervention in democracy

Intervention in democratic politics by armed non-state actors is startlingly common in the modern world. Despite predictions that democratization should reduce the incidence of civil war, a host of new and consolidated democracies suffer from armed violence. From 1989 to 2017, 69 countries across six continents held national-level elections amid civil or criminal conflict.[1] In these countries, the actors involved in the democratic process — voters, bureaucrats staffing elections, candidates, and elected officials — are often subject to violence. Drawing on data from the Global Terrorism Database (LaFree & Dugan, 2007) and the Deadly Electoral Conflict Dataset (Fjelde & Höglund, 2021), Figure 1.1 visualizes the global prevalence of violence committed by non-state actors against voters, elections, and politicians.

The countries in which these interventions occur are characterized by what Goldstein & Arias (2010) term "violent pluralism": a situation where "multiple violent actors operate within the polity and maintain different and changing connections to state institutions and political leaders" (21). In violently plural democracies, different types of armed, organized non-state actors — including insurgents, paramilitaries, militias, and criminal organizations — contest political authority against each other and the state. Unlike prototypical Weberian

[1] My calculation, drawing on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (Pettersson *et al.*, 2021) and the Varieties of Democracy Project (Coppedge *et al.*, 2021).

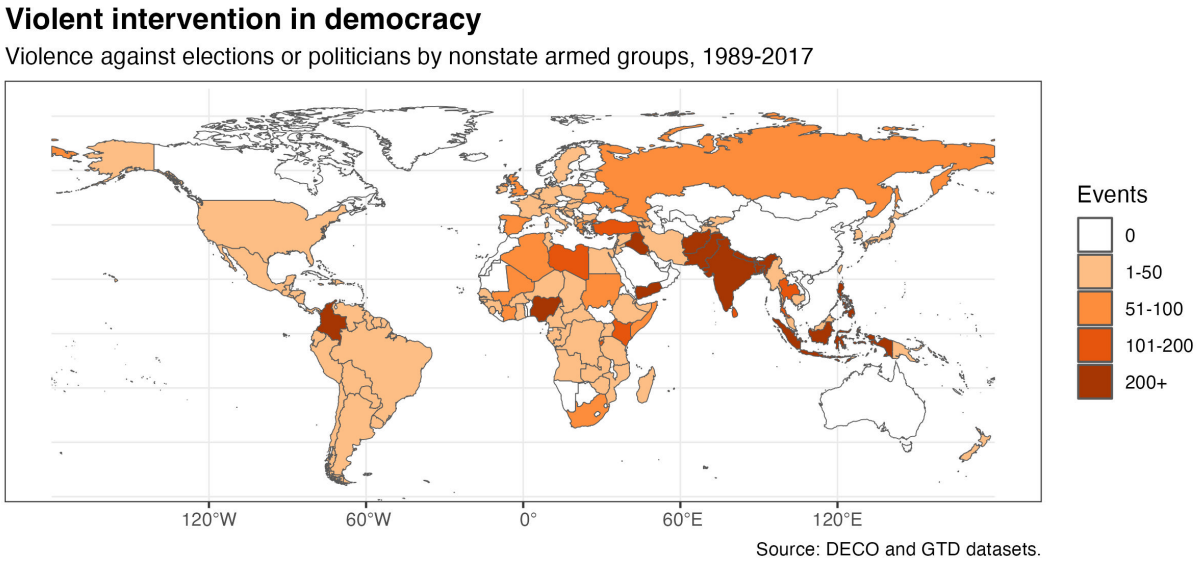

Figure 1.1: Violent intervention in democracy around the world

democracies, where the state alone controls the use of violence and the exercise of legitimate political authority, in violent democracies the institutions and practices of democratic politics coexist with the dynamics of armed conflict and violent contestation.

In these countries, a range of coercive actors in violently plural democracies intervene in democratic politics. They do so in widely varying ways. Right-wing militias in the United States both threaten violence against elected officials and run for office themselves (Mazzei & Feuer, 2022). In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels did not participate in elections but did declare their support for Tamil nationalist parties (Stokke, 2006). Hezbollah has enthusiastically participated in Lebanese electoral politics since the end of the civil war in 1990, yet maintains a separate armed wing and employs political violence against domestic rivals (Wiegand, 2009). The Afghan Taliban did not participate in electoral politics and used violence to depress turnout and discredit elections (Condra *et al.*, 2018).

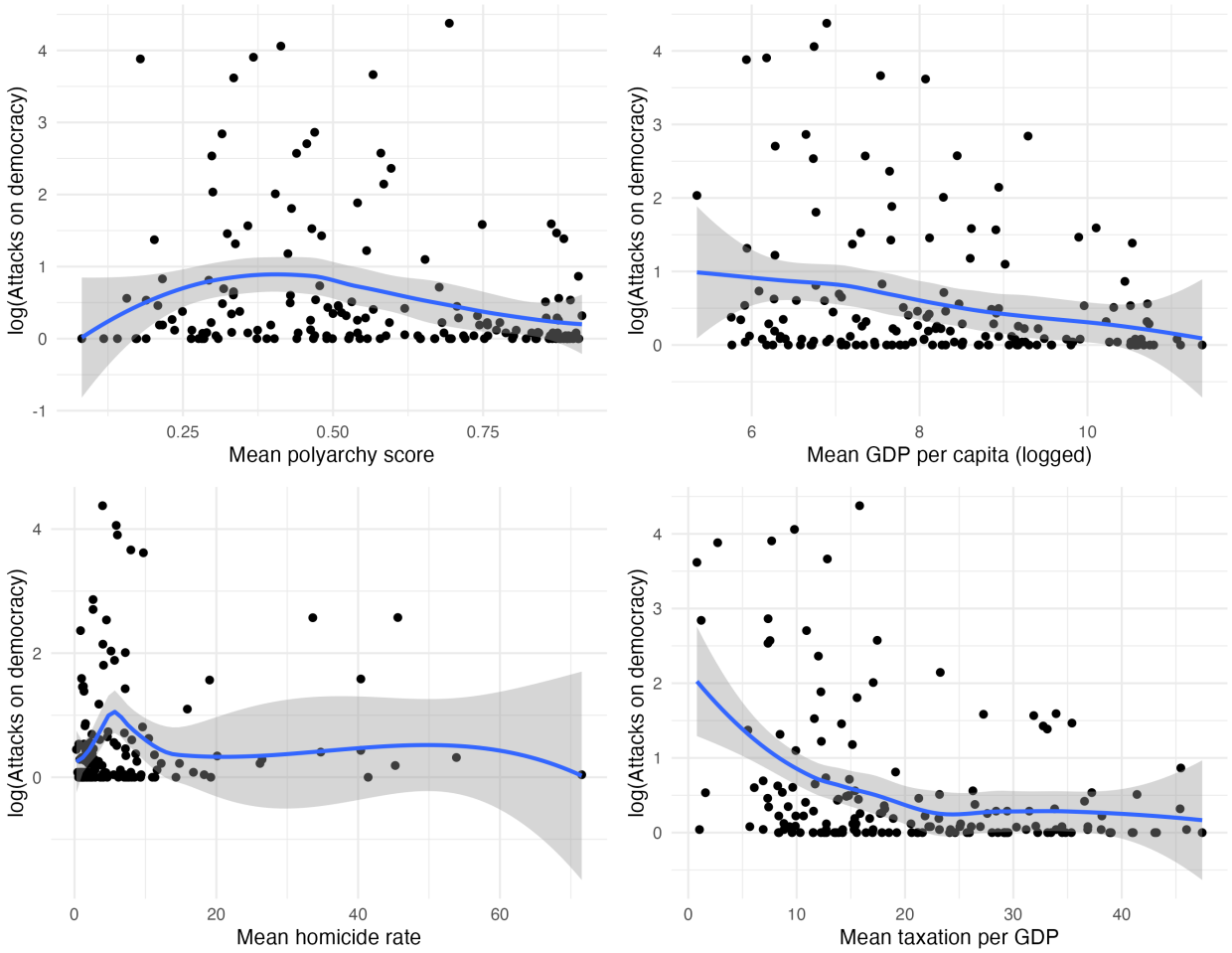

Figure 1.2: Country-level correlates of violent intervention in democracy

How do we understand the logic underpinning these interventions? When and where do they occur? Figure 1.2 offers a first attempt to answer this question. It plots the prevalence of attacks against democracy against a series of essential country-level characteristics. For each democracy in the world, I sum the number of attacks on the democratic process committed by non-state actors between 1989 and 2017.[2] I compare the distribution of this variable against four national factors: the quality of democracy (as measured by V-Dem's polyarchy score), wealth (GDP per capita), violence in society (homicide rate), and state capacity (as

[2]I sum attacks on election violence recorded in the DECO dataset, which focuses specifically on acts of violence intended to affect the conduct or outcome of elections, and attacks on politicians and political parties from the more general Global Terrorism Dataset. I only include democratic country-years, which I define as country-years no more than 5 years after multiparty elections were last held. I log the count of attacks on democracy to account for skewness.

proxied by taxation per GDP).[3]

Few conclusive patterns emerge. There are perhaps fewer attacks at the highest levels of democratic quality (top left pane) and wealth (top right), but the correlations are low. States with very low (fiscal) capacity (bottom right pane) seem to suffer more attacks, but beyond that point state capacity does not appear to be substantively predictive. Homicide rates seem to have no clear relationship with attacks; if anything, countries with mid-level rates of homicide appear to suffer the most acts of violence against democracy. In all, it seems that characteristics of the state and society by themselves offer little explanation of the variation in violent interventions across countries.

If state capacity, democratic quality, wealth, and overall violence grant little analytical leverage, what explains violent interventions in democratic politics? Figure 1.3 shifts the lens from the political context to the perpetrators of violence. I assemble a sample of 134 non-state armed groups active in civil wars around the world between 1989 and 2011. Due to the scope of cross-national political violence datasets, this sample does not entail a comprehensive survey of armed groups. It is composed almost entirely of insurgent groups, excluding militias and paramilitaries, groups that use little violence, groups that operate outside of civil wars, and all criminal organizations — including the powerful, violent gangs and cartels operating in Latin America and elsewhere which I examine later in this dissertation. But this sample does include substantial variation, encompassing 39 countries and armed groups with a wide range of goals, internal structures, and military strength. Drawing data from the Global Terrorism Database, I record the count of attacks against voters, politicians, elections, and political parties committed by each group in every year in my sample.

To explore whether the core characteristics of these insurgent actors explain their use of violence to intervene in democratic politics, I draw data on each group's dominant political ideology from the Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence (FORGE) dataset Braithwaite & Cunningham (2020). FORGE classifies each insurgent group as possessing one or more of

[3]I draw the first variable from the Varieties of Democracy Project and the other three from the World Bank; I take the average value of each variable across the sample period.

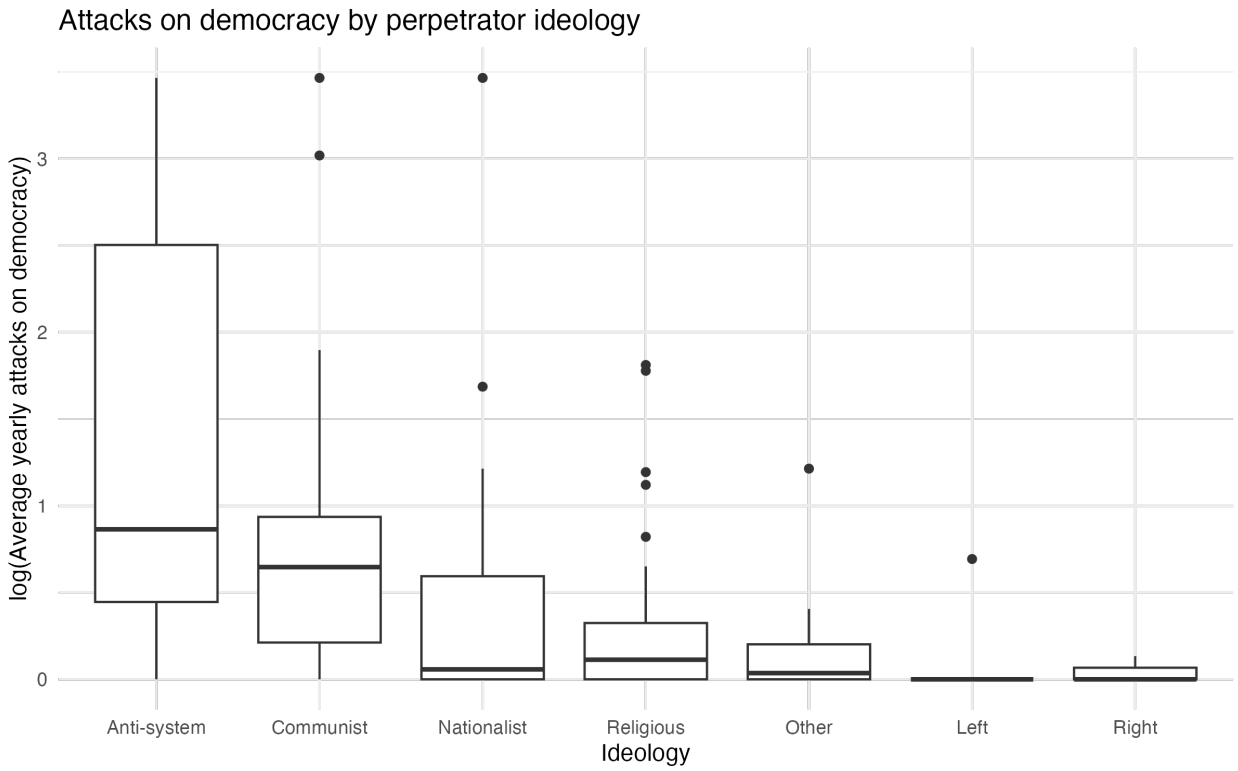

Figure 1.3: Attacks on democracy perpetrator ideology

the following ideologies: 1) communist (Marxist or Maoist), 2) leftist but not communist, 3) right-wing, 4) nationalist, 5) anti-system, 6) religious, or 7) a catch-all category of other ideologies. Figure 1.3 visualizes the distribution of attacks against democracy according to each group's ideology.

A more telling picture emerges here. Armed groups in every ideological category attack participants in the democratic process. But they do so at strikingly different rates. Moderate right- and left-wing insurgents target the democratic system with violence sparingly, as do most but not all religiously motivated and nationalist groups. The two ideological categories that seem to most turn their fire against participants in democratic politics are the communist organizations in the sample (e.g. the Communist Party of India - Maoist, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador, and the National Liberation Army in Colombia) and the groups that proclaimed an "anti-system" ideology (e.g. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the People's Liberation Front in Sri Lanka, and the

People's War Group in India). In all, groups with more transformational goals — those that aim to tear down the political system or replace it with a communist society, rather than advance a less sweeping nationalist or religious agenda — seem more bent on using violence against the democratic process.

This result is purely descriptive. But it suggests that group-level traits, and, in particular, characteristics related to a group's ideology or political goals, may be important determinants of their behavior toward democratic politics. In this dissertation, I argue that political ideology is the central determinant of armed groups' intervention in democracy. Ideology determines how these groups conceive of democracy, what they hope to accomplish by manipulating the democratic process, and which strategies they pursue in doing so. I expand upon this argument in the following section.

1.3 A new theory of armed actors and democracy

I argue that a key ideological difference separates some armed actors from others.[4] Some groups, like Sendero Luminoso in Peru, are uncompromisingly committed to a fundamental restructuring of society — a political vision fundamentally at odds with even illiberal or partial democracy. Others pursue goals that can be reasonably achieved through the democratic process. These actors include terrorists seeking specific policy changes, criminal organizations in search of state cooperation or protection, and militias pursuing increased representation, autonomy, or public investment. A third set of militant organizations combines democracy-compatible and incompatible goals. While the FARC in Colombia shared Sendero Luminoso's goal of overthrowing the democratic state, it also sought less transformative ends: land redistribution, increased investment in rural communities, and lasting political influence as an organization — ends that could be achieved through the democratic process. The compatibility of this set of goals with democratic politics explains the FARC's

[4]By "armed actors," "armed groups," "militant organizations," or "violent organizations," I refer to organized, non-state groups capable of using violence to achieve political or economic aims.

willingness to engage with Colombian democracy.

Armed contestation — civil war, criminal conflict, communal violence, or other forms of violent political conflict — is fundamentally a struggle for political power. In democracies, that power is primarily exercised by the elected officials who make up legislative and executive institutions. Elected officials enact political and economic agendas, channel state resources to some private interests and not others, set security policies, and impose and enforce social order. Armed challengers who wish to enact a political, economic, or social project thus face powerful incentives to manipulate the process and outcomes of democratic politics — who runs for elected positions, who wins elections, and how those politicians govern once in office.

How these groups choose to manipulate the democratic process is, I argue, a function of two key variables, one ideological and one material. The general logic of an armed group's intervention is determined by its *compatibility with democracy*: whether the group's leadership believes its core goals can be achieved through the democratic process. Groups with democracy-compatible goals seek to appropriate the institutions of democratic governance to pursue their agendas. Those with democracy-incompatible goals instead aim to discredit and uproot the infrastructure of democratic rule and to replace this infrastructure with new, non-democratic structures.

These intentions are subject to material constraints. I argue that one such constraint conditions how groups attempt to achieve these goals: the degree of *coercive capacity* the armed group can bring to bear against voters and elected officials. By definition, armed actors are capable of using coercion to accomplish their goals. But the extent of that coercive capacity varies widely over space and time. In some communities at some times, an armed actor can credibly threaten to punish voters and politicians if they do not accede to its demands; in others, voters and politicians are shielded from coercion by security forces, the secret ballot, and protective political institutions.

The combinations of these variables — compatibility with democracy and coercive capac-

ity — generate a set of four ideal-typical strategies: corruption, capture, delegitimization, and displacement. Each of these strategies prescribes a distinct course of violent and non-violent behavior. Violent organizations with democracy-compatible goals seek to appropriate democratic institutions. Where they have the coercive wherewithal to demand compliance from voters and elected officials, they seize legislative and policymaking processes to fit their political aims (*capture*); where they do not, they offer positive inducements to sympathetic politicians (*corruption*). Armed groups with democracy-incompatible goals instead use violence to discredit democracy, impeding elections and attacking symbols of democracy with terrorism (*delegitimization*) and, when they enjoy coercive dominance, evicting elected officials and uprooting the democratic state altogether (*displacement*). Groups with a mixture of compatible and incompatible goals attempt to square this circle by publicly attacking high-profile democratic institutions while quietly colluding with local authorities to implement their political agenda.

This argument has important implications for our understanding of political violence and democratic politics. It provides a theoretical framework for understanding an endemic, tragic, but little-theorized form of political violence. Armed actors across the world — leftists, rightists, ethnic movements and criminal organizations — regularly threaten, attack, and assassinate local and national elected officials. Yet we have few general theories that explain why. While extensive attention has been paid to the ways in which armed actors use violence against combatants and civilians, we have little systematic knowledge about when and why violent organizations target elected officials. I propose two broad logics that explain this form of violence — as an attempt to discredit democracy or in order to shape policy outcomes — and identify the conditions under which each obtains.

Moreover, this project casts light on the complex interplay between political violence and formal democratic politics. It explains how non-state actors — alone or in alliance with mainstream parties and politicians — shape policy outcomes and threaten public faith in democracy. Like the voters, parties, politicians, and interest groups that animate canonical

models of voting and policymaking, armed actors are important players in the democratic systems of these and other countries. Their ability to wield violence represents a potent tool of influence over policy outcomes, and a unique threat to the integrity and representativeness of democracy.

Finally, this project highlights an underexplored means of state-building. Actors seeking to replace the state must do more than defeat it on the battlefield. They need to construct the machinery of statehood — the institutions, bureaucracies, and relationships that permit them to maintain social order, regulate public life, and provide the public goods citizens expect of modern political authorities. Research on rebel and criminal governance illustrates one means by which armed actors can perform these tasks, by building governing institutions from scratch. But I emphasize a different, potentially superior strategy for state-building: commandeering existing institutional machinery and bending it to one's political agenda. By appropriating bureaucratic infrastructure and legitimate channels of power, this approach can be both more efficient and more effective than constructing governance institutions from the ground up. There are multiple paths to state-building in the modern world.

1.4 Research design

1.4.1 Empirical context

I evaluate this argument against evidence from armed groups in Latin America. Latin America is both remarkably democratic and remarkably violent. After waves of democratization in the mid- and late 20th century, nearly every country in the region established democratic or semi-democratic governments. Challenges to democracy persist to varying extents across countries, including corruption and intense polarization; the region is currently passing through a period of attempted democratic backsliding by incumbents on the right and left. But electoral democracy remains the rule in Latin America: with the exception of Cuba and Venezuela, every country selects political leaders through meaningful elections

Table 1.1: Homicide rates per 100,000 people (Latin American countries in bold)

Country	Year	Homicide rate
Jamaica	2021	52.13
South Africa	2021	41.87
St. Lucia	2021	38.96
Honduras	**2021**	**38.34**
Lesotho	2008	37.69
Belize	**2021**	**31.25**
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2021	30.67
St. Kitts and Nevis	2021	29.41
Trinidad and Tobago	2021	29.36
The Bahamas	2021	29.17
Myanmar	2021	28.44
Mexico	**2021**	**28.18**
Colombia	**2021**	**27.48**
Brazil	**2020**	**22.38**
Nigeria	2019	21.74
Central African Republic	2016	20.12
Guatemala	**2021**	**19.99**
Venezuela	**2021**	**19.31**
El Salvador	**2021**	**18.17**
Antigua and Barbuda	2021	17.16

World Bank data, reporting homicide rates from the most recent year available for each country.

with widespread suffrage. This degree of democratic entrenchment makes the region fertile ground for examining interventions in the democratic process.

Tragically, however, Latin America's democratic consolidation has not brought peace. Citizens in much of the region experience high levels of everyday violence. Table 1.1 illustrates this fact: despite encompassing only 21 of the world's 195 independent states, Latin American states represent 8 of the 20 countries with the highest homicide rates in the world. (The neighboring Caribbean region accounts for an additional 7.)

This violence is driven in large part by the actions of a diverse and evolving ecosystem of armed groups that have operated in the region over the last half-century. In the 20th century this ecosystem was dominated by leftist insurgents: more than 300 such organizations spanning every country in the region, according to the Center for the Documentation of Armed Groups (CeDeMa), a think tank that analyzes Latin American militant groups. In many

countries, right-wing militias were formed by economic elites to combat these insurgents, as well as self-defense militias to shield communities from conflict between armed groups and security forces.

Over the last forty years, the landscape of armed groups in Latin America has shifted. Fueled by massive demand for narcotics in the United States, counterproductive anti-drug policies, and a steady flow of weapons south across the U.S.-Mexico border, a series of large and small drug trafficking organizations sprung up across the region. Over time, these criminal groups — more than 200 in Mexico alone (Esberg, 2020), and scores more in Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil, among others — have diversified from drug trafficking into retail drug markets, extortion, illegal mining and logging, oil theft, and other illicit economies. The tremendous diversity in the goals, ideology, organizational structure, and strength of armed groups in Latin America offers useful variation for studying their behaviors.

1.4.2 Analytical approach

I center my analysis on case studies of armed groups in three countries: Peru, Colombia, and Mexico. While a cross-national research design would take advantage of the full variation in armed groups in the region, in practice evaluating my key variables in such a setting is infeasible. Measuring compatibility with democracy requires a close examination of an armed actor's rhetoric, ideology, and positions. Variation in coercive capacity or territorial control is also notoriously difficult to measure (Aponte González *et al.*, 2023), as are the various manifestations of intervention in democracy.

A case study approach permits the in-depth empirical examination that these variables require. To tease out how differences in compatibility with democracy affect armed group behavior, I return to the comparison between the cases of Sendero Luminoso and the FARC that opened this chapter. I complement these two case studies — of a low-compatibility group in Sendero Luminoso and a medium-compatibility group in the FARC — by examining a set

of criminal organizations in Mexico with highly democracy-compatible goals. Across these three cases, I leverage a combination of violent event data, election returns, economic data on armed group revenue, primary documentary sources, court records, and secondary sources.

Identifying the causal effects of the independent variables in my model poses a challenge. Neither armed groups' coercive capacity nor their compatibility with democracy is as-if randomly assigned. For the former, I rely primarily on quantitative causal inference strategies. In the case studies of Sendero Luminoso and the FARC, I use agronomic data on coca cultivation to identify exogenous variation in the revenue each group used to finance their coercive capacity. In the case of Mexican criminal organizations, I rely instead on variation across levels of government in how vulnerable elected officials are to coercion by armed groups. I outline these identification strategies in depth in Chapters 3-5.

Isolating as-if random variation in compatibility with democracy is harder still. As a core element of an armed group's identity, compatibility with democracy is deeply intertwined with other aspects of the group's ideology, its strength and support base, and its strategic incentives. As a trait that is primarily assigned at the group level, measuring within-group variation in compatibility with democracy over space and time is also difficult. I adopt two approaches. First, following the logic of a most similar systems design (Mill, 1843), I take advantage of the commonalities between the FARC and Sendero Luminoso to hold constant several of the key factors that could confound the effects of compatibility with democracy. Second, I pursue a process tracing approach to evaluate if the connection between compatibility with democracy and intervention in the democratic process operates through the causal channels I envision (Bennett & Checkel, 2014) — whether an armed group's behaviors with respect to democracy follow the specific contours of its spoken or demonstrated beliefs about the efficacy, fairness, and viability of democratic rule. I discuss these approaches further in Chapters 3-4.

1.5 Roadmap

This dissertation is organized in six chapters. Chapter 2 examines the state of the literature on violence and democracy and then lays out my theoretical framework. Until recently, I argue, scholarship on political violence and democracy offered few tools to help explain violent interventions in the democratic process by non-state actors. That has started to change in the last decade with the growth of new literatures examining how armed groups employ electoral violence and violence against elected officials. But we still lack a general framework for understanding the logic of armed group interventions in the democratic process: what forms these interventions take, what they hope to achieve, and what consequences they hold for security, election results, and policy outcomes.

I outline such a theoretical framework in the second part of Chapter 2. I identify two broad logics that motivate armed groups to manipulate the democratic process, and generate a typology of four strategies — delegitimization, displacement, corruption, and capture — to categorize these interventions, laying out the violent and non-violent behaviors associated with each strategy. I then turn to determinants, unpacking the concept of compatibility with democracy and explaining how it and coercive capacity jointly shape how armed groups select which strategy to pursue. I conclude by specifying the scope conditions that bound the explanatory power of the theory.

Chapter 3 presents the first case study: an analysis of Sendero Luminoso's violent intervention in Peru's democratic process during the Peruvian civil war. I begin by establishing the group's level of compatibility with democracy. I draw on a corpus of thousands of speeches, press releases, doctrinal statements, and other documents produced by armed groups in the Americas. Using a word embedding-based scaling approach introduced by Kozlowski *et al.* (2019), I identify systematic differences in how Sendero's leaders discussed democracy and democratic politics relative to the other groups in the sample. Close reading of these texts confirms that Sendero Luminoso had a low level of compatibility with democ-

racy: its leadership believed democracy to be useless for their aims, so captured by elite interests as to be effectively a system of dictatorship of the oligarchy.

I then turn to measuring Sendero Luminoso's coercive capacity over space and time. I employ a machine learning technique adapted from Anders (2020) that uses violent event data to infer district-year estimates of the insurgents' coercive capacity. To disentangle the effect of coercive capacity from other factors, I instrument for coercive capacity using an agronomic model of coca cultivation, a key source of military finance for the insurgents. I combine this quantitative approach with qualitative evidence from testimonies garnered by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other sources. Where the insurgents had little coercive capacity, I find, Sendero Luminoso sought to delegitimize democracy with high-profile attacks on symbolic targets. Where they were coercively ascendant, Sendero pursued a strategy of displacement — successfully impeding the conduct of elections, persecuting elected officials and bureaucrats, and replacing democratic governance in "liberated zones" with its own revolutionary, non-democratic institutions.

To further substantiate the mechanisms and effects of Sendero Luminoso's strategy of displacement, I examine an unusually well-documented case of a province in the central Peruvian highlands, Daniel A. Carrión, in the early years of the war. Testimonies illustrate how the group systematically sought to displace and replace the machinery of democratic governance through violence, and a synthetic control analysis estimates the effects of this intervention: strikingly elevated levels of protest balloting — votes cast in rejection of all parties and candidates — in local elections for over a decade.

Chapter 4 moves to Colombia to examine the case of the FARC. In order to maximize the comparability of the cases, I structure the analysis in this chapter to precisely mirror the research design presented in Chapter 3. I again compare the FARC's rhetoric around democracy to the broader population of Latin American armed groups. Here I find a striking divergence with Sendero Luminoso, again substantiated through computational analysis and close reading: the FARC spoke unusually positively about democracy, which it believed

to be a deeply flawed system, but a system worth engaging with and capable of achieving meaningful social change.

I replicate the quantitative approach used in Chapter 3 to estimate the FARC's coercive capacity over space and time during a pivotal stretch of the Colombian civil war (2002-15). Like Sendero Luminoso, the FARC relied heavily on taxation of coca cultivation to finance its war effort; I use the same identification strategy to isolate exogenous variation in coercive capacity driven by uncontrollable shifts in coca income. This research design, combined with primary and secondary evidence, suggests a markedly different approach to engaging with democracy. Like Sendero Luminoso, the FARC sought to delegitimize democracy when it had little coercive capacity through audacious attacks on elections and national politicians. But unlike their Peruvian counterparts, the Colombian insurgents often chose to quietly govern through local politicians in communities where they enjoyed coercive dominance — coercing voters into electing friendlier politicians and then pressuring those politicians to enact the group's agenda.

This behavior even extended to cases where the insurgents possessed full coercive control. I conclude with a case study of the demilitarized zone at El Caguán. In 1998, to incentivize peace negotiations, the Colombian government granted the FARC territorial control over five large, rural municipalities in central Colombia for a period of three years. Given total coercive dominance of the area, the FARC did not evict local elected officials. Rather, it governed through and alongside the mayors and permitted local elections to be held. I also show that this episode of democratic capture had lasting effects: a geographic regression discontinuity design suggests that the insurgents appropriated state institutions to conduct a land reform program.

Chapter 5 turns to armed groups with a high level of compatibility with democracy. I examine the behavior of a set of criminal organizations in 21st-century Mexico. I argue that criminal organizations have strong incentives to manipulate the democratic process, and that those incentives reflect highly democracy-compatible goals. Criminal groups want to plunder

the state's coffers, to prevent repression of their illicit economic activities, and to turn the law enforcement apparatus against their rivals. I expect these actors to pursue these goals through a strategy of corruption when they have low coercive capacity and capture when they can credibly threaten voters and politicians.

Drawing on investigative reports and court records in Mexico and the United States, I find that large criminal organizations offered positive inducements to governors and other high-level national politicians in exchange for a host of benefits — forbearance and sometimes active cooperation from security forces, preferential contracts, and weaponized law enforcement bureaucracies. Very rarely did they use violence against these politicians, who were generally well shielded from coercion as the most prominent faces of the democratic state.

When seeking to influence local elected officials, who lack the robust protection schemes of national leaders, these criminal groups moved from a strategy of corruption through positive inducements to one of capture through intimidation and violence. I examine attempts by criminal groups to capture local governments around the country during the 2018 election cycle. Analyzing over-time variation in administrative data on crime and corruption, I find that capturing municipal governments allowed criminal actors to broaden their economic activities and seize government funds — all without incurring a violent response by the state or rival cartels.

The final chapter offers concluding thoughts. I suggest several avenues for future research on armed groups and democracy, highlighting potential responses to empirical obstacles I encountered in this dissertation and new lines of inquiry based on findings that diverged from my theoretical expectations. I then identify several implications this project holds for theories of violence, democracy, and the state. It provides an explanation for a widespread but under-theorized form of political violence: that enacted by armed actors against the mayors, legislators, and elected officials who make up the democratic state. It also proposes a new means of state-building for aspiring political authorities, showing that these groups

can efficiently appropriate state institutions rather than construct their own. Perhaps most importantly, this project emphasizes the need to take ideology seriously in studies of contentious politics: what armed actors believe about the political world and their place in it has profound implications for their behavior.

Finally, I turn to implications for policy. The unfortunate takeaway that emerges from much of the analysis is that political violence often works. The armed groups I study succeed in damaging public faith in democracy, disrupting fragile democratic institutions, and making policy less responsive to citizens' needs. But this fate is not inevitable. Policy responses can help to reduce the vulnerability of voters and politicians to coercion. More fundamentally, I find that effective, responsive democratic rule can help safeguard against violent intervention. A democracy that meets citizens' demands can better withstand attempts by armed groups to discredit public perceptions of democracy as a system of rule, and robust local democracy impedes attempts to capture local elections and policymakers. Democratic reforms offer a bulwark against efforts to undermine or co-opt democracy.

Chapter 2

A Theory of Armed Actors in Democratic Politics

2.1 What we know about democracy and violent contestation

How should we understand the interventions of armed groups like Sendero Luminoso and the FARC in democratic politics? Existing research on political violence and elections provides some useful clues, but not a complete picture. For most prominent scholarship on civil war, democratic institutions and elected officials play no role at all. Influential works on civil war violence and victimization (Kalyvas, 2006; Condra & Shapiro, 2012; Stanton, 2016), competitive state-building (Berman *et al.*, 2011; Beath *et al.*, 2016; Hazelton, 2017; Lyall *et al.*, 2020), and civilian agency (Kaplan, 2013; Arjona, 2015; Finkel, 2017) model civil wars as contests between three actors: the state, an insurgent group, and the civilian population.[1] In this model, armed groups engage in military combat against security forces and use terrorism to extract political concessions from incumbent authorities. But these works typically treat the state as a monolith, declining to differentiate between security forces, bureaucracies, and political leaders. Though many of the conflicts they study take place in democracies, in these accounts elected officials have no independent role and armed actors have no direct relationship with democratic politics.

Canonical theories of democracy and political conflict provide similarly little explanation for armed group engagement with democratic institutions. In fact, an important strand of research suggests that armed conflict should rarely coexist with democracy, because democracy reduces incentives for political violence. Przeworski (1999) articulates this logic:

> "the very prospect that governments would alternate [through elections] may induce the conflicting political forces to comply with the rules rather than engage in violence [...] Losers wait for their chance to win office. Conflicts are regulated, processed according to rules, and thus limited. This is not consensus, yet not mayhem either. Just limited conflict; conflict without killing" (45-49).

By this argument, democracy reduces violence because it lowers the stakes of political con-

[1] Balcells (2010) and Steele (2011) both link electoral dynamics to civil war violence against civilians, but reverse the causal relationship I propose: rather than study how armed actors shape democratic politics, both authors argue that electoral outcomes drive armed group behavior.

flict: actors who lose elections need not resort to violence since the next election presents another chance to gain power. Equally importantly, democratic institutions allow members of society with political demands to pursue those demands through peaceful channels rather than resorting to armed conflict. Actors with claims to make can run for office, lobby politicians, protest, and otherwise peacefully and productively exercise their voice. Participation in the "democratic game" thus represents an attractive alternative to violent claim-making.

Empirical work on the "democratic civil peace" provides support to this thesis. Krain & Myers (1997) find that democracies are less likely to suffer civil wars than non-democracies. Hegre *et al.* (2001) confirm this finding, though they echo Huntington (1968) in arguing that the pacifying effect of democracy is conditioned by the level of institutional consolidation. Consistent with Przeworski's argument that periodic elections and channels for participation decrease political conflict, Bartusevičius & Skaaning (2018) show that holding elections and enabling broad political participation decreases the likelihood of civil war. These results suggest that democratic institutions encourage social actors to channel their demands through electoral politics rather than using violence. There may be truth to this finding. But the prevalence of political violence in democracies suggests that its explanatory power is lacking: democracies may have less violent political processes than autocracies do, but the political violence they experience is both substantial and consequential.

Neither the civil war literature nor the Przeworskian argument can explain the behavior of armed groups like Sendero Luminoso and the FARC. Contrary to the expectations of the civil war literature, both groups pursued strategies expressly targeted toward the destruction or appropriation of democratic institutions. Despite the sharp demands of waging war against a powerful counterinsurgent, each group risked blood and treasure to influence elected officials and shape structures of political authority. Nor does the democratic civil peace literature offer much explanatory power. Violent democracies like Peru and Colombia are common. Sendero Luminoso rejected electoral politics despite the viable path to power it presented — in an era of unprecedented success for Marxist parties, the insurgents chose war. For its

part, the FARC declined to choose between the democratic game and armed conflict and instead picked both, participating in mainstream politics in varying ways while continuing to fight.

If canonical theories of civil war and democracy provide little help, what do we know about how armed actors intervene in democratic politics? Two new literatures provide partial answers. A growing research agenda centers on electoral violence: the use of violence against voters, political opponents, and state officials in the context of an election in order to sway electoral outcomes (Höglund, 2009). This literature largely examines the use of violence by political parties (Daxecker & Jung, 2018), either through direct repression of voters and opposition candidates (Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2014) or by fostering communal or ethnic violence (Wilkinson, 2006). It identifies several structural factors that affect the probability of electoral violence, including political competition, ethnic polarization, and the design of electoral institutions (Birch *et al.*, 2020). This literature offers important insights about the role of coercion in electoral politics, but the coercive actors it studies are either security forces or the armed wings of political parties — organs of the state or entities directly responsible to it, not the non-state armed actors I examine in this project.

Recent work has begun to explore the use of electoral violence by non-state armed actors as well. In an analysis of the Afghan Taliban, Condra *et al.* (2018) examine how insurgents employ violence against voters and election officials to depress turnout, arguing that elections present a unique opportunity for insurgents to deal both instrumental and symbolic damage to state institutions. Harbers *et al.* (2022) study electoral boycotts proclaimed by armed groups across regions of India, which these groups often enforce by directly victimizing poll workers, candidates, and voters and by encouraging their supporters to do the same. They find that these interventions generate large decreases in voter turnout with spillover effects into nearby constituencies. Gallego (2018) finds a similar result in Colombia, showing that acts of violence committed by the FARC — as will be examined at length in Chapter 4 — spiked in election years and predicted a decrease in turnout.

In practice, the effects of armed group violence on turnout do not always follow directly from the strategic intent of the perpetrator. Ley (2018) shows that armed group violence against state officials and party candidates can depress turnout even when this is not its intent: high-profile acts of violence by Mexican criminal organizations during campaigns decreased turnout in subsequent elections. In contrast, Robbins *et al.* (2013) and Balcells & Torrats-Espinosa (2018) find that acts of terrorism generate a backlash effect that leads to increased voter turnout; Bateson (2012); Bauer *et al.* (2016) show that victims of violence are more likely to turn out in elections, protest, and engage with their communities.

Rather than attempt to depress turnout or discredit elections, violent actors often seek to channel votes toward some candidates and away from others. Staniland (2014) provides a useful conceptual framework for this behavior, arguing that an actor's relationship with the ruling party and the intra- or anti-systemic orientation of its goals explain how and to what end it employs electoral violence. Matanock & Staniland (2018) further theorize how armed groups use violence around elections. They offer a valuable typology of types of armed group participation in elections based on the degree of the group's popular support and the state's tolerance of open electoral participation by militant organizations. This typology situates electoral violence as an element of a broader set of strategies by which armed groups participate in elections, including running their own political parties and covertly or overtly supporting allied parties.

A growing body of empirical research has documented how armed groups use violence to shape election outcomes in a range of contexts. In Colombia, several analyses have studied episodes of intervention in elections by right-wing paramilitary groups in the 1990s and 2000s. Acemoglu *et al.* (2013), García-Sánchez (2016), and Gallego (2018) all find that municipalities where paramilitaries were present voted in greater numbers for right-wing politicians and politicians from parties later accused of collusion with paramilitaries; these areas saw reduced levels of political competition from independent candidates. Hidalgo & Lessing (n.d.) find a similar result in Brazil, where voters in neighborhoods dominated by police-linked

paramilitaries were more likely to vote for paramilitary leaders and allies. Sometimes these armed groups are deputized directly by politicians: Turnbull (2021) demonstrates that political parties in Nigeria hire armed militias to turn out their voters, and Blume (2017) shows that Mexican politicians pay cartels to assassinate their rivals.

Recent work also delves into the tactics armed groups employ to change election outcomes. Trejo & Ley (2021) show that Mexican criminal organizations coerce rival candidates out of running or campaigning to ensure the election of their chosen politicians to local office. Bullock (2021) similarly finds that criminal groups in Rio de Janeiro exert their influence to forbid rival politicians from campaigning in neighborhoods they control. Building on work on brokers in clientelistic politics (Stokes *et al.*, 2013), she also finds that these criminal groups act as vote brokers for allied politicians, leveraging both coercion and their social embeddedness to turn out votes. Córdova (2022) identifies a second-order mechanism through which armed groups affect election outcomes: by restricting mobility and access to state services, gangs in El Salvador prevent political parties from building grassroots organizations in gang-controlled neighborhoods.

As in the case of armed actors using violence to reduce electoral participation, the effects of these interventions to influence election outcomes are moderated by voters' responses to violence. Berrebi & Klor (2008) and Getmansky & Zeitzoff (2014) find that exposure to terrorist violence — or even the threat of violence — increases the voteshare of parties associated with law-and-order platforms in Israel.

This literature provides a valuable foundation for understanding the causes and consequences of electoral violence by armed groups. Yet opportunities for armed actors to engage with democratic politics extend well beyond election day. Beyond the symbolic value they hold, elections are important only as a means to an end: they determine who controls political power. For armed groups pursuing political goals, the key to those goals is not elections but elected officials — politicians whose access to power begins when elections end. Rather than indirectly shape access to power by swaying election outcomes, armed groups can use

coercion or persuasion to directly influence elected authorities.

Dal Bo *et al.* (2006) show that pressure groups can use a combination of bribery and threats of punishment ("plata o plomo") against politicians to sway policy outcomes. A "plata o plomo" approach can work on different time horizons. Sometimes groups will use threats or acts of violence against elected officials to intimidate them into enduring compliance — to effectively convert them into permanent allies or clients. Drawing on evidence from Mexico and Italy, respectively, Dell (2015) and Daniele & Dipoppa (2017) find a sharp increase in attacks against local politicians by organized criminal groups in the period immediately following their election. They interpret this pattern as evidence that these criminal groups use violence to cow these elected officials (or their successors) into compliance with the groups' future demands.

Lessing (2017) identifies a similar logic of influence, which he terms "violent corruption," in which criminal organizations establish allies in government by coercing elected officials and bureaucrats into accepting bribes in exchange for broadly declining to enforce the law against the organization's illicit activities. He also identified a second logic of influence that operates on a shorter time horizon and targets a more specific issue area. Under this logic, "violent lobbying," armed groups use violence — against elected officials, state bureaucrats, or the public — to pressure politicians into changing a particular policy of interest. He identifies examples of violent lobbying in pressure campaigns by criminal groups in Mexico to reverse military deployments, in Brazil to improve prison conditions, and in Colombia to outlaw extradition. Nor is violent lobbying solely exerted at the national level: Ch *et al.* (2018) find evidence of this type of targeted intervention in Colombian local politics, showing that both paramilitaries and insurgents coerced mayors and city councilors into updating (or not updating) the municipal cadaster to formalize property rights.

Recent work also demonstrates that the influence exerted over politicians by armed groups is not necessarily overtly coercive. Armed actors sometimes persuade elected officials to do what they want through positive inducements (bribery and other quid pro quo arrangements)

or by appealing to personal, social, or ethnic ties. This was the case in the paramilitary electoral interventions in Colombia. Consistent with a large body of journalist investigation and judicial records on the *parapolitics* scandal of the early 2000s, Acemoglu *et al.* (2013) find evidence of a clear, seemingly voluntary quid pro quo: legislators who accepted paramilitary help in their campaigns for office were more likely to vote for a favorable demobilization law allowing the group to reintegrate into society without facing accountability for its abuses. Nieto-Matiz (2022) finds a similar result among paramilitary-friendly mayors, who weakened municipal tax collection capabilities and law enforcement capacity in exchange for help winning office. These arrangements are certainly not limited to Colombia; for instance, De Feo & De Luca (2017) demonstrate that the Italian mafia received economic concessions in the construction sector after their allies were elected in parliamentary elections.

Considered together, these literatures provide a valuable foundation for understanding interventions in the democratic process by armed groups. Drawing on ample evidence from insurgent, paramilitary, and criminal groups from around the world, they offer insights into why and how militant actors use force to meddle in national and local elections, coerce elected officials, or collude with politicians. These are exciting and important, rapidly expanding research agendas.

But, with few exceptions, these works do not seek to explain the broader decision-making calculus governing armed group behavior. Why do some groups simultaneously use violence to discredit elections and participate in democratic governance? Why do groups like Sendero Luminoso indiscriminately attack elected officials, while organizations like the FARC sometimes target them, sometimes collaborate with them, and sometimes run for office themselves? Why do insurgents — groups seeking to overthrow and replace the state — bother engaging with democratic institutions at all, and why do criminal groups, defined by their economic motives, demonstrate such a keen interest in electoral politics? In the following section I propose a general theoretical framework for understanding these strategies, when armed groups will use them, and what consequences they hold for policy outcomes, political

institutions, and public faith in democracy.

2.2 A theory of armed actors and democracy

2.2.1 Concepts

I begin by defining the two concepts at the center of this framework: armed actors and democracy. I use the terms "armed actors," "armed groups," "militant organizations," and "violent organizations" interchangeably to refer to organized, non-state social groups capable of using violence to achieve political, social, or economic aims. These groups must not be part of the state or directly answerable to state actors. They must be organized, in that their leaders must have a degree of centralized control sufficient to act as a cohesive entity. They must have goals that, as an organization, they aim to pursue, though I make no requirement about the type or nature of those goals. Lastly, they must be capable of using violence in pursuit of those goals, though they may only use that capability sometimes. In the modern world, these groups are generally armed with firearms, but this is not strictly necessary; political violence is routinely carried out with other weapons of physical coercion.

This definition encompasses a wide range of actors often studied across distinct literatures: insurgent groups seeking to overthrow the state or establish sovereignty over a seceding region; paramilitary organizations fighting alongside security forces against armed challengers; militias that use force to protect communities against predation by the state or other armed groups; vigilante organizations that use violence to enforce social order; terrorist groups using force to demand policy change; criminal organizations employing violence to profit from illicit markets or protection rackets. The aim of this dissertation is to produce a theoretical framework broad enough to apply across this diverse ecosystem of armed groups, but specific enough to generate predictions tailored to individual groups and the particular political and military contexts in which they operate.

Importantly, this definition excludes two types of organizations often analyzed in studies

of political violence. First, it excludes the armed wings of political parties. The electoral violence literature demonstrates that political parties themselves are often the perpetrators of violence against voters and candidates. But the armed wings of political parties are subordinate to the politicians and elected officials who lead those parties. They are effectively part of the democratic system and have different incentives, capabilities, and goals than organizations that are first and foremost non-state actors.[2] Second, I exclude armed groups that have laid down their arms and transitioned into peaceful political parties. Though a topic of considerable scholarly interest (e.g. Ishiyama & Batta, 2011; Söderberg Kovacs & Hatz, 2016; Matanock, 2017), post-demobilization actors do not fit my definition of armed groups as they are no longer capable of exerting coercive influence.

The other concept at the heart of this project is democracy. I make no attempt to offer a novel definition of one of the most contested concepts in social science; I do not believe that such an attempt is necessary for understanding violent interventions in the democratic process. Rather, throughout this dissertation I follow the "minimalist" definition of democracy advanced by Przeworski (1999). By this definition, democracies must hold elections in which a broad set of citizens are eligible to vote and incumbents sometimes lose. It does not require that governments ensure a full set of civil liberties, minority protections, or that societies enjoy a robust free press or elect governments that represent the interests of their constituents. In practice, the democracies I examine in this project, like most democracies in the world, face deep challenges across all of these dimensions. (One such challenge, of course, is the existence and behavior of the armed groups I study.) To fall within the scope of my argument, all I require is that a state fit the minimal criteria of broadly inclusive elections and executive turnover. I devote further attention to the notion of democracy — and, in particular, what it means for political goals to be compatible or incompatible with democracy — in the following section.

[2]In practice, this theoretical distinction can pose empirical challenges. Careful examination is sometimes required to distinguish the specialists in coercion that make up political parties' armed enforcers from non-state armed groups that ally with or are hired by political parties.

2.2.2 Why intervene in democratic politics?

I argue that armed actors face powerful incentives to engage with democratic politics. Insurgents, paramilitaries, criminal organizations, and terrorist groups use coercion to achieve political power: the power to capture rents and patronage, punish rivals, redistribute wealth, restructure social hierarchies, or redefine the role and rules of the state. In democracies, that power is primarily vested in democratic institutions and the elected officials that inhabit them. By "elected officials," I refer to politicians chosen by popular election at all levels of government. Though the population of elected officials differs from country to country, I focus in particular on politicians elected to legislatures (town councils, regional assemblies, or national parliaments) and executives (mayors, governors, and presidents).

To be sure, other actors in democratic politics possess powers relevant to armed actors as well. Bureaucrats and law enforcement officers can selectively enforce laws against armed groups or their rivals, judges can block policies inimical to armed group interests, and security forces can exercise discretion in the prosecution of war. But the majority of political power in democracies — the power to direct spending, create and abolish laws, define the identity of the state, and fundamentally alter the social and economic orientation of the polity — is wielded by elected officials.

In particular, engagement with elected officials offers two critical opportunities to armed actors. First, armed groups can **co-opt democratic institutions** to enact their political programs. By coercing or persuading elected officials to act in favor of their interests — or by running for office themselves — armed groups can achieve a range of goals. Criminal groups can pressure legislators to weaken prosecution and coerce mayors to award contracts to their allies; paramilitaries can lobby policymakers to allow them to act with impunity or to integrate them into formal security forces.

Importantly, co-opting elected officials can pay dividends for aspiring state-builders as well. Unlike criminal organizations and paramilitaries, groups dedicated to the overthrow

and replacement of the state cannot fully implement their political programs until they have defeated the state. But a recent wave of research on rebel governance (e.g. Mampilly, 2011; Arjona *et al.*, 2015; Arjona, 2016; Mampilly & Stewart, 2020) demonstrates that insurgents frequently begin to rule in the midst of war. Under rebel governance — defined by Huang (2016) as a strategy "in which rebels use political organization to forge and manage relations with civilians" — insurgents provide a variety of public goods to local populations, ranging from courts and dispute resolution services to welfare, education, and infrastructure development. Many rebel groups also impose formal or informal rules on public life, setting and enforcing regulations that mandate or forbid certain social, political, or economic behaviors. Finally, some insurgents create institutions to incorporate local civilians into their political projects. These groups invite civilians to participate in insurgent councils and governance bodies or to otherwise provide feedback to rebel leaders (Wickham-Crowley, 2015; Huang, 2016).

Creating new political structures from whole cloth is difficult, however. Standing up institutions requires technical and bureaucratic capacity, a relationship with local communities, and a hefty investment in human capital. Appropriating existing institutions of rule is easier. A strategy of capture holds three key advantages over rebel governance. First, local elected officials already have institutionalized relationships with citizens; mayoralties and town councils have a degree of legitimacy new rebel institutions may not possess. Second, local democratic institutions also have an established infrastructure of rule: decisions made by local authorities are transmitted to functional, institutionalized bureaucracies for implementation. By tapping into existing policy processes, armed groups can harness these bureaucracies rather than create their own. Finally, co-opting democratic institutions requires a lower level of territorial control than rebel governance does. Insurgents need not wholly expel security forces from an area to co-opt its elected officials. Even in areas of strong state presence, security forces may not be able to guarantee protection to local authorities from armed group threats. Nor can they necessarily identify covert collusion between elected

officials and armed groups, or prevent armed group-affiliated candidates from running for office. Capture of elected officials is hard to diagnose and harder to prevent.

The benefits of institutional capture over rebel or criminal governance are not universal, of course. Acting through elected officials constrains armed groups' freedom of agency, may require sharing rents, and limits how transformative a group's political programs can be. It may incur a political cost if working through the state contradicts the group's anti-state rhetoric or its claims to represent a political alternative. But the opportunity to cannibalize the legitimacy and infrastructure of democratic institutions — at limited material and military cost — is deeply compelling.

Intervention in democratic politics holds a second key appeal for armed groups. In addition to capturing elected officials, armed actors can **attack democratic institutions** in order to discredit the state's political project and displace its political infrastructure. Democratic regimes derive legitimacy from elections and from the performance of elected officials. Armed groups seeking to discredit the state as a political authority can use their coercive capacity to target both — violence to impede elections, and violence to prevent elected officials from effectively governing or to remove them from office. For armed groups presenting themselves as alternatives to the state, this strategy is doubly useful. Failure to hold elections and govern functionally both seriously damages the legitimacy of the state and provides a powerful signal of the armed group's strength.

Attacking democratic institutions provides another potential benefit to aspiring political authorities: it generates demand for governance. Imposing new political structures by force is costly, requiring that the group devote time and resources to monitor and enforce popular compliance with its institutions. Voluntary compliance is preferable. To that end, removing or incapacitating elected officials damages both the credibility and the administrative effectiveness of the state. This stimulates popular demand for better, more secure governance goods — popular demand that armed groups can fill with their own governance institutions. Sendero Luminoso articulated this logic explicitly. Abimael Guzmán described Sendero's

strategy as an attempt to “sweep away the old order" in order to make room for a new, revolutionary political structure (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003, Volume 2, p. 29). Sendero consequently used violence extensively against elected officials, leaving a swath of the Andean highlands without local authorities for years.

Democracies are uniquely vulnerable to these strategies. Unlike centralized autocracies, where ruling coalitions can select loyal local governors, democratic elections create opportunities for armed groups to insert themselves into local politics. This generates a host of potential pressure points for armed actors seeking to discredit the state, capture local governance institutions, or lobby for political and economic goals. Moreover, democratic norms make it difficult for central governments to remove politicians suspected of belonging to armed groups or of being friendly to armed group goals. In a perverse twist, the inclusivity and openness of democracy create opportunities for non-democratic actors to co-opt or degrade its institutions.

2.2.3 Strategies of intervention

We can characterize the strategies by which armed actors intervene in democracy along two dimensions. The first reflects the two competing logics articulated above — whether they choose to appropriate or attack the democratic state. The second dimension captures the thickness of intervention: the extent to which a militant group is able to influence electoral and policy outcomes or to undermine democratic legitimacy and uproot the machinery of the democratic state. The combination of these dimensions generates four ideal-typical strategies of intervention, which I outline below. Table 2.1 summarizes the four strategies and their key characteristics.

Logics of violence

These four strategies differ in both the degree and logic of violence that they entail. I differentiate between two types of violence: functional violence and spectacular violence. In

both cases, the targets of violence are actors associated with democratic politics — voters, candidates, elected officials, or bureaucrats involved in organizing elections. But the intent behind the violence differs, as does the form it takes, the elements of the democratic system it targets, and the number of victims it generates.

Functional violence serves to directly influence the behavior of the individuals it targets: to coerce voters to change their vote choice, pressure legislators to alter policy, or force elected officials to abandon their posts. Functional violence corresponds to a classical form of coercion as theorized by Schelling (2008), in which the coercer threatens punishment against a target unless the target changes his or her behavior. The armed group threatens violence if the target does not comply with the group's demand — if a voter does not support a particular politician, or a rival candidate does not cease campaigning, or an elected official refuses to resign his or her position. Acts of functional violence ensue when the target refuses to comply. Non-lethal functional violence aims to change the target's behavior, while lethal violence intends to scare an immediate audience — the voter's next-door neighbor, the elected official's replacement — into complying. Since its audience is local, functional violence is narrowly targeted, often taking the form of private threats, disappearances, or unacknowledged assassinations.

In contrast, *spectacular violence* aims to deliver a message to a broader audience. Acts of spectacular violence intend to send a signal to the mass public about the viability of democratic rule and the ability of the state to sustain it. Spectacular violence follows the basic logic of terrorism (Kydd & Walter, 2006), in which the perpetrator employs shocking acts of violence against civilians to change the public's views and preferences about the world — in this case, its views about the viability of democratic governance and its preference for other systems of rule. In form it resembles what Durán-Martínez (2018) refers to as "visible violence," violence committed "in a very public manner," in which the perpetrators claim responsibility, advertising their authorship to signal their power over their rivals. When focused on elections, it also closely parallels the concept of "anti-systemic violence" proposed

Table 2.1: Strategies of intervention and associated violence signatures

		Level of violence		
Strategy	Logic	Overall	Spectacular	Functional
Corruption	Co-opt	Low	Low	Low
Capture	Co-opt	Medium	Low	High
Delegitimization	Undermine	Medium	High	Low
Displacement	Undermine	High	High	High

by Staniland (2014) and Harbers *et al.* (2022), which the latter describes as violence that "seeks to delegitimize the winner by casting doubt on the state's ability to administer elections and by highlighting the importance of non-electoral alternatives." Spectacular violence often appears indiscriminate, generating multiple victims per attack. It takes aim at the most visible, symbolically important rites and institutions of democratic rule: bombings of polling stations and party headquarters, large-scale terrorist attacks on voters or party operatives, audacious assassinations or kidnappings of national leaders.

Corruption

When armed groups choose to co-opt democracy but are only capable of relatively narrow intervention, they pursue a strategy of *corruption*, in which they offer elected officials positive inducements if they will govern in accordance with the group's interests. Corrupt agreements between armed actors and politicians are common. Armed groups offer a range of benefits to politicians. Most commonly, they rely on simple bribery, agreeing to share a portion of the proceeds of drug trafficking or other illicit economic activities, extortion, or profits from legal businesses. Armed groups frequently offer to support allied politicians' campaigns for office by using coercion or social standing to deliver votes they seek, or by manipulating violence levels to advantage or disadvantage incumbent officeholders. In return, elected officials commit to further the group's interests or implement parts of its political or economic agenda. In some cases, a quid pro quo may not even be necessary — parties and politicians may have direct social or business ties to armed groups or ideological sympathies with their

political platform.

A strategy of corruption has a light footprint. It may entail some violence. The armed group may offer to coerce a politician's political or personal rivals as part of the agreement, and may sometimes attempt to punish politicians who renege on their side of the deal. But it requires little functional violence, because politicians collude voluntarily rather than being coerced. It also requires little spectacular violence, since the armed group has nothing to gain by communicating to a broader audience about its intervention — in fact, publicizing the existence of a corrupt agreement only threatens the benefits both sides enjoy.

In El Salvador, a group of powerful street gangs called *maras* developed complex systems of collusion with local politicians over the last decade. In a series of agreements, several Salvadoran mayors conceded *maras* partial control over the local economy, jobs, and even a targeted micro-credit program in exchange for electoral support (Puerta *et al.*, 2017; Asmann & Robbins, 2020). Nor is corruption limited to local politicians: since 2019, both the Defense Minister of Mexico and the President of Honduras have been indicted for collusion with criminal organizations (Reuters, 2021; Weiser & Suazo, 2022).

Capture

Armed groups seeking to co-opt the democratic state sometimes pursue deeper forms of intervention. Rather than collude with individual elected officials, groups with high levels of influence over an area may attempt to wholly capture local governments — inducing legislators to fit laws to the group's interests and executives to place bureaucracies and security forces at their disposal. A successful strategy of *capture* enables armed actors to avail themselves of the full range of benefits of co-opting democratic institutions, drawing on the machinery of democracy to govern, channel rents, and build political legitimacy.

The means of capture may vary from group to group depending on their endowments and the local political context. While I expect that groups will most often quietly govern through local mayors and legislators, when the state permits it they may also gain influence over

democratic institutions by running for office themselves or making public pacts with elected officials. Though these are usually conceived of as distinct strategies (see e.g. Matanock & Staniland, 2018), they follow the same fundamental logic as co-optation of officials; both approaches seek to control the outcomes of the democratic process.

Like corruption, capture generally entails little spectacular violence since its goal is not to sway public opinion about the state or democratic system. But it requires substantial functional violence. Groups engaging in capture often employ coercion in two steps. First, they target electoral violence against voters, bureaucrats, and candidates to ensure that politicians (more) favorable to their interests win office. Militants may communicate to communities as a whole which candidates they should support, and threaten dire consequences for those who do not comply. Alternatively, they can tap into clientelistic networks and coerce brokers into delivering votes.

Beyond directly influencing how voters behave, armed actors can also constrain their choices. Militants often use coercion against politicians, targeting their political rivals with violence to sideline the competition. They may threaten rival politicians and their families to dissuade them from entering the race or pressure them to drop out. When that fails, they often restrict those rivals' ability to do voter outreach and hold rallies in militant-influenced areas. Eliminating rivals or limiting their ability to campaign helps clear the way for the armed group's chosen candidates to achieve election.

An armed group pursuing a strategy of capture continues to pressure politicians once in office. Rather than rely on elected officials to hold up their end of a quid pro quo — as groups do under a strategy of corruption — they coerce those officials to govern according to the group's desires, threatening violence against officials and their families or assassinating or scaring off those who refuse to cooperate.

Capture has become alarmingly common in the Americas. In Haiti, two powerful coalitions of street gangs have been carving up the capital city of Port-au-Prince, aiming to "consolidate control of populous neighborhoods before new elections are scheduled so they

can coerce residents to vote for certain candidates" (Da Rin, 2022). In the Mexican state of Morelos, drug cartels have captured a series of municipal governments. Mayors in 36 municipalities have been found to have ties with cartels; these mayors are threatened with violence and governance is rendered impossible if they do not comply with cartel demands (Sieff, 2020).

Delegitimization

Rather than shape policy outcomes, some armed groups instead seek to attack democratic institutions. Relatively narrow attempts to undermine democracy correspond to a strategy of *delegitimization*. Under delegitimization, armed actors target the most visible symbolic manifestations of democratic rule. They use terrorism to impede the conduct of elections, aiming to reduce turnout by threatening voters and attacking polling places and election workers: both low turnout and violence-afflicted elections cast doubt on the state's ability to sustain a project of democratic governance. They target national politicians and political elites for assassination or kidnapping, further discrediting the democratic state's ability to protect its elected leaders. This approach produces a high level of spectacular violence — high-profile, attention-grabbing attacks against polling places and high-profile politicians. It entails little functional violence, since the intent is not to change the outcomes of elections or the policymaking process but rather to discredit public perceptions of the viability of democratic rule.

Groups following a strategy of delegitimization also use violence against party offices and candidates. These groups target all parties and candidates with violence, though they often focus in particular on the politicians that they see as the most viable competitors for their putative support base. Marxist insurgents maximize their use of violence against parties from the mainstream left, while religious fundamentalist groups emphasize attacks on religiously conservative electoral actors. Violence against these parties is particularly useful: it discredits electoral politics as a viable option for potential supporters of the armed group.

A successful strategy of delegitimization reduces public confidence in the democratic system, drives down turnout, alienates citizens from the state, dissuades candidates from running for office, and diminishes the quality of democracy.

Delegitimization is a common tactic. After demanding a general boycott of the 2009 Indian general elections, the Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist) insurgency unleashed a wave of attacks on candidates, political party operatives, and polling sites (Banerjee, 2009). The Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) Basque separatist group in Spain instead focused primarily on attacks on high-profile politicians, trying to assassinate conservative leader José María Aznar and King Juan Carlos I, and kidnapping and then killing a Basque politician, Miguel Ángel Blanco (Goodman, 2010; Aizpeolea, 2017). In 2005, Al-Qaeda in Iraq bombed polling stations across the country in an attempt to disrupt national elections; the group's leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, declared the attacks part of the group's "fierce war on this evil principle of democracy" (The Guardian, 2005a,b).

Displacement

Where armed groups double down on attacking the democratic state, they shift from a strategy of delegitimization to one of *displacement*. Rather than solely discrediting the democratic system, these groups fully displace the infrastructure of democracy and carve out space for alternative political structures. In areas these groups control, they attack or evict elected officials and block new officials from taking their place. After removing local authorities, they introduce new, non-democratic governance structures.

Unlike delegitimization, where groups primarily target violence against elections, political rallies, and high-profile political elites, in displacement violence is applied to elected officials of all parties and at all times. Like delegitimization, displacement prescribes high levels of spectacular violence against elections and national political elites. But it also calls for high levels of functional violence against a spectrum of targets. Groups pursuing a strategy of displacement aim to uproot every trace of democratic rule. They coerce individual elected

officials to resign their posts or flee, and they employ functional violence to break up the bureaucracies elected officials lead. To ensure that these officials are not replaced, they impede the conduct of elections by scaring off the bureaucrats that run them and intimidating voters to stay home. Given the wide range of targets it entails and its requirement to employ both functional and spectacular violence, displacement is the most violent of the four strategies I theorize: effectively all-out war on democracy.

Much like delegitimization, this violence aims to discredit the state and the democratic system by casting doubt on the state's ability to hold elections and protect democratic leaders. But it goes two steps further. Under displacement, groups do not solely target the rites and institutions of democratic rule. They actively impede the instruments of functional democratic governance. Charges that democracy is ineffective are more credible when they reflect the truth — when armed group violence has hamstrung democratic governance by uprooting the elected officials and bureaucracies that provide public goods, resolve disputes, and provide mechanisms for citizen feedback.

As a final step, displacement offers a viable alternative to democracy. Armed group rhetoric about the benefits of the non-democratic order they envision is much more persuasive when the group can point to functioning governance institutions. By removing existing governance structures, displacement generates demand for these institutions. Rebel and criminal governance are only valuable if people engage with and participate in the institutions armed groups offer. If the displaced democratic state is incapable of governing, citizens are more likely to look to alternatives.

The Afghan Taliban exemplified the strategy of displacement. The Taliban regularly used threats and violence to both impede elections (Condra *et al.*, 2018) and target elected officials (Partlow & Salahuddin, 2011; Faizi & Nordland, 2019). In provinces where it exerted territorial control, the Taliban sought to fully replace the democratic state with its own governance structures. It prevented voting through violence, persecuted elected officials, and then installed its own non-democratic system of rule. This system included a range of

institutions, led by a Taliban "shadow" governor and incorporating institutions for healthcare provision, education, and finance.

Perhaps most prominently, Taliban shadow governments emphasized dispute resolution. A large rotating staff of religious judges rendered judgments according to Islamic and customary law rather than the notoriously ineffective justice system of the Afghan democratic state (Baczko, 2013; Jackson, 2018). These institutions succeeded in demonstrating the viability of non-democratic rule: "If I have a legal problem," noted one resident, "the Taliban will rule in an hour according to our customs and Islam. If I take it to the government, in six months nothing will have happened" (Farmer, 2010).

2.2.4 Determinants of intervention

How do violent actors decide whether to bend democratic institutions to their aims or to undermine the system and its legitimacy? When are these interventions relatively narrow and when are they expansive? Two main variables determine which strategy an armed group will follow to manipulate democratic institutions: how compatible its goals are with the democratic process, and how much coercion it can bring to bear against voters and elected officials.

Compatibility with democracy

The first variable is the extent to which an armed group's goals are compatible with democracy. This variable, a group-level trait, refers to how an armed group understands the alignment between its core goals and the concept of democracy as a system of rule. As before, I conceptualize democracy here according to the minimalist criteria advanced by Przeworski (1999). Can the group's goals be achieved through a minimally democratic process? Is the political order the group envisions compatible with the selection of political leaders through open, competitive elections?

All political organizations have bundles of goals they hope to achieve. These goals are

likely to be related, but may be diverse and even conflicting, and have different degrees of priority assigned to them. A high level of compatibility with democracy implies that many of the group's most important goals can be achieved through the democratic process. Elected officials willing to implement them can win office through broadly free elections, and can then feasibly pursue these goals through legislation and executive action without triggering overwhelming public rejection or certain removal from office. Many goals typical of armed groups fall under this category. Demands to change military or judicial policies, re-orient taxation and public spending, and award contracts are all achievable through democratic politics. More ambitious goals may be compatible with democracy as well: demands for regional autonomy, independence, or large-scale changes to a state's constitution can be pursued through legislation.

However, some groups have goals that are inherently unachievable through the democratic process and incompatible with minimal tenets of democracy. These groups have little to gain from co-opting elected officials, since even willing legislators or executives will be unable to further the group's demands. Some goals are likely unachievable through the democratic process. Full-scale legalization of illicit economies tends to be politically impossible, as does the open involvement of the state in criminal or terrorist activities. Deeply transformational goals are more unachievable yet: no amount of co-optation of the democratic process will induce the state to legislate itself out of existence or to fundamentally transform its regime type from democracy to autocracy or theocracy — systems of rule incompatible with the basic criteria of free elections to select political leaders. Groups whose core goals fit this standard have a low level of compatibility with democracy.

Organizations with wholly incompatible goals are comparatively few but often politically and militarily potent. Hardline Marxists bent on a true dictatorship of the proletariat fall into this category. Uncompromising fascist and totalitarian groups do as well; their vision of single-party rule, martial law, and ethnic exclusion cannot be reconciled with democratic institutions. So, too, may religious fundamentalist groups, if their goal of a religiously-

ordered society is totally irreconcilable with the fundamental infrastructure of democracy — elections, widespread suffrage, and checks on executive power. A spokesman for the Afghan Taliban illustrated this logic in a statement after the insurgents captured Kabul in August 2021, noting that: "Some of the principles of democracy are in contradiction with the principles of Islam [...] For example, in a democracy, the people are sovereign. But in Islam, God is sovereign. The Quran is sovereign" (Aikins, 2021). For these groups, the incompatibility of their goals with democracy is twofold: they cannot be achieved through elections or legislation, and the vision of society they aspire to cannot be reconciled with core elements of democracy.

A third set of violent actors falls between these two camps. Some political organizations possess a mixture of objectives that can be achieved through the democratic process and goals that are fundamentally incompatible with democracy. These actors are characterized by a medium level of compatibility with democracy. They are driven to both bend democratic institutions to their will and destroy them, to work within the democratic system and to bypass it. This produces a strategy that may look incoherent or self-contradictory. In practice, groups playing this type of "double game" typically seek to square this circle by publicly attacking high-profile democratic targets (national elections, high-ranking officials) while quietly colluding with local authorities to implement their political agenda.

When allowed by the state, these groups may overtly ally with political parties or run their own candidates. Overt democratic participation creates a trade-off, though: these groups may garner support for their state-building project by implementing parts of their political agenda, but risk appearing hypocritical. Groups playing a double game will therefore publicly emphasize that their democratic participation is a temporary means to an end. Like early 20th-century European socialist parties (Przeworski, 1986), these groups seek to accomplish their democracy-compatible goals through electoral politics while continuing to pursue their more revolutionary ends outside of the democratic process.

Medium-compatibility groups are common. In the 1980s, the FARC formed a political

party to contest elections but did not lay down its arms, pursuing political power both within and outside of democratic politics under a philosophy of "the combination of all forms of struggle" (Rodríguez Navarrete, 2005). In Spain, the ETA separatists declared a strategy of "following both paths," electoral and violent (de Otálora, 2017). The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) played a similar double game in 1980s-90s Northern Ireland. The most intense period of the PIRA's armed struggle for independence coincided with the electoral flourishing of its political wing, Sinn Féin, which pursued Irish republicanism through democratic means. This was no coincidence: the PIRA considered democratic and violent approaches to be complements, each serving a different role in achieving the group's ultimate bundle of goals (McAllister, 2004).

A group's degree of compatibility with democracy may vary over time: macro-level shifts in popular support for the group's goals may increase or decrease the attractiveness of electoral politics (Staniland, 2021), as may changes in the ideological composition of the group's leadership, or in the relative prioritization of their goals. But I expect these shifts to be relatively small and slow-moving; political organizations' beliefs about the viability of democracy tend to be fundamental elements of their identity and conception of the world. I expect that armed groups will rarely evolve sufficiently to move between the categories of high, medium, and low compatibility.

Though rooted in reality, compatibility is necessarily perceptual. An organization's leaders may perceive democratic politics as too captured or dysfunctional to accommodate their goals, even if this is not objectively the case. This reality poses an empirical challenge: measuring compatibility with democracy requires an understanding of both the objective affinity of the group's goals with democratic politics and their leaders' perception of that affinity.

Coercive capacity

The second variable captures the level of coercion that an armed group can bring to bear against voters and elected officials. More extensive forms of intervention in democracy —

either capture or displacement — require the ability to use force to sway the behavior of both voters and politicians. Neither proposition is straightforward. Armed actors pursuing a strategy of delegitimization can attack polling stations and threaten voters who turn out. But coercing voters to support some candidates or not others, as a strategy of capture demands, is less straightforward. Armed groups are stymied by an electoral institution: the secret ballot, nearly universal in democracies after the mid-20th century. Ballot secrecy inflicts upon armed groups the same commitment problem that vexes patrons and brokers seeking to buy votes (Hicken & Nathan, 2020): while they can threaten individual punishment to voters who defect, voters know that they have no means of readily monitoring their behavior. Armed groups are thus forced to resort to threats of collective punishment if communities do not vote as they demand, a threat that requires a high level of coercive capacity to be credible.

Coercing elected officials is, if anything, harder. Both the strategies of capture and displacement require direct coercion of elected officials — in the former case, to shape how they govern; in the latter, to remove them from office. Unsurprisingly, democracies prioritize the protection of political leaders over nearly all others. In addition to making and executing policy at all levels of government, elected officials are potent symbols of the democratic state. Moreover, legislators and executives have the power — and clear incentives — to allocate resources to their own protection. Even weak states tend to provide ample protection for elected officials.[3]

Like all people, politicians may respond defiantly to threats and acts of violence. Violent victimization by armed groups often alienates civilians and reduces compliance (Condra & Shapiro, 2012; Lyall *et al.*, 2013; Deglow & Sundberg, 2021). A similar backlash effect drives voters to vote for opposition candidates when exposed to electoral violence by incumbents

[3]To be sure, armed actors can and do use violence against elected politicians. Insurgents, militias, and criminal groups assassinate both candidates and politicians in office. The Global Terrorism Database records nearly 7,000 such attacks in 146 countries since 1970. But this figure pales in comparison to the number of politicians running for and winning office in those countries, from town councilors to deputies and heads of government. Moreover, these acts of violence may represent failures of coercion rather than successes — evidence of punishment in the wake of an unsuccessful threat (Schelling, 2008).

(Burchard, 2020). Politicians may respond similarly to coercion. Compounding this difficulty, politicians face political incentives not to comply with violent threats. Politicians who accede to public threats of violence breach the core democratic norm of non-violence in politics and signal that they prioritize their personal safety over the well-being of their constituents. This represents a serious political risk, as these elected officials may be punished by voters or ostracized by members of their party. In combination, these factors — the protection the state extends to politicians and the incentives politicians face to defy violent threats — limit when and where armed groups can successfully leverage coercion to influence elected officials.

Whereas compatibility with democracy is a group-level trait,[4] coercive capacity varies over space and time. In areas where the armed group is powerful, it can effectively coerce both voters and local elected officials, who are physically present and often receive less state protection. Powerful groups may be able to threaten central government officials as well, but high-ranking legislators and executives working in the center of state power represent a high bar for coercion.

2.2.5 Theoretical expectations

High-compatibility groups

The interaction of these two variables — compatibility with democracy and coercive capacity — determines which strategy of intervention I expect armed groups to pursue. Table 2.2 summarizes these expectations, which form the core of my theoretical framework. A high level of compatibility with democracy prescribes an attempt to capture democracy. Since groups with democracy-compatible goals know that they can further their aims by bending democratic institutions to their will, they will seek to do so. The form of this attempt depends on the level of coercive capacity they can bring to bear. In places where

[4]Decentralized organizations may vary in their compatibility across fronts or units, but I expect that this variation will generally be minor.

Table 2.2: Determinants of strategies of intervention

		Compatibility		
		Low	Medium	High
Coercion	Low	**Delegitimization**	**Delegitimization**	**Corruption**
	High	**Displacement**	**Capture**	**Capture**

they have little capacity to use force (or where state strength presents a daunting deterrent), their inability to credibly threaten voters or politicians leaves them to resort to a piecemeal strategy of corruption. They offer positive inducements to politicians to persuade them to govern according to the armed group's interests, but rarely threaten them with violence since politicians are likely to perceive those threats as not credible.

Where they are more coercively dominant, in contrast, armed groups can pursue a strategy of capture — wielding coercion to force voters to support the candidates of their choice and elected officials to govern in their interest. When given the choice, armed groups almost always choose capture over corruption. Without the threat of violence looming, politicians who have made corrupt agreements with armed actors have strong incentives to renege on their side of the deal. An illegal armed actor can hardly turn to the criminal justice system to complain about contracts broken; in the absence of violence, there is often little they can do if politicians take the money and run.

High coercive capacity remedies this concern. Politicians know the consequences of breaking their promises. If they do choose to defy the armed group's demands or flee, the group can leverage its coercive endowments to pressure voters into electing a more pliant successor. When they can manage it, a strategy of capture enables high-compatibility armed actors to bend the machinery of democratic governance to their ends with little risk of defection.

Low-compatibility groups

Low-compatibility armed groups see the world differently. These actors will not bother investing in efforts to violently or non-violently appropriate democracy; they have little to gain from co-opting democratic institutions. But they have much to gain from attacking them. Impeding and delegitimizing elections through violence discredits the state and the normative project of democratic rule, and uprooting the infrastructure of the democratic state creates space to replace it with a political structure consistent with their transformational aims. For these groups, the prescription is clear: democratic institutions are only useful as symbols to discredit and physical manifestations of the state to displace.

Coercive capacity again patterns the extent of intervention by low-compatibility groups. Delegitimization is achievable even with limited coercive endowments. It requires less violence than displacement, emphasizing a few symbolic acts of terrorism rather than the systematic coercion of voters and politicians. These acts of violence are typically easier to carry out with limited coercive capacity. Elections are soft targets for terrorism; even powerful states have difficulty protecting polling stations around the country. The threshold to commit sporadic acts of indiscriminate violence is lower than that necessary for systematically targeted coercion. As a result, groups with low coercive capacity will settle for a strategy of delegitimization.

Where they instead have high coercive capacity, low-compatibility armed actors will select a strategy of displacement. Displacement requires a much higher level of coercive dominance. Its perpetrators must individually target officeholders and bureaucrats with credible coercion, and must be able to impede the conduct of elections to an extent sufficient to prevent the state from replacing elected officials. A successful strategy of displacement thus requires the ability to systematically coerce voters, candidates, and elected officials (who are often protected by security forces) — a high bar. But the rewards are substantial: displacement corrodes the legitimacy of democracy, impedes the exercise of democratic governance, and stimulates demand for non-democratic alternatives.

Medium-compatibility groups

Armed actors with a medium level of compatibility with democracy face a more difficult decision. I expect that these groups will be torn between the impulse to undermine democratic institutions and the appeal of appropriating them. Like low-compatibility groups, they can advance some of their goals by damaging popular perceptions of the viability and quality of democracy as a system of rule; like high-compatibility actors, they can advance other goals by pressuring elected officials to enact the group's political program. How do they square this circle?

I expect that these groups' level of coercive capacity will structure how they resolve this tension. Medium-compatibility groups know that they have little chance of consolidating political authority over communities where their coercive strength is low or the state is dominant. They could pursue a strategy of corruption, but corruption is less effective than capture and, if exposed, demonstrates a willingness to work within the democratic system that contradicts the group's anti-democratic bona fides. I anticipate that medium-compatibility groups will instead elect to follow a strategy of delegitimization where they have low coercive capacity. Delegitimization requires relatively little coercive capability, and effectively casts doubt on the viability of democratic rule. This is especially true in epicenters of state strength, where armed group coercive capacity is likely to be low: an inability to safeguard the basic functions of electoral democracy in the political and economic core of the state is particularly costly to incumbents.

In places where the armed group is coercively ascendant, the calculus shifts. Given a high level of coercive capacity, both displacement and capture are on the table — rooting out the democratic state or subjugating it. I expect that medium-compatibility groups will generally pick the latter option. The power of displacement to discredit the state's democratic project is appealing, but the opportunity to enact the group's political agenda is more appealing still. Given the cost of constructing governing institutions from scratch and the fact that some or many of the group's core goals are compatible with the democratic process, the allure

of commandeering the state's democratic infrastructure to govern will typically win out. When they have high coercive capacity, then, I expect that medium-compatibility groups will attempt to surreptitiously capture local government institutions in order to enact their political and economic programs.

Medium-compatibility armed actors will thus pursue strikingly different approaches toward democracy as their coercive capacity varies across space and time. By combining a strategy of delegitimization in areas of weakness with one of capture in areas of strength, they can marry the symbolic benefits of undermining the democratic state with the material rewards of governing through it.

2.2.6 Scope conditions of the argument

This theoretical framework aims to explain the behavior of the universe of non-state armed groups operating in democracies. But it will surely not fit all cases. I have delineated two scope conditions so far: the armed group must be independent of the state, and the state must pass a minimalist threshold of democracy. Two other constraints are worth highlighting here. First, some states may be so high-capacity that they leave no room for armed group intervention. States may be so powerful that they can prevent coercion of voters, candidates, and elected officials at all levels of government across their territory. Faced with such overwhelmingly powerful governments, armed actors cannot marshal the coercive capacity to pursue any of the four strategies.

Very high administrative capacity can have a similar effect. States with highly effective anti-corruption regimes may be able to detect and impede instances of corruption or coerced collusion between militant groups and politicians. These states may be able to prevent armed groups from pursuing corruption or capture, though administrative capacity alone does little to avert delegitimization or displacement.

Second, the assumption that armed groups have a deep interest in the democratic process may not always hold. There are likely some militant groups for whom democracy is largely

irrelevant. Some armed groups — vigilante or self-defense organizations, small-scale criminal groups — have limited, parochial interests in local economies or rivalries with other armed groups. Democratic politics may be of no use to these groups if state intervention has little consequence for their lives and little symbolic or instrumental value for their goals. These groups have no reason to engage positively or negatively with democratic institutions or elected officials.

In practice, I expect that this condition is fairly rare. Democracy is useful for a wide range of violent actors: purely economically motivated groups can pressure local officials to relax law enforcement or focus repression on their rivals; small-scale self-defense or vigilante groups can advocate for legislation formalizing their use of violence. Even terrorist groups with goals largely orthogonal to democracy often have democracy-compatible priorities. (Al-Qaeda in the 1990s, for instance, sought the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Saudi Arabia — a goal that could be achieved through legislative or executive action.) The urge to intervene in the democratic process should be widespread, but likely not universal.

2.3 Looking forward

Over the next three chapters, I evaluate this theoretical framework against evidence from armed groups in three Latin American democracies: Peru, Colombia, and Mexico. Each chapter considers a different level of compatibility with democracy, beginning with a case of a group with a low level of compatibility with democracy in Peru's Sendero Luminoso, followed by a medium-compatibility group in the FARC in Colombia and then a highly compatible set of actors in 21st-century Mexican criminal organizations.

In each case, I trace the flow of the argument as articulated in this chapter. I begin by establishing the levels of the two main independent variables in the model: the group's compatibility with democracy (low, medium, or high) and its coercive capacity (low or high, as measured across space and time). I then evaluate each group's choice of strategy,

marshaling a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence about violence committed against democratic actors, election outcomes, and collusion with elected officials. In each case, I also assess the consequences of these interventions for political outcomes of interest: faith and participation in democracy, governance outcomes, and levels of corruption and crime. I turn first to a case of low compatibility.

Chapter 3

Uprooting Democracy in the Peruvian Highlands: Sendero Luminoso's Fight against the Democratic State

3.1 Introduction

I have argued that armed groups with a low level of compatibility with democracy nonetheless have a keen interest in democratic politics. This interest is not primarily motivated by a desire to influence who wins office or what they do with their legislative and policymaking powers. For low-compatibility groups, it matters little who governs the democratic state or how they act: the democratic system is incapable of delivering the political or economic outcomes the group seeks.

Rather, low-compatibility actors see the democratic system as an important target for attack — an object to be discredited and destroyed. These groups consequently pursue all-out war against elections and elected authorities. Elections are a critical source of legitimacy for democratic states and the core of democracy as a system of rule. Holding elections free of violence, disruption, or mass disaffection is a basic function domestic and international audiences expect of legitimate democratic governments. Elections also hold obvious instrumental importance: democratic states cannot govern at all if they fail to select legislators, executives, and other policymakers through elections.

Like elections themselves, the leaders they select are vital to the legitimacy and functioning of democratic states. Elected leaders are the visible face of the state. If politicians are hesitant to run for elected office — or if they appear unable to govern, unwilling to appear in public, or cowed by the threat of violence — the cost to state legitimacy can be high. The instrumental cost of an inability to govern is higher still. In democracies, elected officials command nearly the entire governance apparatus of the state: bureaucracies, security forces, and the budgets to provide public and private goods. Disrupting this chain of command at the top paralyzes the machinery of governance, opening up space for alternative, non-democratic governance structures.

For low-compatibility armed groups, attacking elections and elected officials thus offers a valuable opportunity to discredit democracy as a system of rule, delegitimize the state, and

stymie its ability to govern the population. How these groups pursue those ends is mediated by their level of coercive capacity. Attacking elected officials is not easy: even weak states prioritize policymakers and political elites for protection. Nor is coercing enough voters to impede elections entirely. These tasks require a substantial level of coercive capacity.

When armed groups have little capacity to credibly coerce politicians or large segments of the electorate, they follow a strategy of *delegitimization*. Delegitimization seeks to discredit the democratic process through the use of provocative acts of spectacular violence. These acts of terrorism — which often take the form of bombings, mass shootings, or assassinations of national political elites — target polling places, political rallies, and other symbolically important democratic rituals. They aim to reduce turnout and cast doubt on the democratic state's ability to carry out its core civic responsibilities. This strategy thus entails a high level of spectacular violence but little functional violence.

The ability to credibly coerce elected officials and voters opens the door to a second strategy: *displacement*. When low-compatibility groups have a high level of coercive capacity, they attempt to systematically uproot democracy by impeding elections and removing elected authorities from office. A strategy of displacement pairs provocative, high-profile attacks with an effort to suppress voter turnout and the targeted use of violence against elected officials. By removing the policymakers who direct the apparatus of democratic governance (and blocking the elections that could replace them), displacement both discredits the democratic project and creates demand for alternative sources of governance — demand which the armed group then seeks to fill by installing institutions that fit their non-democratic aims. This is the most violent of the strategies I theorize, entailing high levels of both spectacular and functional violence. Figure 3.1 lays out these expectations.

In this chapter, I evaluate these predictions through an analysis of the Sendero Luminoso insurgency in Peru. I begin with an overview of the group's origins and organization, the political context of the Peruvian civil war, and the major events of the conflict. I then probe the compatibility of Sendero Luminoso's goals with democracy. I analyze a large corpus of

Table 3.1: Strategies of intervention for low-compatibility groups

		Compatibility		
		Low	Medium	High
Coercion	Low	**Delegitimization**	Delegitimization	Corruption
	High	**Displacement**	Capture	Capture

doctrinal documents, speeches, and writings by Sendero and its leaders using a combination of computational content analysis and close reading. I show that Sendero viewed its goals as wholly incompatible with democracy: for *senderista* leaders, the trappings of democracy disguised a dictatorship dominated by the oligarchy, rendering electoral politics useless for its revolutionary aims.

Using a machine learning approach adapted from Anders (2020), I next generate time-varying local measures of Sendero Luminoso's coercive capacity across Peru for the duration of the war. Importantly, this coercive capacity is highly unlikely to be as-if randomly assigned, posing challenges to assessing its causal effects. To address this challenge, I identify a source of exogenous variation in the group's local coercive capacity: uncontrollable shifts in the insurgents' income from coca cultivation due to changes in natural conditions and global cocaine prices.

I use these two measures to evaluate the impact of compatibility and coercion on Sendero Luminoso's intervention in democratic politics. Using quantitative data on violence and election results, I show that Sendero followed a strategy of delegitimization in areas where it had little power, and enacted a policy of displacement in places where it had more influence — impeding the conduct of elections and evicting local authorities to replace them with revolutionary governance structures. Archival and secondary evidence further substantiate these claims.

To more carefully draw out the mechanics and consequences of displacement, a strategy

I do not observe among the other groups studied in this project, I turn to a case study. I examine a representative province in the Peruvian central highlands, Daniel A. Carrión, in which the insurgents pursued a strategy of displacement in the early 1980s. Drawing on testimony from the Peruvian Truth Commission and a synthetic control study, I find that this strategy generated a large and durable increase in rates of protest voting — ballots cast as a rejection of all parties and candidates — an effect that lasted over a decade.

3.2 Case background

Peru oscillated between democracy and dictatorship for most of the 20th century. After reaching a controversial settlement over oil rights with an American multinational corporation, conservative president Fernando Belaúnde was removed in a 1968 military coup. The resulting military dictatorship lasted for 12 years. Under General Juan Velasco Alvarado (president from 1968-75), the ruling junta adopted a nationalist, left-leaning political program emphasizing wealth redistribution. Velasco Alvarado implemented a wide-ranging land reform program, nationalized key industries — including, controversially, the press — and strengthened unions.

This left-leaning posture was sharply reversed in 1975, when Velasco Alvarado was overthrown by his prime minister, General Francisco Morales Bermúdez. Faced with spiraling inflation, Morales Bermúdez cut social spending and implemented broad austerity measures. This deeply unpopular response triggered a surge of anti-regime mobilization, culminating in a series of strikes and protests that paralyzed Lima and triggered the imposition of a national curfew. In the face of this social upheaval, Morales Bermúdez gave in. He ordered a return to democracy in two steps: in 1978, elections for a constitutional assembly to craft a new constitution; and then, in 1980, national elections to select a new civilian administration.

Throughout this period, the Marxist left was in ferment. Like communist movements around the globe, the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP) was divided by the Sino-Soviet

split of the early 1960s into pro-Beijing and pro-Moscow camps. A central issue at debate was the necessity of armed struggle — could democratic politics pave the way to communism, or was the violent overthrow of the state the only path? One Maoist faction, the Peruvian Communist Party - Red Flag (PCP-BR), split from the main party in 1964. Like its parent organization, however, PCP-BR was consumed by internal conflict. Abimael Guzmán, a philosophy professor in the poor highland department of Ayacucho and a prominent voice in the PCP-BR, decided the party was insufficiently committed to preparation for armed conflict. In 1970, he formed a new, hardline faction that he named the Peruvian Communist Party - Sendero Luminoso (Taylor, 2006).

The moniker "Sendero Luminoso," or "Shining Path," was drawn from the writings of José Carlos Mariátegui, an influential Peruvian socialist thinker and the founder of the PCP in the 1920s.[1] Guzmán was heavily influenced by Mariátegui's writings, which emphasized the "revolutionary potential" of Peru's large population of rural smallholders, agricultural workers, and landless poor. In adopting this focus, Mariátegui's theory of revolution dovetailed closely with the writings of Mao Zedong, whose theory of revolution also centered on organizing the rural poor, establishing "liberated areas" in the countryside, and then building up the strength to encircle urban centers. Mariátegui's philosophy and Mao's strategy would form the basis of Sendero Luminoso's approach to the war (Taylor, 2006).

Abimael Guzmán taught at the National University of San Cristóbal of Huamanga in the city of Ayacucho, where he had arrived in 1962 at the age of 28. In 1964, he married Augusta La Torre, the daughter of a prominent PCP leader and an avowed communist herself; La Torre would go on to serve as Sendero Luminoso's second-in-command until her death in unclear circumstances in 1988. After a trip to China in 1965 in which he met with Chinese Communist Party members and attended lectures on revolutionary strategy, Guzmán and La Torre were ready to begin organizing (Starn & La Serna, 2019).

The National University of San Cristóbal of Huamanga became the hotbed of Sendero

[1]Mariátegui wrote that "Marxism–Leninism will open the shining path to revolution."

Luminoso mobilization. Guzmán and La Torre recruited students and lecturers into Sendero Luminoso, and began mobilizing farm workers in the rural areas around the city of Ayacucho (Taylor, 2006). Guzmán resigned his post at the university in 1975 and he and La Torre went underground to prepare for war (Starn & La Serna, 2019). In 1980, the night before the national elections that would return Peru to democratic rule, Sendero Luminoso declared the beginning of its armed struggle by burning the ballot boxes and electoral registries in the town of Chuschi.

The ensuing civil war ran from 1980 to 2000 and claimed roughly 70,000 lives. The conflict represented a pivotal event in contemporary Peruvian history: in addition to the immense human toll of the violence, public backlash to the war led to the unexpected election of Alberto Fujimori in 1990 and the subsequent collapse of Peruvian democracy after emerging from dictatorship only a decade earlier. The legacy of the conflict remains a deeply salient issue in electoral politics and popular culture today (Burt, 2021).

Sendero Luminoso and Peruvian security forces — the police, military, and a brutal counterinsurgency unit called the *sinchis* — were primarily responsible for the violence that wracked the country. But other actors became involved as well. In response to Sendero Luminoso's predations, communities formed state-sponsored self-defense militias called *rondas campesinas* all over the country. A substantially smaller leftist insurgent group, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), emerged in the early 1980s as a less violent, more urban-focused Marxist alternative to Sendero Luminoso.

Sendero Luminoso was initially treated as an annoyance by Fernando Belaúnde (president once again from 1980-85). But the insurgents achieved a string of military successes in the first three years of the war, conducting audacious attacks on police stations and seats of government in cities and towns across the Andean corridor. They also committed brutal massacres of civilians in Soras, Lucanamarca, and other towns whose names would become synonymous with the war's horrific human cost. This alarming wave of violence led to increasing state crackdowns starting in 1983. By 1985, the administration of newly-elected

Alan García (1985-90) declared an emergency zone in the southern highlands, where Sendero Luminoso was most active, and deployed over 2,500 troops to the region (McClintock, 2001).

The conflict escalated through the mid-1980s, with Sendero Luminoso holding territory in rural areas up and down the Andes and carrying out major attacks in Lima and other major cities. Both insurgents and counterinsurgents committed large-scale human rights abuses as fighting intensified. In 1992, Abimael Guzmán was captured by security forces in a surprise raid on a Sendero safe house in Lima. The group, which had always been highly centralized around the figure of Guzmán, began to disintegrate and violence decreased sharply. Fragments of Sendero Luminoso have survived to the present but have little popular support or military capacity.

3.3 Compatibility with democracy

To evaluate the extent to which Sendero Luminoso saw its goals as compatible with democracy, I turn to the written record the group left behind. I compile an original corpus of documents produced by the group. I draw documents from a dataset compiled by the Center for the Documentation of Armed Groups (CeDeMa), a think tank that aggregates a documentary record of Latin American militant organizations. While this corpus is not exhaustive, it offers a large sample of Sendero Luminoso's rhetoric over time and across issue areas, including speeches, party platforms, doctrinal documents, and editorial pieces produced by the group's leaders.

To situate Sendero's rhetoric in the broader landscape of Latin American armed groups, I also scrape the full set of militant documents available in CeDeMa's database. This corpus includes 7,699 documents by 386 armed groups and associated organizations from 21 countries in the Americas — overwhelmingly 20th-century leftist movements like Sendero Luminoso, but also encompassing some criminal groups and militias. The collection incorporates all of the high-profile armed movements in recent Latin American history: in addition to Sendero,

the MRTA in Peru; the FARC, Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19), and Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) in Colombia; the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) in El Salvador; the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) in Nicaragua; the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) in Chile; the Montoneros in Argentina; the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in Mexico. Table A.1 (Appendix) summarizes this corpus.

I use this dataset to analyze Sendero Luminoso's attitudes toward democracy, and to contextualize them relative to similar armed groups in the region. Since systematic close reading of a corpus of this size is infeasible, I begin by applying a series of computational text analysis methods. I first identify references to democracy by all groups in the corpus through a straightforward keyword search for mentions of "democracy," "elections," "voting," and their semantic variations in Spanish. I break the corpus into sentences and save all sentences containing one or more of these keywords. This results in a dataset of 17,465 sentences (representing 6% of the full corpus).

To analyze the rhetoric these groups employ when discussing democracy, I use a word embedding-based approach introduced in Kozlowski *et al.* (2019). Word embeddings are high-dimensional vector representations of words, drawn from the weights generated by a neural net classifier. Usefully, these vector representations encode semantic information: words that have similar meanings or often appear together have closer vector representations, while antonyms are geometrically distant. This property allows users to employ word embeddings to flexibly and systematically determine which words have similar or different valences.[2] I employ a dataset of a million pre-trained 300-dimensional Spanish-language word embeddings from Cardellino (2022),[3]

I select a series of dimensions along which to score the rhetoric around democratic insti-

[2]This technique offers an advantage over simple keyword search or dictionary lookup methods, which require the researcher or a human-coded dictionary to select the words of interest.

[3]Cardellino draws on a wide range of modern Spanish text to produce his word embeddings, including corpora of books, news articles, government documents, and Spanish-language Wikipedia articles. The temporal variation and political emphasis of this corpus make it a reasonable baseline against which to compare Sendero Luminoso's rhetoric.

tutions employed in my corpus. Following Kozlowski *et al.* (2019), I define each dimension by anchoring its extremes with a pair of antonyms. I subtract the embedding for the "lower" antonym from the embedding for the "upper" antonym, creating a vector constituting the dimension of interest. I am then able to project the embedding for each word in my corpus onto that dimension (using the cosine distance between the two vectors) to measure where it falls along the spectrum from "low" to "high." I take the simple average of these scores for every noun, verb, and adjective in each sentence in my corpus, discarding stopwords and other less value-laden parts of speech to reduce noise.

I analyze five dimensions. I begin with a simple overall valence dimension, which I define as the vector from the word "bad" to "good." From reading the corpus, I then identify four other dimensions along which these armed groups often discuss democratic institutions: how functional they are for achieving their political aims (from "ineffective" to "effective"), how democratic or dictatorial they are ("democracy" to "dictatorship"), how much they are influenced by elite interests ("masses" to "elites"), and how unfair their outcomes are ("just" to "unjust"). Table A.2 (Appendix) lists the 20 words in the corpus most associated with the high and low end of each dimension. Using the technique outlined above, I generate a sentence-level score for each sentence in the corpus along each of these dimensions, and standardize the scores for interpretability.

To explore how Sendero Luminoso's rhetoric differed from the average militant group in the sample, I regress each of these dimensions on an indicator for whether a given sentence was written or spoken by Sendero Luminoso. Table 3.2 shows the results of these bivariate regressions. In discussing democracy or elections, Sendero used more negative language overall (Model 1). Compared to the average group, Sendero invoked a rhetoric of democracy as useless or ineffective (Model 2), and likened it more to dictatorship than to democracy (Model 3). In contrast, Sendero Luminoso's leadership associated democracy less with being influenced by elite interests (Model 4) and less with being unfair or unjust (Model 5) than the average militant organization in the sample.

Table 3.2: How Sendero Luminoso discussed democracy

	Valence (1)	Efficacy (2)	Dictatorship (3)	Elitism (4)	Unfairness (5)
(Intercept)	0.0076	0.0101	-0.0071	0.0098	0.0069
	(0.0077)	(0.0077)	(0.0078)	(0.0077)	(0.0077)
Sendero Luminoso	-0.1719**	-0.2281**	0.1587**	-0.2209**	-0.1546**
	(0.0373)	(0.0364)	(0.0347)	(0.0383)	(0.0376)
Observations	17,465	17,465	17,465	17,465	17,465
R^2	0.00125	0.00221	0.00107	0.00207	0.00101
Adjusted R^2	0.00120	0.00215	0.00101	0.00201	0.00096

*OLS models with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

These differences sketch a revealing picture about how Sendero Luminoso conceived of democracy. They suggest that the group's leadership had an unusually negative view of Peruvian democracy, even relative to other revolutionary organizations in the region. The insurgents' rhetoric emphasized foundational critiques of democratic rule: that the democratic process was useless to achieve the group's political goals, and that democracy should be best thought of as dictatorship by another name. In contrast, Sendero de-emphasized the more process-oriented criticisms embodied in Models 4 and 5. It used less language suggesting that political systems give outsized weight to economic elites, and focused less on critiques about fairness of outcomes. The combination of these tendencies suggests a wholesale rejection of democracy rather than complaints about the democratic process.

One possibility is that these differences capture general trends in the rhetoric Sendero Luminoso's leaders employed rather than conceptions of democracy in particular. If this is the case, I may be finding evidence of the group's broader view of the world rather than its specific beliefs about the value and efficacy of democracy as a system of governance. To address this possibility, I conduct a series of randomization inference-style placebo tests. For each group in the corpus, I randomly sample a set of sentences equal in size to the number of sentences in which the group mentions democracy. I then re-estimate the five

models above and save the t-scores on the *Sendero Luminoso* term as a measure of both the direction and statistical significance of the coefficient. I replicate this procedure 1000 times. If the rhetorical differences I have observed represent general tendencies in how Sendero's leadership talked and wrote about the world, I would expect to see similarly large and directionally consistent t-scores in these placebo regressions as in the main models.

Figure A.1 (Appendix) presents density plots of these placebo t-scores for each outcome variable, marking the true t-score for reference. The magnitude and significance of the relationships in Models 1-5 are clear outliers in almost all cases. In the corpus at large, Sendero's rhetoric does not stand out from the average militant organization along most dimensions. When discussing democracy, however, the differences between Sendero Luminoso and other armed groups are stark. Rather than criticize the process or outcomes of democracy, the Peruvian insurgents employed a deeply Manichean language, disparaging electoral politics as useless and characterizing it in the language of dictatorship.[4] This evidence points to a clear, systematic difference in how Sendero Luminoso understood the nature and function of democracy.

Close examination of the text confirms this conclusion. Throughout the organization's life, Sendero Luminoso was vocal in its opposition to democracy. In 1978, when Peru's military dictatorship held elections for a constitutional assembly in preparation for a return to democracy, many parties on the Peruvian left agreed to participate. Abimael Guzmán denounced these parties, arguing that electoral democracy was a "'constitutionalist illusion' [...] bourgeoisie trickery to fool the masses into believing they had a voice" (Starn & La Serna, 2019, 78). Peruvian democracy, he suggested, was no better than autocracy: "[The Peruvian legislature] is a bourgeois state organ, an organ of the bourgeois dictatorship. [...] This is not a matter of civilian or military dictatorship. What is at stake is a class dictatorship." Leftist parties participating in elections were "parliamentary cretins" who had forgotten that

[4]The only relationship that does not seem to be an outlier is in the case of Model 4: Sendero's focus on masses rather than elites appears to have animated much of its rhetoric, not solely when discussing democracy.

power "is conquered with violence and is maintained through dictatorship" (Gorriti, 2000, 127).

Sendero Luminoso's Central Committee spelled out this logic in an April 1978 broadside against the constitutional assembly elections.

> "Marx emphasized, 'Once every few years, the oppressed are granted the opportunity to decide which members of the oppressor class should represent them and crush them in Parliament!' [...] elections are the regular order of government renewal in bourgeois dictatorships of capitalist societies [... they] are a means of domination for landowners and *grande bourgeoisie*; they are not an instrument of transformation for the people nor a way to remove the dominant classes from power" (CeDeMa, 1978).

This justification contains elements of the "elitist" and "unfairness" frames mentioned above: Peruvian democracy is tilted in favor of the interests of capitalists and landowners, and produces outcomes unfair to the broader population. But it goes well beyond those procedural critiques as well. Sendero repeatedly equated democracy with a "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie," a thinly disguised system of absolute rule by the capitalist class. It also stressed the inherent inability of the democratic system to achieve any of the group's revolutionary aims. Elections were a rote means of "government renewal" for capitalist dictators and offered no possibility of transformative political change.

In Sendero Luminoso's eyes, this fundamental lack of efficacy extended beyond elections to the institutions of the democratic state. On the eve of the 1985 general elections, the Central Committee released a statement with a pointed — and typically stilted — title: "Do not vote, rather generalize guerrilla war to conquer power for the people!"

> "The Parliament abdicated its legislative function in favor of the Executive; the Judiciary, incapable of judging thousands of defendants and even less capable of enforcing its own laws [...] The Executive has become the true legislative power, with the basic laws of the country in the hands of outdated bureaucrats and technocrats trained and advised by imperialism, with super-ministers who make and unmake themselves like old autocrats" (CeDeMa, 1985).

Sendero paints a picture of a system of governance in shambles — broken institutions inca-

pable of maintaining social order, captained by autocratic bureaucrats controlled by foreign powers, and wholly divorced from the popular will. Faced with a sham of an electoral system and hopelessly corrupted and compromised democratic institutions, Sendero's leadership argued, voters' only recourse was to abandon democratic politics entirely.

> "[S]imply and concretely, voting is endorsing the social system and choosing another government that is even more hunger-inducing and genocidal! It is serving the territorial-bureaucratic state to renew its authorities, according to its laws and conditions, who will exercise their class dictatorship against the people in favor of maintaining the semi-feudal and semi-colonial character of the society in which bureaucratic capitalism develops, benefiting the ruling classes and their main master, Yankee imperialism. Voting is serving the establishment of a more hunger-inducing government because it is determined by the needs and class character of the State of which it is a part" (CeDeMa, 1985).

Rather than contribute to the legitimization and consolidation of the democratic state by participating in elections, "the only thing that is fitting today is NOT TO VOTE!" and instead to follow Sendero Luminoso's lead and join "the armed struggle that, with rifles, is destroying the old and creating the new" political order (CeDeMa, 1985).

As the war wore on, Sendero Luminoso did not waver in its wholesale rejection of democracy. In 1988 — a decade after the group's call to boycott the 1978 constitutional assembly election — the pro-*senderista* newspaper El Diario published an interview with Abimael Guzmán. Asked about his position on the general elections to be held in 1990, Guzmán offered a familiar response. Ordinary Peruvians should "expect nothing from the elections or a new government," since the electoral process "only means allowing the renewal of authorities of this old and rotten order, nothing more [...] The revolution has never been carried out through Parliament." He cited the lessons learned from the debate around the constitutional assembly. Many who claimed to be revolutionaries had argued that "by using the parliamentary arena, we would transition to a revolutionary situation, only to later tell us that we should focus on defending the existing order" — abandoning the revolutionary cause in favor of the democratic *status quo*. Given the impotence of the democratic process, the prescription for voters was clear: the goal with respect to "elections is to boycott them

and, if possible, prevent them." Voters should "express their rejection of the elections" by "casting blank votes," so that "the will of the masses of our people, the vast majority who already understand that there is no solution through this electoral path, will be expressed" (CeDeMa, 1988).

Guzmán also broadened his criticism of democracy to take aim at the "legal left" — particularly the major coalition of Marxist political parties, Izquierda Unida (IU). He described IU as "a rehashing of the old opportunist electoral frontism that we have seen many times in Peru" and "a sieve of contradictions, like collusion and conflict": torn between working within the system and fighting against it. For Guzmán, it was this openness to working within the democratic system that doomed the "legal left" to failure.

> "What lies at the core of [IU's] positions? It is a very simple matter: they believe they can take the government and then, as they say, take power. Well, they should understand that one cannot be taken without the other. You first take power and then establish the government, because the essential problem of the State is the system of the State, meaning the dictatorship that governs it, the class it belongs to, and the system of government that is derived from that. Everything else is the cheap delusions of rotten revisionists" (CeDeMa, 1988).

This was the crux of Sendero Luminoso's condemnation of the electoral left. The democratic system was so captured and corrupted as to be wholly irreparable: revolution required taking power through force, tearing down the system, and constructing a new one from scratch. IU's belief that, by working through the democratic process "with government and reforms, they can move towards socialism" was "simply unbridled revisionism" (CeDeMa, 1988).

All of this suggests a consistent position with respect to democracy, elections, and political parties. For Sendero Luminoso, democracy offered nothing more than a fig leaf over a system of ruthless domination by economic elites and foreign imperialist powers, a system effectively indistinguishable from an explicit dictatorship by the oligarchy. This system was wholly useless for achieving the group's revolutionary aims; participation in elections served only to legitimize the existing regime. I thus classify Sendero Luminoso as having a low level of compatibility with democracy: the group could not achieve its primary goals through the

democratic process, and the social order it aimed to create was fundamentally irreconcilable with the basic tenets of democratic governance.

To be sure, inferring an armed group's genuine political commitments from their public documentary record is difficult. Groups often have incentives to dissimulate in public statements, lying about their true political goals to attract supporters, build coalitions, or improve their bargaining position.[5] But the clear and consistent position espoused across the corpus I examine is telling. Sendero's strident opposition to democracy was costly: it alienated potential allies like the IU and more moderate armed groups like the MRTA, and made it easier for the state to depict the insurgents as radical and anti-democratic. Faced with this cost, the group's unwavering and insistent rejection of democracy suggests a genuine ideological commitment to non-democratic rule.

3.4 Coercive capacity

Having established that Sendero Luminoso had a low level of compatibility with democracy, I next turn to measuring the group's coercive capacity. Unlike compatibility with democracy, coercive capacity varies finely over time and space. Measuring coercive capacity or territorial control in civil conflict presents a steep methodological challenge. Datasets on political violence generally record conflict events — clashes between combatants, moments of popular mobilization, and acts of civilian victimization. Yet the association between violent events and territorial control is not a simple one. On one hand, violence by an armed actor may imply that that actor possesses greater control and can thus use force with abandon. On the other hand, more violence may imply a state of contestation or rebellion against the social order imposed by the actor — failures of coercion betraying a lack of control (Kalyvas, 1999; Schelling, 2008).

To cut through this ambiguous relationship, I employ a modified version of a machine

[5]Examining documents internal to the armed organization, in which leaders likely have fewer reasons to lie about their political positions, would be preferable. An archive of internal Sendero documents captured by the Peruvian military apparently exists but I have not yet succeeded in accessing it.

learning method introduced by Anders (2020) to generate local measures of coercive capacity. This approach uses a Hidden Markov Model (HMM) to infer states of coercive capacity by Sendero Luminoso based on the violence signature each state produced. HMMs estimate a trajectory of states that a unit passes through over time from the observable "emission" each state produces. They require that the analyst specify three key parameters: 1) the baseline probability that a unit (a district, in my case) begins its trajectory in a given state (high or low coercive capacity), 2) the probability that a unit transitions to each state in a given time period, and 3) the probability that each state produces a given emission pattern.

To reflect the fact that Sendero Luminoso began the war in 1980 with little military capacity, I set the baseline probability of high coercive capacity in any given district at 0.2. Since the local balance of military power in civil war is fairly sticky, I set the probability of remaining in the same state at 0.7. I set the probability of observing the emission corresponding to each state at 0.9, to allow for the possibility that high coercive capacity may not produce violence in every district-year and low capacity may occasionally produce selective violence.[6]

I define two states: high coercive capacity and low coercive capacity. The former category requires that Sendero demonstrate an ability to 1) attack security forces directly or 2) wield selective violence against civilians.[7] Following Kalyvas (2006), the latter category corresponds to either no violence or indiscriminate acts of terrorism — bombings and other remote acts of violence that require little coercive capacity to execute. Using these mappings of violence signatures to states of coercive capacity, I fit the HMM model at the district-year level for the full sample of Peruvian districts between 1980 and 1993, spanning from the beginning of the war to the moment when the group began to break down following the capture of Abimael Guzmán. I exclude attacks on the democratic process, voters, or elected

[6] As I will show in section 3.5.1, results are substantively robust to varying these parameters.

[7] Civilian victimization by armed groups is often driven not by a logic of contestation but by governance. Armed groups frequently govern areas they control. That governance is almost invariably violent: militants use violence against civilians who refuse to comply with their orders or provide taxes or labor, and many groups engage in "social cleansing" against social minorities (Arjona, 2016; Kasfir *et al.*, 2017; Aponte González *et al.*, 2023). This type of governing violence thus implies a high level of coercive influence.

officials from the violence signatures to avoid selecting on the dependent variable.

I draw on violent event data compiled by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR). The CVR conducted a large-scale national fact-finding mission after the war, traversing the country to collect nearly 17,000 testimonies from people affected by the conflict. It then triangulated these records against evidence from human rights organizations and civil society monitors to create a dataset of acts of violence committed by Sendero Luminoso, security forces, and other perpetrators (Heilman, 2018).[8] Although data missingness concerns remain, these testimonies offer a wealth of data on the insurgents' violent activities across the country and throughout the war. I record district-year counts of civilians harmed in confrontations between Sendero and security forces — the closest measure of armed clashes available — and counts of people directly victimized by the insurgents. The spatial distribution of coercive capacity estimated by the Hidden Markov Model is depicted in Figure 3.1.

A major concern in evaluating the effect of coercive capacity is inferential. Coercive capacity is rarely exogenously assigned. Districts where Sendero Luminoso gained coercive power may have experienced related shifts in public sentiment toward the group, state presence, or local policy — shifts that could also affect the armed group's use of force against voters and elected officials. To isolate the independent effect of coercive capacity on intervention in democracy, I turn to an instrumental variables approach. I leverage exogenous variation in Sendero Luminoso's income from coca production. The insurgents financed their military operations in large part by encouraging and then taxing local production of coca, the key agricultural input for cocaine. Though outlawed in Peru, coca cultivation was widespread throughout the war due to the lucrative prices the crop demanded on the black market.

To identify exogenous variation in the group's income from the coca economy, I follow Mejia & Restrepo (2013) and Sonin & Wright (n.d.) in constructing an inductive model of

[8]The CVR used multiple systems estimation capture-recapture methods to try to adjust for missingness, though the approach has attracted criticism (Rendon, 2019; Manrique-Vallier & Ball, 2019).

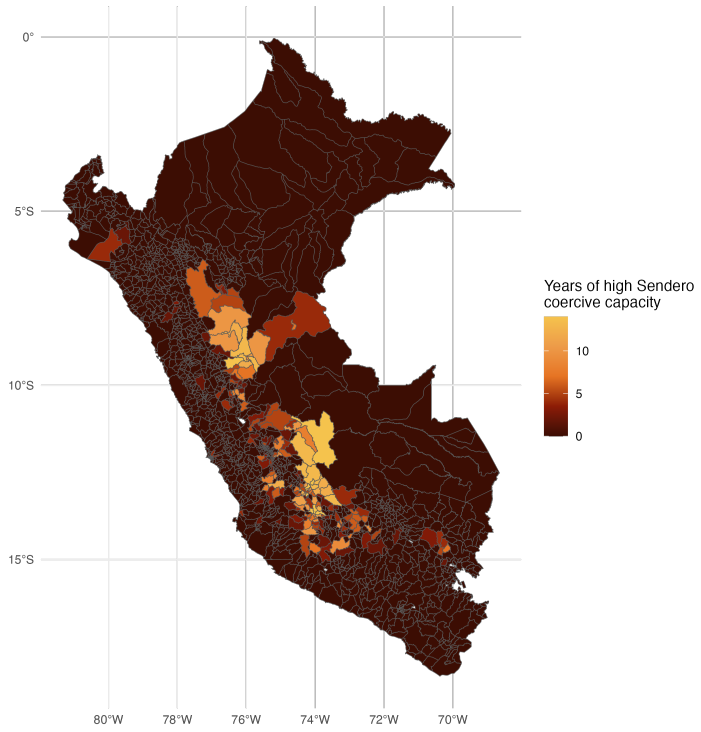

Figure 3.1: Spatial distribution of Sendero Luminoso coercive capacity

coca production. This model has two components: one that captures natural variation in environmental suitability for coca cultivation, and one that measures temporal variation in the price demanded by coca. Though relatively hardy, coca bushes require favorable soil characteristics and climatic conditions — including temperature, rainfall, and sun exposure — to yield leaves suitable for cocaine production (Acock *et al.*, 1996; Mejia & Restrepo, 2013). I generate a coca suitability score that combines information on these conditions. To capture the time-varying rewards of coca production, I interact the suitability score with data on the street price of cocaine in the United States, the main export market for Peruvian coca.[9]

Crucially, both the suitability and price variables should fulfill the exclusion restriction required for causal identification in instrumental variable settings. Natural conditions are

[9]I draw this data from ONDCP (2015). While farm gate prices for coca leaves and paste would more precisely capture armed group income from coca production, historical data is unfortunately not available.

exogenous to social and political dynamics and unlikely to affect armed group strategies through channels other than income shocks. Street prices in the United States are unaffected by local factors in any given Peruvian district. It is unlikely that local conditions or the decisions of insurgent commanders could affect either of these variables. These instruments should also satisfy the monotonicity assumption. Sendero commanders are likely to have reacted to propitious economic conditions by decreasing coca output. Security forces could potentially have responded to increased coca yields by stepping up eradication efforts, but this seems unlikely as a systematic threat to monotonicity; both aerial and manual coca eradication are ineffective and seldom succeed in meaningfully depressing production (ICG, 2021a).

To generate the coca suitability score, I collect annual district-level data on coca cultivation from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). UNODC provides high-resolution maps of coca cultivation in Peru from the years 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2016.[10] I download these maps as images, manually georeference them, and extract coca cultivation locations from the pixel values. I pair this data with a series of variables capturing soil quality and climatic conditions. I gather seven measures of soil characteristics relevant to agricultural output.[11] I also record static measures of mean elevation and slope, as well as monthly weather data capturing temperature, precipitation, air pressure, and wind.[12] To maximize model flexibility and predictive power, I regress an indicator for coca cultivation on the union of these variables and their pairwise interactions. I use this model to predict coca suitability at the district-year level.

Does the combination of coca suitability and cocaine pricing predict high coercive ca-

[10]Unfortunately, historical data on the spatial distribution of coca cultivation before 2000 is not available.

[11]I draw these measures from the Harmonized World Soil Database (HWSD), which qualitatively codes nutrient availability, nutrient retention capacity, rooting conditions, oxygen availability, salt, toxicity, and soil workability at 30 arc-second resolution.

[12]I draw the former variables from the Shuttle Radar Topography Mission digital elevation dataset and the latter from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts' ERA5 climate reanalysis dataset. ERA5 uses a combination of observation and historical climate modeling to generate monthly measures of mean, minimum, and maximum air temperature; dewpoint temperature; precipitation; surface and sea-level pressure; and the u and v components of wind. I record each of these variables for each month of the year and also generate annual measures of mean temperature and total precipitation.

pacity? I interact the predicted suitability score for district i in year t with the annual U.S. price of cocaine in year t. Since the instrument should only apply in places where coca was cultivated and Sendero Luminoso was present to profit from cultivation, I subset the sample to districts where 1) Sendero had high coercive capacity at some point during the war and 2) coca cultivation was recorded at least once in the UNODC data.[13] Since taxation does not immediately translate into coercive capacity, I measure the suitability and price variables in year $t-1$ and add district fixed effects to adjust for static unobservables. I thus estimate a two-stage least squares linear probability model with first stage

$$\text{High capacity}_{i,t} = \beta_1 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta_3 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} \times \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta FE_{district} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where i indexes districts and t indexes years. The suitability and price instruments are relevant for high coercive capacity, producing F-statistics above 10 in all specifications (see Tables 3.3 and 3.4). The second stage is given by

$$\text{Outcome}_{i,t} = \beta_1 \widehat{\text{High capacity}}_{i,t} + \beta FE_{district} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where *Outcome* is one of several different measures of intervention in the democratic process: the use of violence against democratic actors or the effects of intervention on election outcomes.

[13] Ideally I would define this second condition based on the location of coca cultivation during the sample period. Since this data is not available, I use the UNODC rasters from the 2000s. This represents a reasonable proxy: though the spatial distribution of coca zones in Peru has shifted somewhat over time, it is largely sticky.

3.5 Results: Sendero Luminoso's intervention in democracy

3.5.1 Quantitative evidence

How did ideological compatibility and coercive capacity affect Sendero Luminoso's intervention in democracy? I first evaluate the group's use of violence. I take data from the CVR to measure three district-year level quantities. I generate an indicator capturing whether a district-year suffered one or more attacks on democracy (including all acts of physical violence against voters, elections or election workers, candidates, or elected officials). I also create indicators for instances of spectacular and functional violence.[14] I regress these variables on an indicator for coercive capacity. I first estimate simple OLS models incorporating district and year fixed effects. To adjust for the influence of unobserved factors on coercive capacity and violence toward democracy, I then employ the instrumental variables approach outlined above.

The results of the OLS models are shown in Table 3.3, Models 6-8. In places where Sendero Luminoso was coercively powerful, it was much more likely to commit violence against democratic actors — 17 percentage points more likely than in zones of coercive weakness. This increase was driven by both functional and spectacular violence, which grew by 14 and 7 percentage points respectively. These are large effects. Only 3% of observations in the sample suffered attacks against democratic actors, and fewer than 1% experienced acts of spectacular violence. Where Sendero Luminoso was coercively powerful, it dramatically expanded its use of all kinds of violence against the democratic process.

These results hold across the instrumental variable specifications (Models 9-11). In all three models, the absolute effect sizes grow. But this difference is largely explained by the

[14] I gene, rate these measures by merging the CVR's quantitative data on violence, which identifies acts involving politicians and elected officials, with the testimonial text that forms the basis for each record. I use keyword searches of this text to identify attacks on elections, voters, and bureaucrats involved in the electoral process. I code an act of violence as spectacular violence if it claimed five or more victims. I categorize all other attacks as functional violence.

Table 3.3: Effects of Sendero coercive capacity on violence against democracy

	Attack on democracy (6)	Functional violence (7)	Spectacular violence (8)	Attack on democracy (9)	Functional violence (10)	Spectacular violence (11)
High capacity	0.171**	0.137**	0.067**	0.368**	0.220**	0.192**
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.079)	(0.077)	(0.052)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	39.4	39.4	39.4
Observations	23,842	23,842	23,842	4,512	4,512	4,512
R^2	0.27888	0.26210	0.16395	0.19390	0.22170	0.10492
Within R^2	0.04303	0.03192	0.02174	-0.00242	0.02623	-0.03521

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in Models 6-8 is all Peruvian district-years from 1981-1993; sample in Models 9-11 is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

fact that the districts in the smaller sample — coca-growing zones where Sendero Luminoso was present — were substantially more violent at baseline than the full sample of Peruvian districts. Relative to this baseline, the instrumental variable models suggest similar increases in the likelihood of observing attacks on democracy, both functional and spectacular, where Sendero had greater coercive capacity.

How do we interpret these results? They are in line with the violence signatures produced by displacement. Displacement is the bloodiest of the four strategies I theorize. It requires high levels of both spectacular and functional violence — spectacular violence to discredit democracy and discourage electoral participation, and functional violence to persecute and evict elected officials. Sendero appears to have followed this playbook. In places where the insurgents amassed coercive power, this evidence suggests, they used that power to launch all-out war against elections, voters, elected officials, and the machinery of democratic rule.

I next evaluate how Sendero Luminoso sought to influence election outcomes. Given its

total incompatibility with democracy, I expect that Sendero discouraged voter participation in places where it exercised coercive control in an attempt to signal popular disaffection with democracy. The insurgents demanded that Peruvian voters pursue one of two paths on election day. Voters could stay home, but this was costly: Peru had a compulsory voting regime with hefty fines levied for not turning out (Uribe, 2023a). Alternatively, Sendero Luminoso pressured voters to cast "protest votes" — ballots left intentionally blank or spoiled (McClintock, 1984; Palmer, 1986; ONPE, 2005). Like many Latin American democracies, Peru has a long tradition of protest voting as a rejection of the political options on offer (Driscoll & Nelson, 2014). High levels of protest balloting would signal broad disapproval of democracy; sufficiently high levels would even render election outcomes invalid (La República, 2001).

To evaluate this prediction, I scrape district-level returns for the four rounds of local elections held in Peru during the war (1983, 1986, 1989, and 1993) from the Peruvian government's Observatory for Governance website. I record the share of spoiled and blank ballots. I also sum the total voteshare of the major conservative parties.[15] I expect that leftist armed groups with democracy-compatible goals would seek to depress conservative voteshare in order to help elect ideologically sympathetic politicians more amenable to collusion. Given Sendero Luminoso's incompatibility with democracy, I anticipate that they did not care: all parties and politicians were equally useless for their aims.

I analyze Sendero Luminoso's influence on voter behavior in Table 3.4, again beginning with OLS specifications with two-way fixed effects (Models 12-13) and then estimating instrumental variable models (Models 14-15). In the former specification, Sendero's coercive influence produced a 7 percentage point incline in protest voteshare, representing nearly 20% of the mean protest voteshare in the sample. In contrast, the effect on conservative voteshare is fairly precisely null — suggesting that Sendero did not coerce voters into supporting

[15]I code the following parties as conservative: Acción Popular, Partido Popular Cristiano, FREDEMO, Movimiento Libertad, Movimiento Independiente Cambio 93, Alianza Nueva Mayoría - Cambio 90, Partido Demócrata Cristiano.

Table 3.4: Effects of Sendero coercive capacity on election results

	Protest voteshare (12)	Conservative voteshare (13)	Protest voteshare (14)	Conservative voteshare (15)
High capacity	0.072**	-0.015	0.475**	-0.342**
	(0.019)	(0.013)	(0.106)	(0.078)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	22.7	23.1
Observations	5,273	5,291	902	909
R^2	0.56265	0.63169	0.16077	-0.01831
Within R^2	0.00589	0.00038	-0.56169	-0.45715

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in Models 12-13 is all Peruvian districts in 1983, 1986, 1989, and 1993 local elections; sample in Models 14-15 is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

ideologically sympathetic allies.

Instrumental variables estimation suggests an even larger effect on protest voteshare: high capacity generated a sharp increase — nearly 50 percentage points, representing 118% of the sample mean — in areas influenced by Sendero. This is a striking effect, approaching the threshold of blank-and-null ballots at which elections are automatically annulled (La República, 2001). Unlike the OLS models, however, the instrumental variable specification suggests that high coercive capacity did decrease conservative voteshare, albeit to a lesser extent than the effect on protest votes. This may imply that Sendero's presence inhibited the campaign activities of conservative parties more than it affected their leftist counterparts.[16]

Both of these sets of results — around violence dynamics and election outcomes — change

[16] Alternatively, this result may suggest a violation of the exclusion restriction: unlike Sendero Luminoso's use of violence, which coca production likely affects only through the profit channel I theorize, shifts in the local coca economy could influence election outcomes by changing patterns of political mobilization and economic voting independent of the insurgents.

little under alternative model specifications. Since linear probability models can produce biased and inconsistent estimates, I follow Wooldridge (2010) in fitting a non-linear first-stage model for *High capacity*, depicted in Table A.3 (Appendix); the results are substantively unchanged. Tables A.4 and Table A.5 (Appendix) show similarly consistent results when one-way fixed effects are used in all models and when violent event outcomes are measured as counts instead of as indicators.

I also assess the sensitivity of the results to varying the parameters of the Hidden Markov Model I use to infer states of coercive control. In Tables A.6 to A.9 (Appendix), I increment and decrement the probability of transitioning between states, and in Tables A.10 and A.11 (Appendix) I reduce the certainty that each violence signature implies the corresponding state. The results change little. The image that coalesces across models, then, is one of a group deeply hostile to democracy: when it was coercively ascendant, Sendero Luminoso appears to have sought to discredit democracy by targeting elections with spectacular violence, pressuring voters to cast protest ballots, and killing or evicting local elected officials.

3.5.2 Qualitative evidence

Primary and secondary evidence support these conclusions. Sendero Luminoso sought to discredit democracy across the country. It decreed "armed strikes" on election days, threatening violence against voters who turned out and bureaucrats who staffed polling sites. Sendero also carried out high-profile attacks on political party offices in Lima and other major cities throughout the war. These acts of violence aimed to delegitimize democracy in two ways: to strike a symbolic blow at the machinery of democratic politics, and to discourage people from mobilizing into parties as supporters, operatives, or candidates.

Spectacular attacks against parties, elections, and the bureaucracy of electoral politics were a consistent element of Sendero Luminoso's military strategy from the beginning of the war. In 1980, *senderistas* firebombed the house of the president of the Electoral Commission of Ayacucho; in 1985, they attacked the president of the National Electoral Commission with

machine guns. Political party headquarters were frequent targets: in 1981, the headquarters of Popular Action (Fernando Belaúnde's party) in Ayacucho was dynamited, and in 1983 the party offices of both Popular Action and the Christian People's Party (PCC) in Lima were attacked with machine guns and dynamite (DESCO, 1989). In 1992, a high-profile economic think tank in Lima, the Institute for Liberty and Democracy, held a meeting in which a number of high-profile advisors to President Alberto Fujimori were present. Sendero Luminoso detonated a car bomb with 300 kilograms of dynamite outside the venue, killing or injuring 21 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003).

In districts where Sendero was coercively dominant, it shifted from a strategy of delegitimization to one of displacement. When Sendero Luminoso entered a community, its first step was to demand the resignation of local authorities. As the insurgents consolidated control over an area, they enforced these demands, killing or expelling local elected officials and bureaucrats. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports nearly 2,000 acts of violence committed by Sendero against political authorities over the course of the war. Senderistas targeted mayors, community leaders, judges, heads of local unions, and traditional authorities with threats and violence. Abimael Guzmán explained this wave of violence as an attempt to "sweep away the old order" to make room for a new, revolutionary political structure (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003).

Examples abound. A particularly violent wave of attacks against elected officials occurred in the department of Huánuco, where the insurgents established a high degree of coercive influence. After subjecting him to "constant threats," Sendero Luminoso assassinated the mayor of Luyando in his office. In 1989, insurgents assassinated the mayoral candidate in the district of Chavinillo. *Senderistas* captured and killed the incoming mayor of San Pedro de Chaulán in 1993. They also killed the mayor of Daniel Alomía Robles district in 1992; he had just recently assumed the office after Sendero had murdered his predecessor. The insurgents threatened violence against all of the candidates running for local office in San Clemente, Ica, if they did not drop out. A candidate for the centrist coalition FREDEMO

refused, so Sendero bombed his house; the remaining candidates dropped out the following day.

In order to impede the conduct of elections, the rebels often targeted bureaucrats involved in local election administration in districts they dominated. Ahead of the 1983 local elections, a group of 40 insurgents murdered the local electoral registrar of Nuevo Occro district and burned down his office. In 1989, Sendero members assassinated a man in Carmen Alto district for having helped run the recent municipal elections; two years later, *senderistas* threatened and ultimately killed the secretary of the electoral commission of the province of Huamanga (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003).

Once it had dismantled the structures of democratic governance in a district, Sendero Luminoso instated its own system of revolutionary, non-democratic rule. A core element of this alternative political vision centered around violent wealth redistribution. After arriving in a town and threatening or killing local officials, Sendero Luminoso would often identify the wealthiest landowner, submit him to a public "people's trial" and execution, and redistribute his land and livestock among the poorer members of the community. In other cases, they would ransack or redistribute the goods of well-off local merchants (Del Pino H., 1998). In those communities without large landowners — recall that Peru had recently undergone an extensive land reform program — the militants would find a slightly wealthier smallholder to target.

In "liberated zones" and towns it fully controlled, Sendero went further, creating a new local government by selecting members of the community to participate in "people's assemblies" (Del Pino H., 1998). One of the principal functions of these assemblies was to regulate social life in the community — to resolve disputes, supervise teachers and local officials, serve as morality police, and punish people who committed crimes (Manrique, 1998). The punishments for violations of the law were draconian. The constitution of one people's assembly in the town of Nueva Esperanza, Alto Huallaga, outlines these punishments: jailing for smoking or gambling, beating for stealing or assault, death by firing squad for collaborat-

ing with security forces (Gorriti, n.d.). Punishments were often carried out through public executions conducted in front of the community (Del Pino H., 1998).

Consistent with its goal of replacing extant forms of political or social organization, Sendero Luminoso also attempted to stamp out religious and cultural institutions. In areas it controlled, Sendero prohibited religious practices and banned traditional holidays like Christmas. The insurgents "demanded that the peasants 'submit' not to God but to [Abimael Guzmán]" and established a new calendar of celebrations, including a holiday marking the beginning of the armed struggle and one for Guzmán's birthday (Del Pino H., 1998, 175-76). These impositions were highly unpopular. Taken as a whole, Sendero Luminoso's strategy of displacement sought to replace the existing system of democratic governance with a wide-ranging set of institutions broadly incompatible with democracy: violent wealth redistribution without any pretense of due process; unpopular, undemocratic bodies for local governance; and draconian rules for social control.

3.6 Displacement in Carrión Province

To more thoroughly draw out the mechanisms of displacement and its effects on democratic outcomes, I turn to a case study of a province in the central Andean highlands, Daniel A. Carrión Province in the department of Pasco. The CVR narratives offer a remarkably complete picture of Sendero Luminoso's activities in Carrión Province in the early years of the war, including when the insurgents first arrived and what violent and non-violent actions they took. I use this narrative to piece together an account of the activities involved in Sendero Luminoso's attempts to displace democracy. I then examine the electoral effects of this strategy by conducting a synthetic control study of protest voting. I find that displacement had striking effects on voter behavior: protest voting rates skyrocketed in the following election and remained unusually high for at least a decade.

3.6.1 Sendero Luminoso in Carrión Province

Sendero Luminoso insurgents arrived in the central department of Pasco early in the war. After launching hostilities in 1980, the rebels began to make their way north along the Andes corridor from their original base of operations of Ayacucho. Sendero announced its presence in Carrión Province in 1982 with a pair of assassinations. The insurgents then ramped up their campaign against democracy in early 1983, ahead of the local elections that were to be held in November.

A group of insurgents entered the town of San Juan de Yacán in May 1983 and forced all of the residents to convene on the campus of the local high school. The CVR quotes one resident:

> "Once we were all in the classroom, the attackers identified themselves as members of Sendero Luminoso and talked to us about their ideology, [they kept us] until 5pm teaching us songs."

After this forced indoctrination session, the militants then named a group of residents as representatives to the Sendero commander — effectively organizing a new town council. The *senderistas* then threatened seven local authorities with death if they did not resign their posts and left. They returned a month later: "Approximately 100 members of [Sendero Luminoso], dressed in black and hooded, carried the seven town authorities to the plaza where they shot them, killing them. They then retreated, yelling 'this is how traitors die"' (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003). Over the following years, Sendero Luminoso assassinated at least three more local elected officials in the province.

The use of force to uproot local democracy was accompanied by an attempt to introduce alternative governance structures. Beyond appointing new leadership bodies to interface with the insurgents, Sendero focused its governance efforts on violent wealth redistribution. Around the same time, thirty militants killed Alcira Benavides Albeo de Madrid in Yanahuanca district after a "popular trial" in which they accused him of being a wealthy landowner; they looted his estate and redistributed his belongings and livestock among

community members. According to the CVR report, news of "the assassination of Alcira Benavides [...] rapidly spread through all the towns and annexes of Yanahuanca." Sendero also assassinated two people in Páucar for "having extensive land and livestock" and redistributed their belongings (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003).

This intervention thus encompasses all of the major elements of a strategy of displacement. The insurgents employed systematic violence against elected officials, killing them or forcing them to abandon their posts. They then sought to fill the newly-created political vacuum with their own system of political order: instituting new organizations for local governance, indoctrinating residents in the group's revolutionary ideology, and imposing (incipient) alternative forms of non-democratic governance for wealth redistribution and social organization.

3.6.2 Synthetic control analysis

What effect did this intervention have on election outcomes? By violently uprooting local democracy, scaring off candidates, and enmeshing voters in Sendero Luminoso's alternative structures of rule, I expect that it caused a sharp increase in protest voting. I evaluate this hypothesis through a synthetic control study. Since no natural baseline exists, I use the synthetic control method (Abadie & Gardeazabal, 2003; Abadie *et al.*, 2010) to construct a counterfactual version of Carrión Province — one that was not "treated" by Sendero Luminoso's intervention. The synthetic control method builds an artificial version of the treated unit as a weighted combination of untreated units, optimized to closely mirror the trajectory of the treated unit's covariates and outcomes prior to treatment. It then predicts the post-treatment outcome of that artificial, untreated unit in order to serve as a baseline to the treated unit.

Using election and census data, I build a panel of province-election cycles leading up to 1983. Since Peru was ruled by a military dictatorship from 1968 to 1980, I use results from the 1963, 1966, and 1980 local elections and the 1978 constitutional assembly election to

establish the trajectory of null-and-spoiled votes across provinces. I gather this data from Tuesta Soldevilla (2001) and from original collection. In order for the synthetic Carrión Province to approximate the real one along the key socio-political covariates that may affect protest voting, I interpolate several statistics from the 1961, 1972, and 1981 censuses and from Albertus (2020).

To control for previous political orientation, which may correlate with the likelihood of protest voting, I include a measure of leftist party voteshare (available for 1978 and 1980). I record the provincial illiteracy rate and the proportion of residents speaking Spanish as a first language to account for two potential causes of non-protest blank-or-spoiled ballots (ballots were printed in Spanish). I also incorporate a count of past social movements as a broad measure of capacity for social mobilization, either within or against electoral politics. Finally, one might expect higher levels of protest balloting where economic conditions are poor and the state is absent or ineffectual. I include province population, as well as mean elevation, road density, and proportion of cultivable land as proxies for economic opportunity, and the (log) count of government employees as a measure of local state capacity.

To establish the donor pool for the synthetic control, I subset the sample to the 57 provinces that did not experience civil war violence through 1983 and for which I have complete information.[17] This donor pool allows me to construct a synthetic control province that shares the social and political characteristics of Carrión that may affect protest voting, but that is not treated by Sendero Luminoso's activities. The pre-treatment characteristics of the synthetic Carrión Province generated by this approach are summarized in Table A.12 (Appendix). Table A.13 (Appendix) shows which donor provinces combined to create the synthetic province. It appears to be composed of provinces from around the country, from the south to the central highlands and the Amazonian interior.

The results of the synthetic control analysis are depicted in Figure 3.2. The protest vote-

[17]This group consists of those provinces for which the CVR records no events prior to 1984. Given that Sendero Luminoso's presence almost invariably entailed violence against local leaders or coercive redistribution from economic elites, this group should not have experienced insurgent intervention.

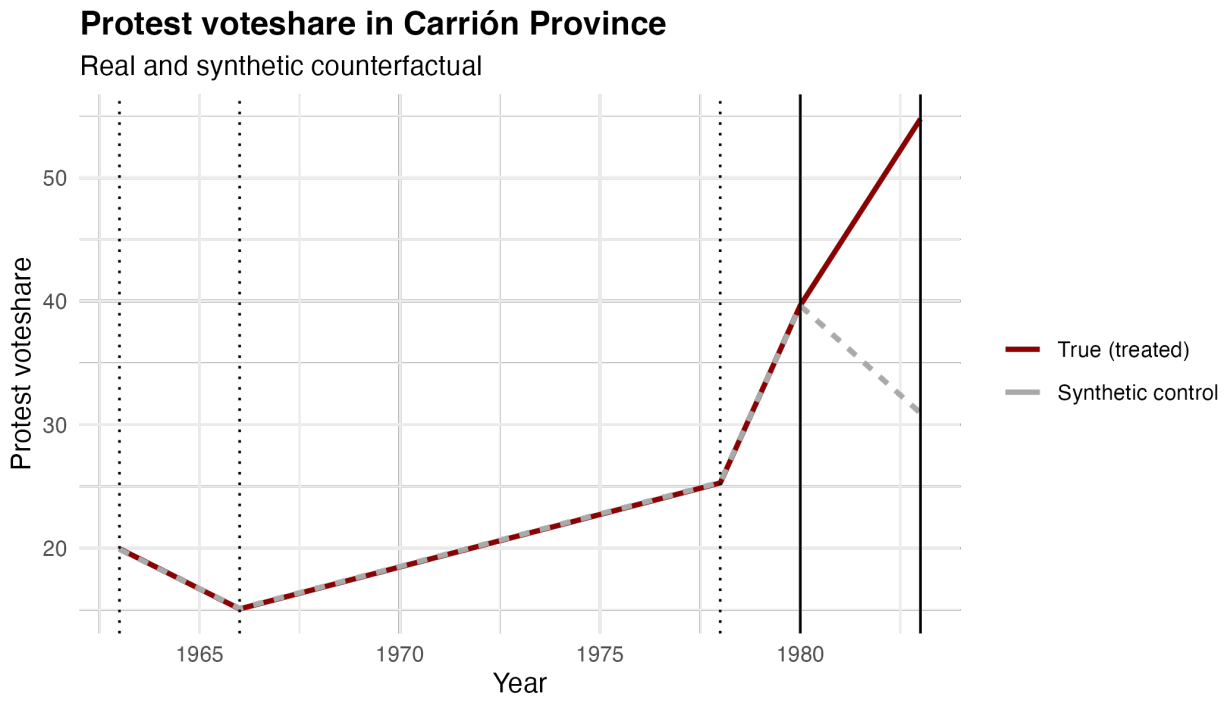

Figure 3.2: Synthetic control results

share of the synthetic Carrión approximates the true province tightly until the treatment period, at which point it diverges sharply from the true value. This disjuncture suggests a substantial treatment effect: an impressive 54% of votes cast in the real Carrión Province in 1983 were blank or spoiled, compared to 31% in the synthetic control province. This treatment effect — a 20 percentage point increase — is large, equaling more than two standard deviations of the full sample of protest voteshares. It is also substantively significant: the fact that more than half of votes cast in Carrión Province were invalid carries a clear political message, and approaches the threshold for annulling the election.

Is this effect statistically robust, or could it be spurious? I follow Abadie & Gardeazabal (2003) in evaluating statistical confidence through placebo-style tests. I conduct placebo tests for each province in the donor pool. Each of these tests fits a synthetic control for the placebo unit (excluding Carrión from the donor pool) and estimates the treatment effect. If a spurious or unobserved factor were driving the treatment effect for Carrión, it would likely show up in the results of these control units as well.

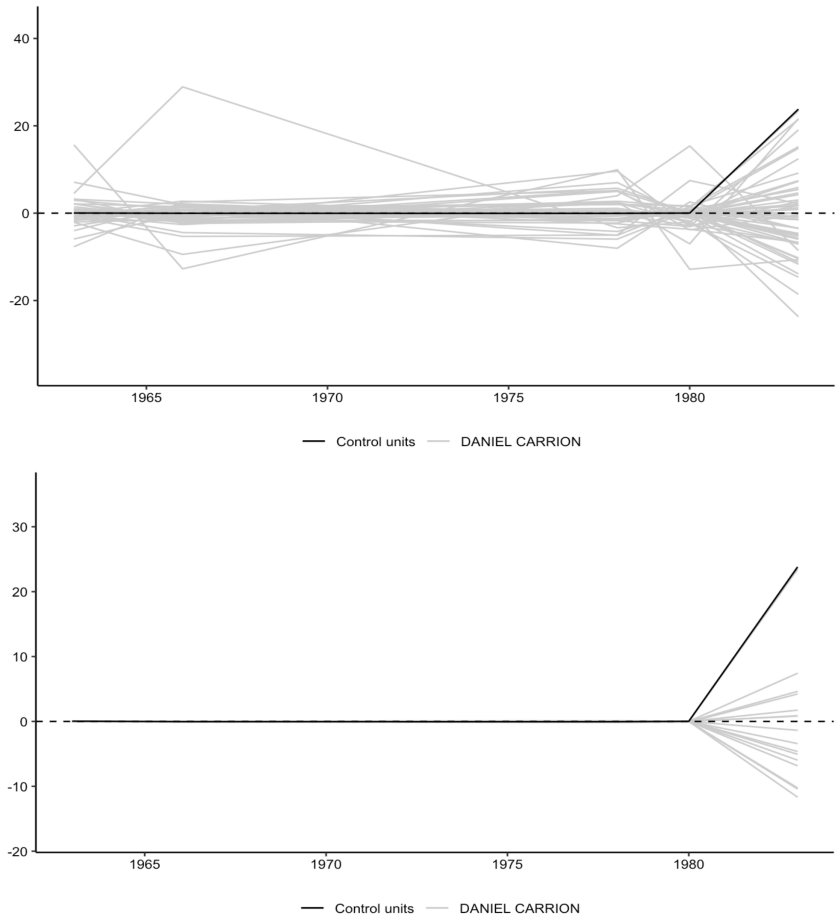

Figure 3.3: Placebo tests

Plots depicting the gap between true and synthetic protest voteshare over time across units. All placebos (top) and placebos with up to 10x the MSPE of Carrión province (bottom).

Figure 3.3 graphs the results of these tests. In both plots, the y-axis shows the gap between the true and synthetic protest voteshare for each placebo unit; the magnitude of that gap in the period following 1980 is the treatment effect. The top pane shows the results of the full set of placebo tests, with Carrión's trajectory bolded. Carrión appears to have a large but not wholly unparalleled treatment effect. However, many of the placebo units depicted suffer from poor model fit (hence the comparatively large gaps in the pre-treatment period). The bottom plot considers only placebo units for which good synthetic controls could be found (provinces with up to 10 times the mean squared prediction error (MSPE) of the treated unit). Among this more credible population of placebos, Carrión's treatment

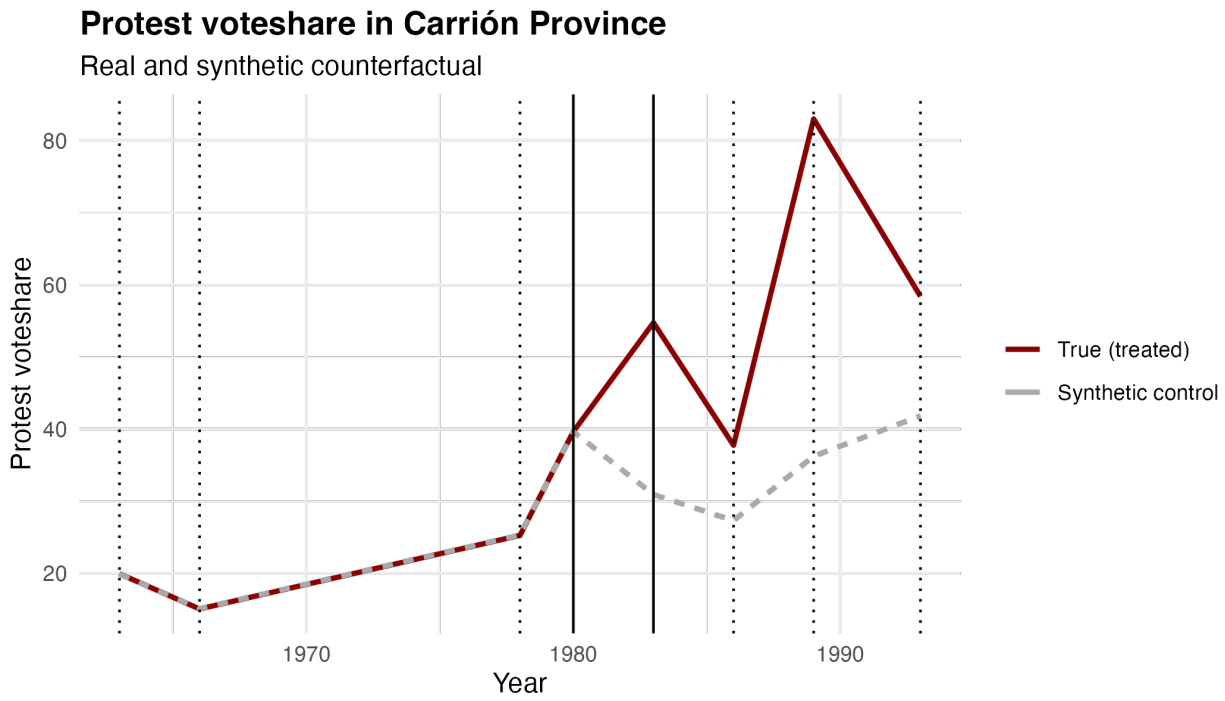

Figure 3.4: Long-run effects

effect appears to be substantially larger than an effect one might observe by chance.

Does the effect of displacement extend beyond 1983? Though the insurgents continued to maintain a presence in the province, the CVR records only isolated attacks against elections or local authorities after the mid-1980s. But they are reasons to think the effects of displacement may be lasting. Discrediting and displacing democracy exacts a toll on public faith in democracy: persecuting elected officials reduces the effectiveness of governance and discourages quality politicians from running in future campaigns; impeding elections damages citizens' confidence in the ability of the democratic state to effectively channel the popular will into policy.

To investigate this possibility, I extend the synthetic control estimation across the three following local elections: 1986, 1989, and 1993. The results are depicted in Figure 3.4. The treatment effect extends well into the future: ten years later, the protest voteshare recorded in Carrión Province was just shy of 60%, nearly 20 percentage points higher than in the counterfactual province. Sendero Luminoso's war against democracy seems to have

succeeded in shaking faith in the democratic process for years to come.

3.7 Conclusion

For armed groups with democracy-incompatible goals, the democratic system is not a prize but a target. These groups aim to tear down democracy: to discredit it in the eyes of its citizens, to hamper its ability to elect new political leaders, to evict its authorities and replace them with non-democratic governance structures. When these low-compatibility actors have little capacity to effectively coerce voters and politicians, they instead aim to commit acts of spectacular violence against elections, political gatherings, and other symbols of democratic rule.

When these armed groups enjoy a higher level of coercive capacity, they expand the scope of this intervention. They pair these spectacular acts of violence with functional attacks on candidates, voters, and poll workers to prevent them from participating in elections; they threaten local elected officials with death if they do not abandon their posts. This full-bore assault on democracy leaves communities ungoverned, starved of authorities and struggling to hold elections to replenish their ranks. The armed group fills this political vacuum with an alternative set of non-democratic governance institutions compatible with their political aims.

Evidence from the Sendero Luminoso insurgency in Peru provides broad support for these propositions. An examination of Sendero's doctrinal documents suggests that the group saw its goals as wholly incompatible with Peruvian democracy, which Abimael Guzmán saw as an impenetrable dictatorship of the oligarchy masked by a thin veneer of popular consent. Quantitative and qualitative analysis depict behavior largely consistent with the theoretical framework: audacious attacks against high-profile targets outside of Sendero's zone of influence, and a methodical campaign to displace and replace the infrastructure of democratic rule in communities the group influenced.

Sendero Luminoso's war against Peruvian democracy was ultimately a failure. As the state ramped up counterinsurgency efforts in the late 1980s and Sendero Luminoso began to struggle militarily and economically, the insurgents increasingly turned their use of violence against the rural poor to prevent collaboration with state authorities and to extract food, supplies, and conscripts. Governance institutions that had sometimes been popular became more repressive and abusive (Del Pino H., 1998; McClintock, 2001). Sendero Luminoso rapidly lost popular support and was effectively marginalized in the years following Abimael Guzmán's capture.

But the insurgents did succeed in doing lasting damage to Peru's democratic culture and institutions. The 1980s offered a moment of democratic promise: the peaceful transition from military dictatorship was met by an explosion of political competition, including an unprecedented level of electoral success for leftist parties. Sendero Luminoso's intervention spoiled that promise. The "legal left," in particular, suffered a double blow. Conservative parties campaigning against Izquierda Unida accused it of association with the insurgents. There was little truth in these claims: rather than support the leftist coalition, Sendero Luminoso disparaged IU and targeted its candidates and operatives with unrelenting violence. In 1990, Sendero's brutality precipitated the election of Alberto Fujimori on a hardline law and order platform, closing the space for political competition and plunging Peru back into dictatorship.

Chapter 4

"The Combination of All Forms of Struggle": The FARC's Democratic Double Game

4.1 Introduction

Having examined the behavior of armed actors with a low level of compatibility, I turn now to medium-compatibility groups. Like their low-compatibility counterparts, these groups possess a set of goals that they see as being irreconcilable with the core tenets of democracy and therefore unachievable through the democratic process. But they also have a set of goals that *are* compatible with democracy — political or economic aims that can feasibly be accomplished through elections and the democratic legislative and policymaking processes. As a result, I have argued, these groups are torn between two competing impulses: on one hand, to tear down democratic institutions in order to discredit the state and the notion of democratic rule; on the other, to appropriate the infrastructure of democracy in order to accomplish the goals they see as compatible with the democratic process.

The tension between these two imperatives can lead to behaviors that appear incoherent. These groups will sometimes disrupt elections with violence, or threaten elected officials unless they abandon their posts. At other times, they will seek to sway who wins elections by manipulating voters and politicians to advantage some candidates over others, and they will coerce elected officials to shift public policy, siphon off public resources, or appropriate bureaucracies. Often their words will not match their actions: they will proclaim that democracy is a sham and elections are rigged, but they will quietly work with elected officials to meet their political aims when opportunities arise.

In practice, I propose, medium-compatibility groups often resolve this incoherence by adjusting their strategy according to the local coercive environment. When they have little capacity to feasibly threaten voters and politicians with coercion — and thus a limited ability to bend the democratic process to achieve their democracy-compatible goals — they prioritize attempts to *delegitimize* democracy by committing spectacular acts of terrorism against elections and political elites. When they enjoy a greater degree of coercive capacity, the opportunity to appropriate the machinery of democratic politics is too valuable to pass up.

Table 4.1: Strategies of intervention for medium-compatibility groups

		Compatibility		
		Low	**Medium**	High
Coercion	Low	Delegitimization	**Delegitimization**	Corruption
	High	Displacement	**Capture**	Capture

In those cases medium-compatibility groups instead pursue a strategy of *capture*, (quietly) co-opting elected authorities to accomplish their political and economic aims. The decision to co-opt the democratic state is reflected in their use of violence in places they have coercive influence: unlike delegitimization, in these places medium-compatibility groups forgo spectacular violence and instead target functional violence against voters, candidates, and elected officials to shape the electoral playing field and the outcomes of the policymaking process. Table 4.1 illustrates these expectations.

I assess these hypotheses through an examination of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a Marxist insurgency active in Colombia for over 50 years. After introducing the political and social context of the Colombian civil war, I structure the analysis to parallel that presented in Chapter 3. I begin by studying quantitative and qualitative evidence of the FARC's rhetoric around democracy to establish the group's level of compatibility with democracy, and then proceed to a mixed-methods examination of the insurgents' intervention in the democratic process. As before, I estimate the FARC's coercive capacity via Hidden Markov Model and rely on exogenous variation in profit from the coca economy — a core source of the FARC's military finance as it had been for Sendero Luminoso — to causally identify the effects of coercive capacity on violence and election outcomes. Qualitative evidence from across the FARC's five-decade existence substantiates these results.

Throughout this analysis, I draw comparisons with the case of Sendero Luminoso. The two groups were similar along a range of core dimensions. The two largest and most promi-

nent insurgencies in Latin American history, both were centralized Andean Marxist organizations with substantial influence in rural areas and lesser degrees of influence in urban peripheries.[1] Both waged war against medium-capacity democratic states supported by the United States and paramilitary allies; both committed large-scale violence against civilians. This comparison thus allows me to minimize the confounding effects of several variables that could affect the two actors' behavior, and to focus on the causal effect of compatibility with democracy.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine a case study of capture by the FARC. From 1998 to 2002, the Colombian government granted the insurgents complete territorial control over a "demilitarized zone" (DMZ) of five municipalities in south-central Colombia, encompassing an area of 42,000 square kilometers. Drawing on first-hand accounts from journalists and testimonies gathered by the Truth Commission, I study how the insurgents leveraged their complete coercive control to co-opt local democratic leaders and bureaucracies to fit their political project. I then turn to quantitative analysis of the policy effects of democratic capture, focusing on a core element of the insurgents' political platform: land redistribution. Using a geographic regression discontinuity design around the borders of the demilitarized zone, I find a greater prevalence of small parcels of land just inside the DMZ boundary than just outside — evidence of the FARC's land redistribution campaign. Democratic capture appears to have lasting policy consequences.

4.2 Case background

Colombia has a long democratic history. Unlike most countries in the region, since independence it has experienced few periods of dictatorship. For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, Colombian politics was instead dominated by two hegemonic parties. The Liberal and Conservative parties traded off periods of ascendancy and bitter partisan rivalry, which

[1] To be sure, important ideological differences separate Maoist groups — and Sendero's vision of Maoism in particular — from Marxist groups like the FARC (Gregor & Chang, 1978; Starn, 1995), but these doctrinal differences do not predict distinct behavior toward democratic actors and institutions.

episodically spilled over into violent conflict. This happened most infamously in 1948, when populist Liberal politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated while running for president, triggering a decade-long civil war known as *La Violencia*.

In addition to partisan warfare between Conservatives and Liberals, *La Violencia* triggered a series of peasant uprisings across rural Colombia in protest of deep inequalities in land ownership. The Conservative government in power during the early years of the war harshly repressed these uprisings, leading the rural poor — supported and organized by the Colombian Communist Party — to organize armed self-defense units. These peasant militias declared autonomy from the state and established what came to be known as "independent republics" — enclaves where the central and state and large landowners were absent and Community Party-organized collectives ruled (Leech, 2011).

The FARC was born in one of these enclaves. In 1964, the Colombian and U.S. militaries launched a large-scale operation to subdue the independent republic of Marquetalia in the central department of Tolima. The survivors of this assault, including two men, Manuel Marulanda and Jacobo Arenas, who would go on to lead the FARC, regrouped later that year with fighters who had fled other vanquished independent republics and established the FARC as a Marxist-Leninist insurgent organization (Molano, 2017; Karl, 2017). Unusually among the Latin American Marxist insurgent groups of the era, the FARC were primarily organized and led by the rural poor they claimed to represent rather than by urban ideologues (Brittain, 2010; Leech, 2011).

The FARC remained small and the conflict primarily limited to peripheral areas of central and southern Colombia for the first decade of the war. In the late 1970s, however, the insurgents began to grow, increasing their income by expanding the use of kidnapping for ransom and, crucially, embracing the coca economy. By the mid-1980s, the FARC had established a presence in 15% of the country's municipalities (Brittain, 2010). Faced with this alarming growth, President Belisario Betancur (1982-86) launched peace negotiations

with the FARC leadership.[2] The 1984 La Uribe Agreement called for a ceasefire and, as will be discussed below, set the framework for the FARC to join with the Communist Party to create a political party, the Patriotic Union (UP). This experiment ended in disaster: after contesting a series of elections in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the UP was destroyed in a wave of assassinations by paramilitary groups (Rodríguez Navarrete, 2005).

The conflict continued to escalate through the 1990s, as the FARC deepened its involvement in cocaine trafficking and expanded its use of kidnapping for profit (Gilbert, 2022). Homicide rates and clashes with security forces spiked. By 1999, the FARC had established a military presence in 95% of the country (Brittain, 2010). The same year saw President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002) launch another major peace process, in which — as will be discussed in depth in section 4.6 — the Colombian government withdrew all security forces from a "demilitarized zone" of five municipalities, which the FARC were given political authority over for three years in order to negotiate "as equals." This peace process, too, ultimately failed and the government retook the demilitarized zone in 2002.

The conflict then entered its final phase. Amid rampant dissatisfaction with escalating violence and the failure of the Caguán peace process, Álvaro Uribe won the presidency on a militant law and order platform. With large-scale financial and military backing from the United States, Uribe launched a massive national counterinsurgency campaign and corresponding state-building effort — strengthening security forces, expanding the presence of police units in rural areas, and aggressively repressing the FARC across the country. This marked the bloodiest phase of the war, as the FARC, security forces, and paramilitary groups committed widespread human rights abuses (Leech, 2011). Violence levels began to subside again after 2010, when the more moderate Juan Manuel Santos (2010-18) was elected to the presidency. Santos and the FARC leadership quietly launched a new process of negotiations in Havana in 2012. This process ultimately culminated in a successful peace agreement in 2016, in which the insurgents agreed to disarm and form a political party in exchange for

[2]Betancur also initiated parallel negotiations with three other Marxist insurgent groups: the M-19, Popular Liberation Army (EPL), and National Liberation Army (ELN).

guaranteed political representation in Congress, assistance with reintegration into society, and investment in rural development (CNN, 2016). This agreement has largely held, though some FARC units defected and continue to fight.

4.3 Compatibility with democracy

As in Chapter 3, I begin my analysis with a quantitative examination of the FARC's rhetoric around democracy. I again turn to the CeDeMa corpus to situate this rhetoric relative to the broader population of armed groups in the region. CeDeMa's collection of FARC documents stretches from the group's foundation through its 2016 demobilization, but the density of documents is heavily skewed toward the latter period, probably due to increased data availability.[3][4] It includes press releases, doctrinal statements from party conferences, and speeches and editorials by insurgent leaders. I again compare the FARC's rhetoric against the full universe of documents in CeDeMa's corpus: 7,699 documents by 386 armed groups and associated organizations from 21 countries in the Americas.

For comparability, I exactly replicate the steps laid out in Chapter 3. I break the corpus up into sentences, use keyword searches to identify which sentences mention democracy or elections, and then analyze the rhetorical content of those sentences through word embeddings. Using the scaling method from Kozlowski *et al.* (2019), I assess the FARC's language about democracy along the same five dimensions I selected to analyze Sendero Luminoso's rhetoric: overall valence, which I define as the vector from the word "bad" to "good"; how functional democratic institutions are for achieving the group's political aims (from "ineffective" to "effective"); how democratic or dictatorial they are ("democracy" to "dictatorship"); how much they are influenced by elite interests ("masses" to "elites"); and how unfair their

[3]CeDeMa also has documents from splinter groups that defected from the 2016 peace deal and continue to operate. I do not include these since these dissident groups are functionally distinct organizations from the old FARC.

[4]Unfortunately, this heavy skew toward the 2000s and 2010s makes quantitative comparisons of the FARC's rhetoric across decades impossible. I attempt such a temporal analysis using qualitative evidence later in the chapter.

Table 4.2: How the FARC discussed democracy

	Valence (1)	Efficacy (2)	Dictatorship (3)	Elitism (4)	Unfairness (5)
(Intercept)	-0.0307**	-0.0426**	0.0323**	-0.0366**	-0.0168*
	(0.0080)	(0.0079)	(0.0080)	(0.0080)	(0.0080)
FARC	0.2777**	0.3853**	-0.2914**	0.3307**	0.1520**
	(0.0238)	(0.0261)	(0.0244)	(0.0227)	(0.0240)
Observations	17,465	17,465	17,465	17,465	17,465
R^2	0.00759	0.01461	0.00836	0.01077	0.00227
Adjusted R^2	0.00753	0.01456	0.00830	0.01071	0.00222

*OLS models with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

outcomes are ("just" to "unjust"). I record the score of each noun, verb, and adjective in the corpus along each dimension and average them to generate standardized sentence-level scores. To identify differences in how the FARC discusses democracy relative to the average group in the sample, I regress the sentence-level scores for each dimension on an indicator for whether the FARC authored the sentence.

The results are depicted in Table 4.2. They suggest a striking divergence from the patterns that characterized Sendero Luminoso's rhetoric. Compared to the average group in the sample, the FARC spoke more positively about democracy by nearly a third of a standard deviation (Model 1). It framed democratic institutions as efficacious rather than impotent (.4 standard deviations closer to the "effective" end of the dimension than the sample average, Model 2), and was less likely to characterize democracy with a language of dictatorship (Model 3). In contrast, the FARC leaned heavily on the process-based criticisms that Sendero Luminoso largely eschewed: it was substantially more likely to criticize Colombian democracy as being dominated by elites and as producing unfair outcomes.

These aggregate tendencies suggest a foundational difference in how the FARC conceived of democracy compared to the average militant group — and particularly compared to Sendero Luminoso. Whereas the Peruvian insurgents condemned democracy as useless and

effectively dictatorial, the FARC employed a much more positive frame, emphasizing the viability of the democratic process for achieving change and declining to characterize it as a dictatorship. Rather, the Colombian rebels stressed the type of processual critiques that Sendero largely eschewed, complaining about problems with the democratic process without rejecting the notion of democracy altogether.

Do these tendencies reflect the FARC's specific beliefs about democracy, or do they capture general patterns in the group's rhetoric across topics? As in Chapter 3, I conduct a series of randomization inference-style placebo tests to address this question. For each group in the corpus, I randomly sample a set of sentences equal in size to the number of sentences in which the group mentions democracy. I then re-estimate the models in Table 4.2 and record the t-scores on the *FARC* term. I replicate this procedure 1000 times. If the rhetorical differences I observe in the FARC's discussion of democracy represent general tendencies in how the group's leadership talked and wrote about the world, I would expect to see similarly large and directionally consistent t-scores in these placebo regressions as in the main models.

The results of this exercise are visualized in Figure B.1 (Appendix). In all cases, the t-scores in Models 1-5 are stark outliers. Outside of discussions of democracy, the FARC was much less of an outlier in the positivity of its rhetoric or its propensity to characterize subjects as efficacious, dictatorial, or elitist. In general discussion, the FARC was less likely to employ language around unfairness — a frame it leaned on heavily in its rhetoric around democracy. The differences I detect in Table 4.2 seem to point to a specific conception of democracy distinct from the group's general view of the world. The FARC, this evidence suggests, viewed democratic rule as a deeply flawed but ultimately viable means for achieving the group's revolutionary aims.

Qualitative evidence from the corpus substantiates this conclusion. To be sure, the FARC had many complaints about Colombian democracy. Like Sendero Luminoso, the FARC often encouraged voters to abstain or cast protest ballots. But its rationale was much less

extreme than the rhetoric Sendero Luminoso employed. A 1997 press release calling for voters to abstain claimed that "elections in Colombia had been distorted, rigged, manipulated, and corrupted by the oligarchy," which had governed on behalf of the "owners of domestic and international capital, drug traffickers, and large landowners who finance costly electoral campaigns." The statement went on to protest specific forms of electoral malfeasance — "vote-buying, voter relocation, issuing multiple identification cards, nepotism, moving polling places, assuming the identities of dead people" — that are commonly critiqued by mainstream political parties (Secretariado Nacional FARC-EP, 1997). This argument reads less like a categorical rejection of democracy and more like a process critique of a democratic system beholden to elite interests.

Ahead of the 2011 local elections, a press release issued by the FARC Secretariat levied a harsher critique of Colombian democracy.

> "'[R]epresentative democracy' is the government of the ruling class and the class in power. At least in Colombia, no one can deny, first of all, that elections are rigged and their results are spurious; secondly, that the so-called 'representation' excludes the people from governing the nation; and thirdly, that public administration always remains in the hands of political figureheads, the mafias of drug trafficking, corruption, contractors, paramilitary mafias, or mafias defending the interests of foreign multinational corporations, and once again, the ruling classes" (CeDeMa, 2011b).

In the FARC's eyes, Colombian democracy was deeply broken; elections were rigged and the state was controlled by the ruling classes, the wealthy, the military, and foreign powers while the masses were excluded from power. Given this state of affairs, the FARC leadership "call[ed] on the Colombian people to abstain" from voting in the upcoming elections.

Unlike Sendero Luminoso, however, the FARC did not sustain this hardline stance against democracy. The same press release went on to note that the insurgents would "respect the will of the citizenry to vote for whomever they desire." To those voters who wanted to turn out, they offered a clear prescription: "We call on those who have decided to participate not to vote for the representatives of the parties of the oligarchy, enemies of the people,

and true perpetrators of the violence, corruption, and injustices that batter Colombia." The FARC vowed that they would "prevent the presence of recognized candidates linked to paramilitarism in our areas of influence," and that they would "oppose by all means any candidate [attacking] us in their campaigns or supporting candidates from the ruling parties" (CeDeMa, 2011b).

This represents a substantial departure from Sendero Luminoso's wholesale rejection of elections. Despite their serious misgivings about the process of Colombian democracy, the FARC expressed an openness to voters participating in elections. More importantly still, the FARC leadership staked out a clear preference about who wins and who loses elections. They implored voters to cast their ballots against the conservative "parties of the oligarchy," and vowed to impede conservative candidates from campaigning in communities where the FARC held power. Unlike Sendero Luminoso, for the FARC the results of elections had important consequences for political outcomes — an implicit recognition that electing the right parties and candidates could begin to generate the policy changes the group sought.

At times the FARC even urged voters to turn out. In an interview ahead of the 2006 presidential election, in which Álvaro Uribe was running for a second term, FARC commander Raúl Reyes proclaimed that the insurgents would not prevent citizens in areas they controlled from going to the polls. Though he said he could not bring himself to vote, he implored the group's supporters to cast their ballots "for any candidate except the current fascist, paramilitary president." Questioned about this change in the group's position, Reyes stated that "the FARC are not anti-electoral [...] the FARC analyzes when one should participate in elections, under which conditions and concrete positions" (Raúl Reyes, 2006). The FARC also espoused a degree of optimism about the possibility of achieving success through electoral politics. A 2005 statement by Manuel Marulanda evaluated the political viability of leftist parties ahead of the 2006 national elections, noting that "the attempt by left-wing forces to create a common front against *uribismo* in the upcoming electoral campaign is not easy, but it is not impossible" (CeDeMa, 2005).

When the insurgents sketched out their political vision for the country, they often claimed a commitment to democratic institutions and ideals. Their ultimate goal — one plainly incompatible with democracy — was always socialist revolution, the forcible overthrow of the state and the creation of a new government. Yet the form of this new government often sounded fairly democratic. A document produced at the Ninth General Conference of the FARC in 2008 spelled out their vision for a "New Colombia." After winning the war, they committed to

> "[n]ational, regional, and municipal democratic participation in decisions that impact the future of society. The people assert themselves as sovereign and, as such, directly elect the President, members of the unicameral legislature, the heads of moral authority (Office of the Attorney General, Office of the Ombudsman, and Office of the Comptroller General), and the head of the electoral authority. [...] The Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, the State Council, and the National Council of the Judiciary will be elected by the direct vote of all judges and magistrates in the country, following the democratization of the judicial system (CeDeMa, 2008).

This proposed revolutionary government featured some important differences from the incumbent regime in Bogotá, chiefly an emphasis on direct democracy at the expense of political parties. But it hardly looks anti-democratic. Leaders would be selected through full-suffrage national elections to staff a presidency, legislature, and judicial system. Even the particular, specialized institutions of 21st-century Colombian democracy — the Ombudsman, the National Council of the Judiciary — would be preserved in the FARC's vision of a New Colombia. Along the way, the FARC promised, it would seek to "support the struggle to change political customs in our country" (CeDeMa, 2011b) and to "reconstruct the rules of democracy in order to debate programs and ideas from [a position of] equality of opportunity" (CeDeMa, 2011a). Despite railing against democratic governance and vowing to overthrow the elected political order by force, the FARC's political vision sounded remarkably consistent with the ideals and institutional frameworks of democracy in Colombia.

The combination of this textual evidence suggests a mixed, somewhat conflicted view

of democracy and its viability for achieving the FARC's goals.[5][6] In the insurgents' eyes, Colombian democracy was deeply flawed; elections were tilted in favor of establishment parties and moneyed interests and elected authorities ignored the demands of the people. But the solution to this impediment lay not in abandoning the notion of democracy but in reshaping the rules of the game to empower the sectors of Colombian society that the FARC prized. Based on this evidence, I classify the FARC as possessing a medium level of compatibility with democracy: combining incompatible goals (the violent overthrow of the constitutional order) with compatible goals (redistributive governance directly responsive to the interests of the poor and rural Colombians who made up the FARC's core constituency.)

4.4 Coercive capacity

Having established the FARC's level of compatibility with democracy, I turn to measuring its coercive capacity across time and space. I again employ a Hidden Markov Model (HMM) to classify the FARC's level of coercive capacity as *High* or *Low* in each of Colombia's 1,122 districts (municipalities) for every year between 2002 and 2015.[7] I select this time period for reasons of data availability; detailed violent event data necessary to detect attacks on politicians and the democratic process are only available after 2000. This period also marks a distinct, final phase in the FARC's existence as an insurgent group. The 2002 election of hardline conservative president Álvaro Uribe, following the collapse of the El Caguán peace process, triggered the bloodiest stage of the war, with cascading militarized crackdowns by

[5]This conflicted perspective sometimes generated confusion among the group's leadership. In a 2010 letter to the Secretariat from Jorge Briceño Suárez (known as Mono Jojoy), commander of the powerful Eastern Bloc, he notes that "about elections we are not doing anything here, people are beginning to ask what our position is, I don't have any clear idea, so what should I do?" (Briceño Suárez, 2010).

[6]As in the case of Sendero Luminoso, these documents should be interpreted with a degree of caution. The FARC likely had incentives to exaggerate its pro-democratic bona fides to foster domestic and international legitimacy and improve its negotiating position with the government. All of the documents I analyze here are public-facing. But the group's ultimate fate suggests that systematic deception about its preferences around democracy was unlikely: electoral inclusion for the FARC's political party was arguably the single most important demand of the FARC negotiators during the 2016 peace process.

[7]I employ the same HMM parameters as in the previous chapter, except that I set the starting probability of high capacity as 0.4 instead of 0.2 to reflect the fact that the FARC had substantially more coercive influence in 2002 than Sendero Luminoso enjoyed in 1980.

security forces and paramilitaries met by increasingly violent FARC responses. The level of violence slowly abated after Uribe's more moderate successor, Juan Manuel Santos, took office in 2010, culminating in the 2016 peace accord. My analysis consequently runs through 2015, the final full year of the war.

I draw the violent event data to estimate the Hidden Markov Model from two sources. To record instances of civilian victimization by the FARC, I use a dataset of human rights abuses aggregated by the Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP), a think tank in Bogotá. CINEP has a decades-long history of tracking violent events committed by the state, insurgents, paramilitaries, and criminal groups in Colombia. It draws on a combination of original data collection, testimony from social leaders and victims, records from local non-governmental organizations, and validated media reports. I pair this data with evidence of FARC clashes with the state and other armed groups, which I take from the National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH), a state institution charged with preserving memory of the Colombian civil war; like CINEP, the CNMH draws data from civil society groups, news media, and civilian testimonies, but also relies on the military and state institutions as sources for data on clashes between combatants. Using these two sources, I record district-year counts of civilian victimization by the FARC and of confrontations between the FARC and security forces or other armed groups. I again exclude attacks on the democratic process, voters, or elected officials from these violence signatures to avoid selecting on the dependent variable. The spatial distribution of coercive capacity in the sample as given by the Hidden Markov Model is depicted in Figure 4.1.

As in Chapter 3, inferential concerns around the endogeneity of coercive capacity loom. I turn to the same empirical strategy to ameliorate them. Even more than Sendero Luminoso, the FARC relied on coca cultivation to finance its war effort. In the early years of the war, the FARC maintained an ambivalent relationship with the coca economy, which it saw as a distraction from its political goals and feared could imperil public support. This stance changed in the 1990s, as the war escalated and the insurgents grew desperate for ad-

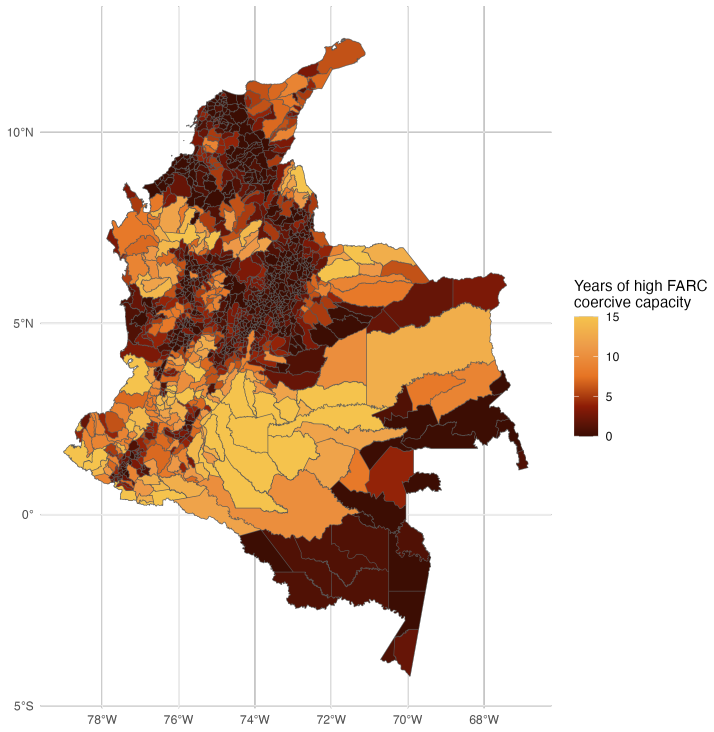

Figure 4.1: Spatial distribution of FARC coercive capacity

ditional income. Throughout the latter two decades of the war, they aggressively encouraged coca cultivation and both directly participated in and indirectly taxed the cocaine economy. Colombia rapidly became the world's leading producer of cocaine.

As before, I use a two-part instrumental variable strategy that leverages exogenous variation in the environmental suitability for coca cultivation in a given district-year and the price of cocaine in the United States. To generate the suitability score, I collect annual district-level data on coca cultivation from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Colombia-specific coca surveillance office, the Integrated System for Monitoring Illicit Crops (SIMCI). SIMCI provides yearly raster files showing the spatial distribution of coca cultivation in Colombia in every year from 2001 to 2016; I aggregate these values to produce a district-year-level indicator for coca cultivation. I draw climate suitability variables from the same sources as in Chapter 3, and take time series data on cocaine prices in

the United States from ONDCP (2015).[8] Since different species of coca plants thrive under different environmental conditions, I estimate a new coca suitability model for Colombia following the procedure in Chapter 3.

I again interact the predicted suitability score for district i in year t with the annual U.S. price of cocaine in year t, subsetting the sample to districts where 1) the FARC had high coercive capacity at some point during the sample period and 2) coca cultivation was recorded at least once in the SIMCI data. Since taxation does not immediately translate into coercive capacity, I measure the suitability and price variables in year $t-1$ and add district fixed effects to adjust for static unobservables. I thus estimate a two-stage least squares linear probability model with first stage

$$\text{High capacity}_{i,t} = \beta_1 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta_3 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} \times \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta FE_{district} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where i indexes districts and t indexes years. The suitability and price instruments are relevant for high coercive capacity, producing F-statistics above 10 in all specifications (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4). The second stage is given by

$$\text{Outcome}_{i,t} = \beta_1 \widehat{\text{High capacity}}_{i,t} + \beta FE_{district} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where *Outcome* is one of several different measures of intervention in the democratic process: the use of violence against democratic actors or the effects of intervention on election outcomes.

[8]The cocaine price time series data in that report ends in 2012, so I supplement it with data from U.S. Department of Justice (2017); I extrapolate the time series forward since the former time series records prices for small purchases of cocaine (<10 grams) and the latter reports aggregate prices.

4.5 Results: the FARC's intervention in democracy

4.5.1 Quantitative evidence

How did the FARC's ideological compatibility and coercive capacity shape its intervention in democracy? I first evaluate the insurgents' use of violence. Using CINEP's dataset of human rights abuses, I generate an indicator recording whether a district-year suffered one or more attacks on democracy (including all acts of physical violence against voters, elections or election workers, candidates, or elected officials). I also create dummy variables for instances of spectacular and functional violence.[9] I regress these variables on an indicator for coercive capacity. As before, I begin by estimating simple OLS models incorporating district and year fixed effects. To adjust for the influence of unobserved factors on coercive capacity and violent intervention in democracy, I then employ the instrumental variables approach outlined above.

The results of the OLS models are shown in Table 4.3, Models 6-8. The FARC was nearly 5 percentage points more likely to attack the actors and institutions of democracy when it was coercively ascendant. This increase was overwhelmingly driven by acts of functional violence, which the insurgents were 4 percentage points more likely to commit when they had high coercive capacity. These are large effects, roughly double the average probability of attacks on democracy and functional violence in the full sample. I find a much smaller but statistically significant effect for spectacular violence (less than 1 percentage point) — spectacular violence is quite rare in the sample, and this effect also represents around double the mean probability.

The instrumental variables models tell a largely consistent story, but suggest substantially

[9] I identify attacks on voters, elections, and elected officials through keyword searches of the open-ended text description that accompanies every CINEP record. I informally validate the accuracy of this simple classifier through manual inspection of a subset of records, and by cross-checking the classification against a large language model (GPT-3.5). I code an act of violence as spectacular violence if it claimed five or more victims, and categorize all other attacks as functional violence.

Table 4.3: Effects of FARC coercive capacity on violence against democracy

	Attack on democracy (6)	Functional violence (7)	Spectacular violence (8)	Attack on democracy (9)	Functional violence (10)	Spectacular violence (11)
High capacity	0.047**	0.040**	0.009**	0.218**	0.176**	0.043
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.066)	(0.054)	(0.026)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	19.1	19.1	19.1
Observations	15,708	15,708	15,708	8,827	8,827	8,827
R^2	0.17496	0.16469	0.08860	0.00639	0.03616	0.05416
Within R^2	0.00911	0.00740	0.00164	-0.16193	-0.11619	-0.04172

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in Models 6-8 is all Colombian district-years from 2002-15; sample in Models 9-11 is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

larger effect sizes. In these models, high FARC coercive capacity generates a 22 percentage point increase in attacks against democracy and an 18 percentage point increase in acts of functional violence — in both cases, effects that represent more than 5 times the sample mean. The effect of high coercive capacity on spectacular violence loses statistical significance ($p = .10$).

These patterns are broadly consistent with the violence signatures associated with a medium-compatibility armed group. The FARC's use of violence against actors involved in elections and democratic governance increased sharply where it had more coercive capacity. This increase seems to have been driven, as a strategy of capture would predict, overwhelmingly by acts of functional violence — targeted coercion exercised against individual voters and politicians in order to change their political behavior. The findings regarding spectacular violence are somewhat more muddled. In the OLS models, I also find an increase in spectacular violence, a pattern more consistent with displacement than capture. In the

instrumental variables models, in contrast, I find no statistically discernible difference in spectacular violence between low and high capacity areas, suggesting that the FARC de-emphasized efforts to discredit the democratic state in places where capture was an option. As will be discussed below, this inconsistency may be a consequence of the form of spectacular violence the FARC favored where it had limited coercive capacity: kidnappings of high-profile national politicians, which damaged the legitimacy of the democratic state but did not reach the casualty threshold I use to operationalize acts of spectacular violence.

I next assess how the FARC sought to influence election outcomes. In communities where they enjoyed coercive predominance, I expect that the insurgents primarily attempted to influence vote choice rather than drive down turnout or encourage protest voting. As dictated by a strategy of capture, the Colombian insurgents would have sought to prevent the election of ideological enemies to local government in order to facilitate their attempts to co-opt local authority. To evaluate this thesis, I draw on data from the Universidad de los Andes' Municipal Electoral Panel to record conservative voteshare and protest (blank and null) voteshare for the four mayoral elections held in Colombia during my period of study (2003, 2007, 2011, 2015).[10]

The results of these models are shown in Table 4.4. As in the previous analysis, I present OLS models with two-way fixed effects (Models 12 and 13) followed by instrumental variable models (Models 14 and 15). In the former pair of models, I find a precise null effect of FARC coercive capacity on protest voteshare, but a 3 percentage point decrease in conservative voteshare when the FARC enjoyed coercive influence. The instrumental variables models find a considerably larger decrease in conservative voteshare (nearly 16 percentage points) and a statistically significant but slightly smaller increase in protest voteshare (13 percentage

[10]I estimate effects on vote choice using conservative rather than leftist voteshare because the Colombian left was politically weak during my period of study; in most municipalities leftist candidates were irrelevant or wholly absent. I code the following parties as conservative: Cambio Radical, Convergencia Ciudadana, Movimiento ALAS Equipo Colombia, Colombia Democrática, Movimiento Equipo Colombia, Movimiento de Integración Nacional, Movimiento Colombia Viva, Movimiento Popular Unido, Opción Ciudadana, Partido de la Unidad Nacional (de la U), Centro Democrático, Colombia Siempre, Movimiento de Integración Popular (MIPOL), Movimiento Dejen Jugar al Moreno, and Partido Conservador.

Table 4.4: Effects of FARC coercive capacity on election results

	Protest voteshare (12)	Conservative voteshare (13)	Protest voteshare (14)	Conservative voteshare (15)
High capacity	0.001	-0.029*	0.127**	-0.158*
	(0.002)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.075)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	24.7	24.7
Observations	4,191	4,191	2,554	2,554
R^2	0.50626	0.55188	-0.17180	0.53755
Within R^2	8.01×10^{-5}	0.00132	-1.1972	0.02808

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in Models 12-13 is all Colombian districts in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 local elections; sample in Models 14-15 is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the sample period and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

points).[11]

What should we make of these findings? The overall picture they present is of a group conflicted in its approach to elections and democracy. The FARC clearly had a deep interest in democratic politics, as evidenced both by how it used violence to intervene in democratic processes and how its efforts succeeded in altering election outcomes. I find support for the proposition that the FARC pursued a strategy of capture when it had high coercive capacity; across research designs and specifications, I find that the insurgents were more likely to target functional violence against voters and politicians and to drive down conservative voteshare

[11]These results — in both the violence and election outcomes models — are generally consistent across model specifications: using a probit first stage in the two-stage least squares models as suggested in Wooldridge (2010) (Table B.1, Appendix), incorporating only district fixed effects in the OLS models to match the instrumental variables specifications (Table B.2, Appendix), and modeling the violence outcomes as counts rather than dummy variables (Table B.3, Appendix). Nor are they substantially sensitive to varying the parameters of the Hidden Markov Model used to infer states of coercive control. In Tables B.4 to B.7 (Appendix), I increment and decrement the probability of transitioning between states, and in Tables B.8 and B.9 (Appendix) I reduce the certainty that each violence signature implies the corresponding state; the results change little.

in local elections. More tenuous evidence suggests that — contrary to my theoretical predictions — they may have at times paired this strategy with one of displacement, sometimes employing acts of spectacular violence against democratic targets and encouraging protest voting. To better draw out these conclusions, I turn to qualitative evidence.

4.5.2 Qualitative evidence

Like Sendero Luminoso, the FARC sought to delegitimize democracy through high-profile acts of violence against national political figures and institutions. The FARC often intensified its use of violence ahead of national elections in order to "generate terror [..] and undermine the democratic process" (HRW, 2006). It sometimes sought to disrupt elections with explosive attacks on polling sites. In 2010, security forces discovered 300 kilograms of explosives that, they alleged, the FARC intended to use to disrupt legislative elections in the departmental capital of Neiva (La Verdad, 2010). The insurgents also planned spectacular attacks against political parties — covert FARC operatives allegedly bombed three of the National Unity Party's offices in Cali, the third largest city in Colombia (Agencia EFE, 2010) — and against symbolically important democratic rites, including launching a series of mortar shells at the crowd attending Álvaro Uribe's first inauguration in 2002, killing 14 and injuring 40 (Forero, 2002).

The FARC also targeted high-profile national elected officials with violence. According to security forces, they repeatedly attempted to assassinate Uribe: at a speech he was scheduled to deliver in Medellín in 2002 (VOA, 2002); by poisoning, several times between 2008 and 2011 (Reuters, 2010); and at an event he was speaking at in Argentina in 2012, after leaving office (Reuters, 2012). In addition to assassination attempts, these symbolic attacks against political elites often took the form of kidnappings. The FARC employed kidnapping prolifically to finance its armed struggle (Gilbert, 2022). But it also used it for political ends. Though it did not entail mass casualties, kidnapping political leaders sent a powerful symbol about the FARC's strength and the state's weakness, transforming "the kidnapping

victim into a prisoner of war of a political actor that considers itself legitimate, by disputing power with a state that they declare to be a thief, corrupt, unjust, and oppressive" (Caballero Reinoso & Ospina, 2013). Such kidnappings were commonplace. In 2002 alone, the FARC kidnapped Senator Ingrid Betancourt, holding her hostage for six years before she was rescued, and kidnapped and ultimately killed the governor of the department of Antioquia, Guillermo Gaviria Correa, and the former Minister of National Defense, Gilberto Echeverri Mejía. These acts of violence — kidnappings, assassination attempts, and bombings — against elections, party installations, and high-profile elected officials aimed to discredit Colombian democracy in the eyes of its citizens.

In communities the FARC influenced, however, it generally chose to co-opt local democracy rather than discredit it — selecting a strategy of capture over one of displacement. In the early years of the war, the insurgents were too weak and the state too absent for the insurgents to make a sustained effort to influence the democratic process. That began to change in the mid-1970s. The FARC initially adopted a strategy of bottom-up influence, organizing peasants into unions and local governing bodies called Community Action Boards (JACs) that regulated land colonization and could petition the state for resources (Kaplan, 2013; Steele, 2017). In northern Cundinamarca, a 1974 government report warned of a system of "'self-government through the agrarian union'; an infiltration of the municipal administration, where 'it is known that many officials collaborate with criminals, and of others who are communists"' (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014). The goal of this campaign of bottom-up influence, the National Center for Historical Memory notes, was "to neutralize the influence of the traditional political parties and the armed forces in organisms like the JACs, and convert them into allies in the fight against the government." This intervention thus began to resemble a strategy of capture: the FARC hoped to co-opt local democratic institutions (the JACs) and the institutional channels they connected to in order to achieve their goals of increasing rural investment and land colonization.

This incipient involvement in democratic politics accelerated into direct participation in

the mid-1980s. In 1982, the FARC signed a ceasefire with President Belisario Betancur (1982-86), in an agreement that encouraged the insurgents to participate in electoral politics — but did not oblige them to lay down their arms (Rodríguez Navarrete, 2005). At the 1982 party conference, the FARC had formally adopted a commitment to "the combination of all forms of struggle": the notion that socialist revolution could be achieved through the simultaneous pursuit of armed conflict, social mobilization, and electoral contestation. In this spirit, the FARC joined forces with the Colombian Communist Party to create a new political party in 1985, the Patriotic Union (UP). FARC commanders combined with Communist Party leadership to build the political machinery of the UP, fielding candidates, training party operatives, and even forming alliances with mainstream parties. The UP contested local and regional elections through the late 1980s and early 1990s. It enjoyed startling success given the entrenched nature of Colombia's hegemonic two-party establishment: in 1986, UP candidates won 8 seats in Congress (including one for FARC commander Iván Márquez), 24 seats in departmental assemblies, and 275 municipal positions Leech (2011).

In areas they influenced, FARC militants sought to channel votes to UP candidates through both conventional electioneering and armed intimidation of voters and political rivals. FARC units "went from village to village and [held] assemblies to inform the people about the UP" (Leech, 2011). But the threat of coercion was never far. Claims emerged that the FARC was engaged in "armed proselytizing" to turn out voters for the UP Rodríguez Navarrete (2005). In a 1986 letter to FARC commander Jacobo Arenas, Alberto Rojas Puyo, a Communist Party stalwart-turned-UP party member, explained that "[w]hat the government and virtually everyone else thinks, including me, is that you can't campaign with guns in your hands, and, if you're going to accept peace, the guns should disappear" (Dudley, 2004, 82). The UP experiment met a tragic end. Alarmed by the party's electoral success, conservative elites reacted with violence. In the 1980s and early 1990s, paramilitary groups closely linked to the Colombian military assassinated or disappeared hundreds of UP politicians, operatives, and supporters in a brutal extermination campaign likened to polit-

ical genocide (Rodríguez Navarrete, 2005; Gomez-Suarez, 2007). The UP went functionally extinct.

Scarred by the decimation of the UP, the FARC would not return to direct electoral contention for another two decades. But this did not mean the insurgents gave up on seeking to influence the democratic process. The FARC continued to meddle in local politics through the 1990s and 2000s in order to influence who was elected to local office in territories they controlled and how those politicians governed. This strategy was often formalized in the group's strategic documents. A May 1998 military plan issued by Joaquín Gómez, commander of the FARC's Southern Bloc, laid out his approach to convert the municipality of Cartagena del Chairá in the department of Caquetá into an "Independent Republic". The Bloc first "demanded the resignation of the Mayor and City Councilors." Crucially, however, they proposed to fill the resulting political vacuum not with revolutionary FARC governors, but with new elected officials. The FARC would shape the electoral process. "Each village [in the municipality] has its Community Action Board, organizations that the [FARC] controls through its representatives or agents," the plan notes. Using this infrastructure, the FARC would "[launch a] political campaign [emphasizing] administrative corruption, neglect and oblivion by the central Government, lack of support, communication routes, employment, etc" in order to "[ensure the] election of a candidate for Mayor and 3 candidates for the Council" who would be favorable to the FARC's interests (Gómez, 1998).

At times this approach resembled a strategy of displacement. It could be very violent. The FARC kidnapped, exiled, or assassinated scores of local authorities, including murdering dozens of mayors and councilors in Caquetá and launching an audacious assault on a meeting of the departmental legislature of Valle del Cauca. In some cases, elected officials were attacked in an attempt to evict the state from areas of particular military or economic importance for the FARC (especially coca cultivation zones or strategic corridors for the movement of troops or weapons) (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014).

But more often the FARC appeared to pursue a strategy of capture. The group's use of

coercion generally aimed to influence local democratic governance not by uprooting it and replacing it with something else, but by shaping it from within — purging oppositional elected officials and then engaging in violent and non-violent electioneering to place sympathetic politicians in power. Most of the victimized elected officials were kidnapped or killed not because they were democratic leaders but because they were *disobedient* democratic leaders, punished for perceived disloyalty or for their failure to comply with the FARC's policy demands (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014).

Once friendly — or at least compliant — politicians held municipal office, the FARC governed through and alongside them. These arrangements usually involved a heavy dose of patronage: elected officials were instructed to direct municipal funds to some towns over others, and to offer jobs and public works contracts to the people and firms the FARC selected. But they also entailed more complex co-governance schemes. The Community Action Boards were charged with resolving disputes between residents. The FARC complemented this function: taking charge of adjudicating serious crimes, serving as the coercive arm of the JAC to compel compliance with their judgments, and victimizing residents they claimed to be criminals or socially undesirable (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014; Aponte González *et al.*, 2023).

This arrangement closely resembles an ideal-typical strategy of capture. Where it had the coercive wherewithal, the FARC pressured voters and candidates to ensure that its allies were elected to local office. It then coerced those officials to govern in furtherance of the insurgents' political and economic goals: to channel resources, jobs, and contracts to the group's constituents, and to bend the bureaucratic machinery of the state to construct and sustain the social order the FARC envisioned.

4.6 Capture in El Caguán, 1998-2002

One potential objection to the preceding analysis is that it does not consider the full range of coercive capacity. In both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, I primarily examine areas in which the FARC had substantial but not unrivaled coercive power — communities where police were present, where other armed groups lurked, where the firepower of the Colombian military was only a call to Bogotá away. I may be missing important variation in the FARC's approach to democratic politics where it had very high levels of coercive capacity. When they enjoyed an undisputed monopoly on the use of force, the insurgents may have diverged from my theoretical predictions to pursue a strategy of displacement or to ignore democratic institutions altogether.

To address this concern, I turn to a case study of a unique episode in the history of the Colombian armed conflict. In 1998, newly elected president Andrés Pastrana made a bold gamble. For years, the FARC had demanded the ability to negotiate with the government as equal, sovereign co-belligerents. Pastrana offered the insurgents a remarkable concession to attract them to the negotiating table: total territorial control over a "demilitarized zone" (DMZ) of five municipalities in rural central Colombia while negotiations were ongoing. The DMZ was situated in El Caguán, a historical heartland of FARC support located at the intersection of the departments of Meta and Caquetá. While the FARC and government negotiators met in the region's capital of San Vicente del Caguán, the insurgents would exert full territorial dominance over the 42,000 square kilometer DMZ. In late 1998, all police and military forces withdrew from the area. The FARC would remain in sole control of the region until February 2002, when negotiations broke down and security forces retook the area. The three-year period in which the DMZ was operative thus represents a case in which the FARC enjoyed unprecedented levels of uncontested coercive capacity.[12]

[12]To be sure, a lack of military competition does not imply that the FARC was fully free of constraints. Most notably, actions the insurgents took would affect the status of the ongoing negotiations with the government. But this consideration does not seem to have meaningfully constrained the insurgent group, which did not hesitate to impose on the population "a system of institutions, frameworks, and political

4.6.1 The demilitarized zone

Given complete coercive domination over the five municipalities of the demilitarized zone, how did the FARC engage with local democracy? The insurgents claimed total political authority. Rebels in uniform ambled around downtown San Vicente, set up checkpoints on the roads out to other towns, and controlled entrance and exit into the DMZ. They evicted some bureaucrats, in particular judicial employees who the insurgents saw as an extension of the now-absent police; other public servants fled of their own accord. But, given complete coercive latitude, the FARC did not impede the conduct of elections or banish elected authorities. Rather than evict the machinery of the state that the FARC had sworn to overthrow, the insurgents chose to bend its governing institutions to their aims.

Local elections were to be held across the country in October 2000. In March 2000, the central FARC leadership formulated a strategic plan delineating their approach to elections in the DMZ. They would generally support the holding of elections, but would not allow all candidates to run — the plan declared "war on paramilitary candidates" and a "veto to corrupt candidates and candidates of the traditional parties." In fact, the FARC vowed to engage in "intense electoral activity in the demilitarized zone, to prevent victory by candidates who represent the traditional political class" (FARC-EP, 2000). This document thus suggested a clear strategy of capture: the FARC would allow elections, deter opposition candidates from running, and campaign on behalf of their chosen allies.

A FARC commander interviewed shortly after the election maintained that "here we hold the freest elections in all of Colombia, we don't intervene or vote" (Soto-Trillo, 2001). In practice the 2000 elections (for mayors, city councilors, departmental assemblies, and governors) seem to have been unevenly conducted. But ballots were cast in substantial numbers in four of five municipalities in the DMZ. In San Vicente del Caguán, the urban center of the region, turnout increased sharply, reaching the highest level in a mayoral race

interactions in order to promote the FARC's ideologies and values" (Comisión de la Verdad, 2023).

in the municipality's history.[13]

Once local authorities were in office, the FARC treated them as it had elected officials in other communities where it held sway. This sometimes entailed threats and acts of violence. The FARC assassinated the mayor of Vistahermosa in 1999, and the mayor of San Vicente del Caguán fled the region (Soto-Trillo, 2001; Comisión de la Verdad, 2023). But, by and large, the insurgents and the mayors worked together. For the FARC, this was a useful partnership to lend legitimacy to their claims of political authority. The FARC "mined the authority of the mayors and, as with other public employees, exercised a supposed accompaniment with them" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014). The insurgents "influenced the mayors to such an extent that officials spoke of a co-administration, a kind of dual power" (Comisión de la Verdad, 2023).

Insurgents and city employees jointly constructed roads and repaired damaged airstrips (Soto-Trillo, 2001). Since the state police had withdrawn from the DMZ, the FARC and the five mayors created a "civic police" force to keep order; each side nominated half of the personnel. The FARC effectively split policing duties with the civic police, with the former patrolling rural areas and setting up checkpoints on roads and rivers and the latter focusing on urban settlements. In addition to policing, the insurgents created a new dispute resolution mechanism to fill in for the judicial officials who had fled. They established "claims offices" where residents could bring complaints to be adjudicated by rebel judges; those found guilty of offenses were assigned to mandatory work details or jailed in state prisons appropriated by the FARC (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014).

Governance in the DMZ was often intricately layered between insurgent and democratic institutions. "If someone commits a violation of human rights," explained a FARC representative in a 2000 interview, "we intervene and report [the crime] to the police inspector in the mayoral office. If the FARC are the suspected offenders, we communicate that to the mayor and he speaks directly with [Southern Bloc commander] Joaquín Gómez" (Soto-Trillo, 2001,

[13]Author's calculation using data from the Universidad de los Andes' Electoral Panel.

126). Disputes between the insurgents and the democratic government were often resolved directly between the mayor and FARC commanders. When the FARC commander in La Macarena freed an accused assassin, the mayor intervened. When residents grew resentful of the FARC's imposition of mandatory city cleaning details, the mayor negotiated with the FARC Secretariat to lift the requirement (Soto-Trillo, 2001). El Caguán represented a sophisticated system of democratic capture: the FARC capitalized on the symbolic authority and bureaucratic capacity of the local democratic government, adopting some elements of democratic rule and discarding or replacing others.

4.6.2 The policy consequences of capture

What were the consequence of this "co-governance" between the FARC and local elected officials in El Caguán? Did capture allow the insurgents to advance their political agenda? To evaluate the effects of the FARC's capture of local democracy in the DMZ, I focus on a core element of the group's policy platform: land tenure. Land inequality had been at the center of the FARC's political program from the group's creation (Albertus & Kaplan, 2013); the first thing the insurgents had done, under fire from security forces in Marquetalia in 1964, was to establish an agrarian reform agenda (Leech, 2011). At the group's 1982 national conference, they announced the passage of their first law, a "Revolutionary Agrarian Reform" statute that declared that all properties owned by corporations and large landowners now belonged to the FARC, who would "deliver them for the use of peasants without land" (CeDeMa, 1982). Land inequality remained a core political grievance in the group's rhetoric over the decades, and represented a key plank of the peace negotiations in the 2010s.

Given this longstanding emphasis on land inequality, the Caguán DMZ offered the FARC an unprecedented opportunity to leverage their total coercive control to implement a land redistribution program. Indeed, the FARC declared that the agrarian reform law they had passed in 1982 was in effect in the demilitarized zone (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014). By 1998, however, the insurgents' sweeping redistributive designs had given way to

a more limited agenda. From initially vowing to seize all property owned by large landowners and corporations to redistribute to landless peasants, in the Caguán negotiations the FARC focused on the more modest goal of "recovering unproductive land" to allocate for redistribution (Bernal Morales, 2014).

Given these more limited aims, did the FARC pursue a program of land redistribution in the DMZ? A 1998 investigative piece by the political commentary magazine *Cambio* (cited in El Tornillo (2013)) showed that it did. "When the demilitarized zone began to operate," it notes, "the FARC notified landowners and peasants that [the FARC would] realize an inventory of their properties." After taking this cadastral census, the insurgents proceeded with forcible expropriation of land.

> "The National Ranching Federation (Fedegán) has received reports that the owners of 3,170 plots of land in [the municipality of] San Vicente del Caguán were dispossessed of their land, as well as the owners of 797 plots in the other four demilitarized municipalities [...This expropriation was] formalized in public records and cadastral plots [...] the transfer of the properties was made in the FARC's name in the offices of the Registrar of Public Instruments of San Vicente del Cagúan and Florencia" (El Tornillo, 2013).

The *Cambio* piece also noted that 23 smallholders had complained that their land had been forcibly expropriated by the FARC, with orders allegedly coming directly from the Secretariat.

Two elements of this intervention are worth underlining. First, the FARC's land expropriation seems to have been substantial but not particularly progressive, targeting smallholders as much if not more than large ranchers. The insurgents often chose as targets of expropriation landowners "whom they considered enemies of the guerrilla or allies of the paramilitaries" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014), rather than systematically seizing the largest parcels. When they did expropriate large plots, they sometimes kept them for themselves — according to the mayor of San Vicente del Caguán, two members of the Secretariat acquired sizable properties in the municipality during the period of the DMZ (Navarrete & Calle, 2015). Given the arbitrary and circumscribed nature of this redistri-

bution, I do not expect that it led to a systemic shift in land inequality. Rather, it likely generated an increase in the small parcels the insurgents redistributed to the landless but did not create broad effects across the distribution of plots.

Second, the FARC appears to have chosen to act through the bureaucratic machinery of the democratic state. Rather than create its own infrastructure for maintaining records of property transfers and owners, the group registered these expropriations with the Colombian state's Registrar of Public Instruments. Choosing to register these transfers was a non-trivial step. Roughly 50% of actively worked land parcels in Colombia are not formally titled (Restrepo Salazar & Bernal Morales, 2014). Nowhere is this problem worse than in the region around El Caguán — documentation of land ownership in Caquetá is "almost null" (Navarrete & Calle, 2015). Confronted with the need to formalize land expropriation to ensure it lasted past the end of the demilitarized zone, the FARC turned to state institutions. This, then, suggests a case of capture: rather than construct complex, costly governance institutions from scratch, the insurgents appropriated the state's bureaucratic machinery to execute their political program.

I examine the effect of this intervention quantitatively. To do so, I exploit the fact that the DMZ had sharply continuous boundaries at the external borders of the five municipalities that composed it. When the DMZ was formed in 1998, state security forces retreated to these borders but maintained a presence in the surrounding municipalities. I take advantage of this discontinuity in the FARC's capacity to enforce its will to estimate the effect of democratic capture on land holdings by employing a spatial regression discontinuity design (RDD) (Keele & Titiunik, 2015).

I draw information on land holdings from the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute (IGAC), the Colombian government's agency for geography and cartography. The IGAC maintains a publicly available, periodically updated cadaster of all land and property holdings in the country. It produces spatial data files identifying the boundaries of each parcel and information about its ownership and economic purpose. By spatially merging this data

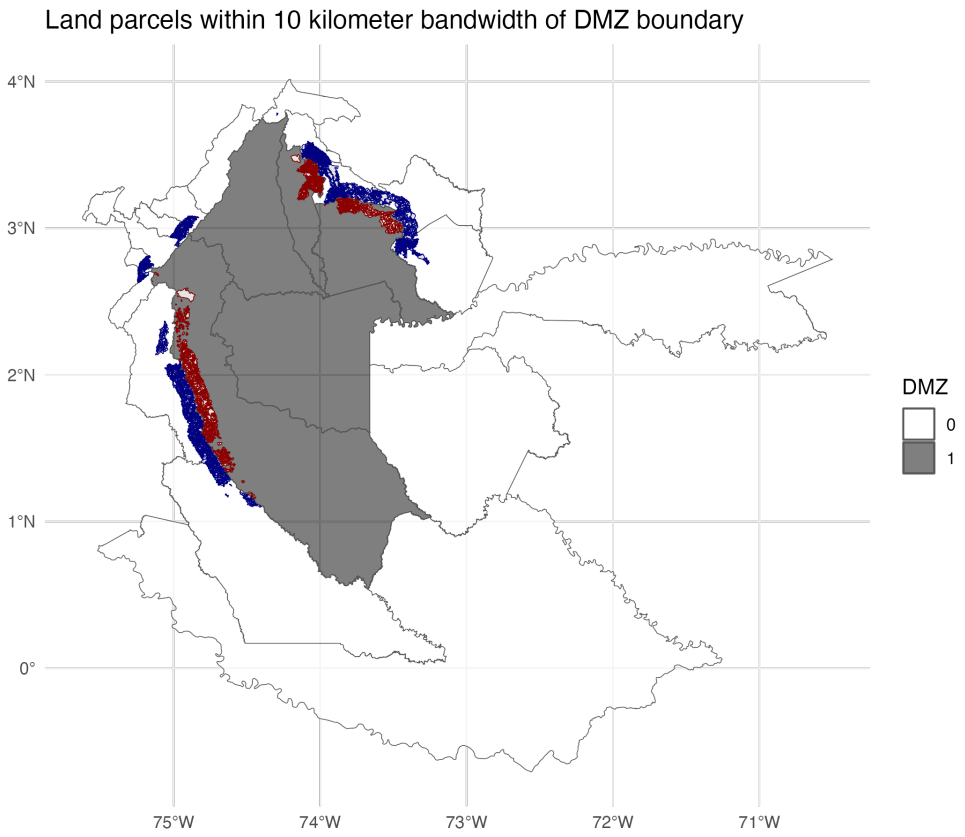

Figure 4.2: Land parcels within 10 kilometer bandwidth of DMZ boundary

with the location of the frontier between the DMZ and neighboring municipalities, I can identify whether there are discontinuous differences in the distribution of land parcel sizes on either side of the border — differences that would suggest that the period of FARC control likely affected land tenure. I subset the cadaster data to parcels classified as being for private economic use (excluding parks, state-owned land, and land designated for other special purposes). Figure 4.2 provides a visualization of the DMZ, surrounding municipalities, and the distribution of parcels within 10 kilometers of the boundary.

I conduct a series of quantile regressions. Whereas ordinary least squares regression models the conditional effect of one or more independent variables on the mean value of an outcome variable, quantile regression weights observations in order to model the effect at a given quantile of the distribution of the outcome variable. This approach allows the analyst to investigate the causal effect of interest across the distribution of the dependent

variable (Koenker & Hallock, 2001). In my case, this allows me to examine whether the FARC's haphazard application of land expropriation and redistribution resulted in a greater prevalence of small parcels of land.

To render the comparisons between "treated" and "control" parcels as controlled as possible, I subset the plots to those within a bandwidth of 10 kilometers on either side of the DMZ border. Using the "naive" distance to the border to calculate this bandwidth discards information about the geographic location of each plot (Keele & Titiunik, 2015), so I follow Dell (2010) and Albertus (2020) in including a second-order polynomial of latitude and longitude in estimation. To examine the effects of treatment across the distribution of land holdings, I run a separate regression for each fifth percentile from the 5th to the 95th; I take the natural log of the outcome variable, plot size, to adjust for high levels of skew.

The results of these models are depicted in Figure 4.3, which plots the coefficient on *Treated* for each quantile (the regression results for selected quantiles are depicted in Table B.10 (Appendix)). Across the distribution, treated plots of land are slightly smaller than control units: 20% smaller at the median, and 25% smaller at the 90th percentile. But these differences are dwarfed by the treatment effects among smaller parcels. At the 25th percentile, treated plots are roughly 50% smaller; at the 10th they are 2.5 times smaller; at the 5th they are nearly 5 times smaller. This pattern suggests that the FARC expropriated land across the spectrum of plot sizes but primarily from smallholders. The land that it then redistributed to landless people seems to have been in very small plots, generating the large differences in parcel size at the bottom of the distribution.

To ensure that these results are not driven by the arbitrary choice of a 10-kilometer bandwidth, in Figures B.2 to B.5 (Appendix) I vary the bandwidth to 5, 7.5, 12.5, and 15 kilometers. The overall pattern of effects by quantile hardly shifts. More concerningly, it is possible that the differences I observe are due to compound treatment: a factor distinct from FARC democratic capture that would vary systematically across the DMZ border and would also affect land holdings (Keele & Titiunik, 2015). I cannot conclusively discount this

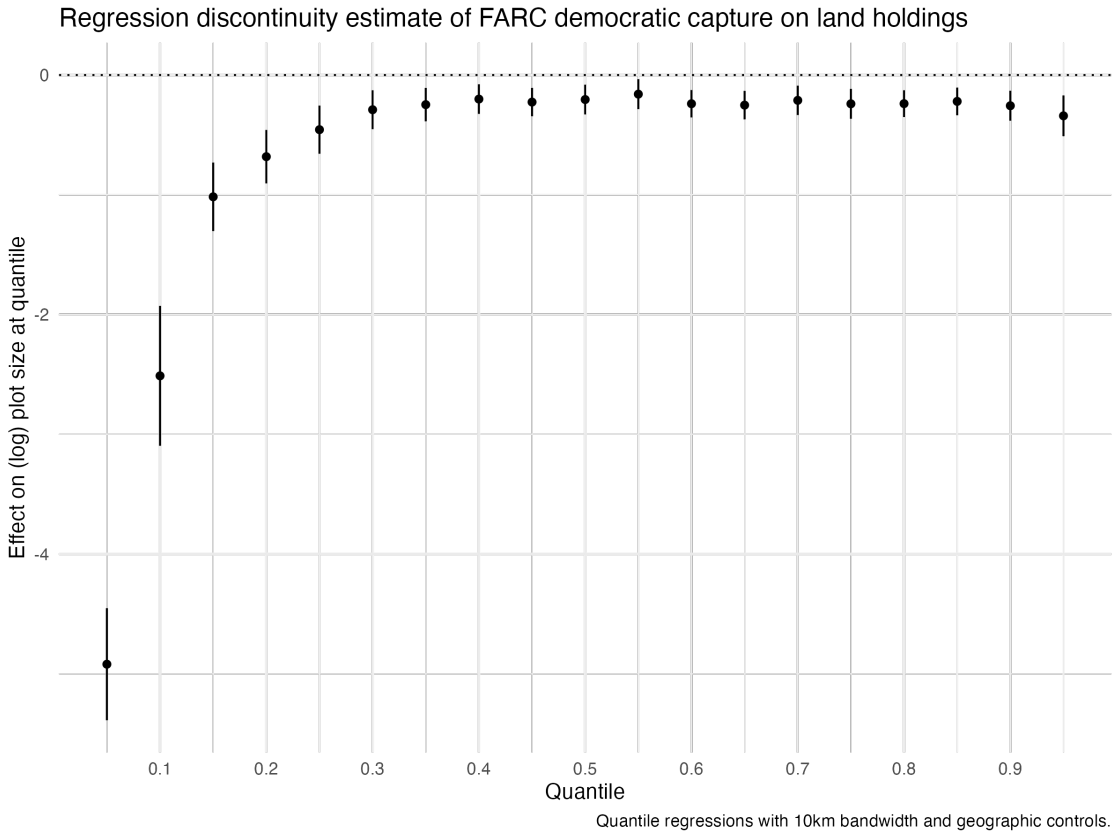

Figure 4.3: Regression discontinuity results

possibility.[14] But I attempt to address the clearest potential source of compound treatment: that DMZ municipalities have more leftist politics than their neighbors, and that the increase in small plots reflects redistributive policy under "normal" democratic governance before or after the DMZ period. Figure B.6 (Appendix) plots the voteshare of leftist parties in the sample municipalities both before the DMZ period (1990-98) and after (2002-14). In neither stretch of time do the DMZ municipalities appear to have more left-leaning electorates than their neighbors, providing some evidence that the differences I detect are likely not a product of normal democratic politics. Rather, this analysis appears to be capturing enduring differences in land inequality produced by the FARC's strategy of capturing state recordkeeping institutions in the demilitarized zone.

[14]Cadastral snapshots from just before or just after the DMZ period would help to isolate the treatment effect, but are unfortunately not available.

4.7 Conclusion

Some armed groups possess one set of goals that are compatible with the democratic process and the basic tenets of democratic rule and one set of goals that are not. These medium-compatibility groups, I have argued, are torn between two competing impulses. In pursuit of their democracy-incompatible goals, they are motivated to discredit the legitimacy of democratic rule and to tear down and replace its infrastructure. But they are also driven to co-opt both the symbolic trappings and bureaucratic machinery of democracy to further their democracy-compatible aims. They often attempt to resolve this tension by orienting their behavior according to the local coercive environment. Where they have little military capacity, they delegitimize democracy through spectacular acts of violence. Where they have coercive endowments sufficient to credibly coerce elected officials, they instead employ functional violence to co-opt the democratic system to accomplish their political goals.

The case of the FARC in Colombia illustrates these dynamics. The FARC had a conflicted view of democracy. It viewed Colombian democracy as deeply flawed but still valuable as a pathway toward socialist revolution. The FARC could further some of its goals through democratic means — redistributing land and wealth and positioning the insurgents as legitimate governing authorities — but it could not accomplish the overthrow of the constitutional order that it ultimately sought.

How did the FARC act given this medium level of democratic compatibility? It brazenly attacked high-profile symbols of democratic rule, assassinating and kidnapping political elites and disrupting elections and other democratic institutions. In communities where the insurgents held sway, though, they often preferred to quietly capture the democratic system — to ensure the election of compliant politicians, and to extract resources and programmatic concessions from the bureaucracies those politicians commanded. Even in settings where the FARC had near-total coercive control, like the demilitarized zone at El Caguán, the insurgents primarily chose to govern through local democratic institutions rather than uproot

and replace them.

Two implications of this analysis are worth highlighting. First, the FARC's behavior complicates my theoretical expectations. They did not always follow the neat division of strategies by level of coercive capacity that my theory envisioned: delegitimization where their coercive capacity was low, capture where it was high. At times the FARC aimed to displace democratic institutions in communities where they had high capacity, particularly in places where state presence posed a threat — strategically important corridors and coca-growing zones — or as retaliation against government offenses. At other times they declared a pro-democracy stance in places where they had little coercive capacity: in 2014, the FARC leadership declared a nationwide unilateral ceasefire to encourage participation in that year's presidential elections (Bocanegra, 2014). These deviations represented exceptions more than the rule, but they suggest that the logic of intervention for medium-compatibility groups may not be as neat as I have suggested.

Second, the extended duration of the FARC's war against the Colombian state raises questions about temporal variation in compatibility with democracy. For theoretical tractability, I have treated compatibility with democracy as exogenously given and constant over time. Is that a feasible assumption? Over its five decades of existence, the FARC's attitudes toward democracy do seem to have shifted somewhat. It expressed more openness to democratic participation in the mid-1980s, and then less following the decimation of the Patriotic Union; less following the failure of the Caguán peace process in 2002, but then more when it demanded political representation in the 2016 peace process. These shifts were, I would argue, comparatively small: at no point did the FARC transition to being fully democracy-compatible or to wholly rejecting the notion of working within the system. But they suggest that compatibility with democracy may change over time in response to strategic developments — an important implication that I will discuss further in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5

Corruption and Capture by Criminal Organizations in Mexico

5.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the behavior of armed groups with largely or wholly democracy-compatible goals. As I argued in Chapter 2, these actors typically have strong incentives to influence the outcomes of elections, legislation, and the policymaking process. Elected officials possess a range of powers of use to these groups. They control budgets that can be diverted to benefit armed groups' interests through corruption, theft, or preferential contracting. They set policies that structure social life, regulate local economies, and allocate scarce public and private resources. They direct institutionalized bureaucracies trained to implement a wide range of policies — including, crucially, ordering security force bureaucracies to crack down on or turn a blind eye to illegal armed groups. For democracy-compatible groups, the urge to appropriate the democratic state tends to be strong.

In contrast, high-compatibility actors have little to gain from undermining, discrediting, or uprooting the democratic system. They have no quarrel with democracy as a system of rule: their primary goals are neither irreconcilable with the basic tenets of democracy nor unachievable through the democratic process. These groups likewise gain little from discrediting the state by disrupting elections or impeding governance, and have no particular interest in replacing the machinery of democratic rule with their own governance institutions. Unlike medium-compatibility groups like the FARC, which are torn between appropriating and undermining the democratic state, highly democracy-compatible actors should seek only to bend the process and products of democratic politics to fit their political and economic aims.

How these groups go about the goal of co-opting the democratic system depends on the coercive endowments they can draw on. When an armed actor lacks the ability to credibly threaten elected officials or the voters who choose them with violence, I expect that it will pursue a strategy of *corruption*, relying on positive inducements to persuade elected officials to act in its interests. These inducements can take a range of forms, from straightforward

Table 5.1: Strategies of intervention for high-compatibility groups

		Compatibility		
		Low	Medium	**High**
Coercion	Low	Delegitimization	Delegitimization	**Corruption**
	High	Displacement	Capture	**Capture**

cash bribery to offering cuts of proceeds from illicit economies, to pledging to donate or electioneer on behalf of the politician's next campaign. The employment of positive, voluntary inducements means that this is a relatively non-violent strategy; it should not entail substantial amounts of functional or spectacular violence. It is not always effective, though: since colluding politicians know that they are likely protected from violent retribution, they have incentives to renege on their commitments.

When a group has the ability to coerce voters and elected officials, it can marry the positive inducements of kickbacks and electoral support with threats of physical harm. This ability enables a deeper appropriation of democracy. Under a strategy of *capture*, armed groups still offer rewards to cooperative elected officials. But they address the risk of those officials reneging by adding a threat of targeted functional violence ("plata o plomo"). At the point of a gun, elected officials are both less likely to defect on their agreements and more willing to consent to larger commitments — to make large policy changes or siphon off substantial resources even at the risk of political or legal consequences. What's more, armed groups pursuing a strategy of capture complement this ability to manipulate policymakers with a capacity to decide who joins their ranks: to coerce a meaningful part of the electorate to support sympathetic politicians, and intimidate rival candidates into dropping out of the race or restricting their campaign activity. Capture is thus both more violent than corruption — entailing high levels of functional violence, though little spectacular violence — and typically more effective. Table 5.1 summarizes these expectations.

In this chapter, I evaluate these predictions against evidence from contemporary Mexico. 21st-century Mexico is home to a range of armed actors with democracy-compatible aims. Predominant among these is an evolving constellation of criminal organizations operating throughout the country.[1] These cartels[2] are primarily involved in the production and trafficking of illicit drugs but have also diversified into large-scale extortion of businesses and residents, illegal mining and logging, oil theft, and other sectors.

Rather than focus on one armed actor in particular, as I have in examining Sendero Luminoso and the FARC in Chapters 3 and 4, here I study the universe of criminal organizations active in 21st-century Mexico. I present evidence about the behavior of several different cartels. It is often impossible to definitively identify which of the dozens of evolving, splintering criminal actors were responsible for an act of political violence or electoral interference. Importantly, however, I expect that all of these groups have a high level of compatibility with democracy, and that all will pursue a strategy of corruption and, when they are coercively capable, capture. Though some criminal groups do vary in their political ideologies (Badillo & Mijares, 2021; Johnson & Gillooly, 2023), among the groups I study here I expect that this variation is insufficient to change my core theoretical predictions.

I first outline why I categorize criminal groups as having highly democracy-compatible goals, and enumerate the core aims they hope to achieve by meddling in electoral politics. I then turn to a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence from Mexico. Drawing on court records and media reports, I examine how criminal organizations have reached corrupt agreements with governors and national elected officials to further their economic and political interests. I then turn to a quantitative examination of criminal organizations' attempts to capture municipal governments through the use of force. Centering my analysis on local elections held across the country in 2018, I find that capturing local governments offered a wealth of benefits to criminal actors, who were able to expand their illicit activities

[1]Other democracy-compatible armed groups have emerged, largely in response to criminal predation, including self-defense militias and vigilante groups (Felbab-Brown, 2015; Trevizo, 2022).

[2]Following the literature, I refer to these groups as "criminal organization," "criminal groups," and "cartels" synonymous throughout this chapter.

while tapping into government coffers and minimizing state repression or competition from rivals.

5.2 Criminal groups and democracy

I argue that essentially all criminal organizations have a high degree of compatibility with democracy. Criminal actors are defined by their economic motives. Organized criminal groups reap profit from a wide range of economic industries. But their primary activity is protection racketeering: taxing participants in an economy in exchange for guaranteeing their contracts, property rights, and physical security (Tilly, 1985; Gambetta, 1993; Skaperdas, 2001). This protection — which always includes, implicitly or explicitly, protection from predation by the criminal group itself — encompasses a wide range of economic sectors. Criminal groups commonly operate protection rackets in economic sectors that the state has left unregulated by declaring them illegal: most infamously, the production, trafficking, and retail of illicit narcotics. They also operate in legal but strictly regulated or taxed sectors, where there are strong economic incentives to flout regulations. Criminal groups oversee mining or logging enterprises that fail to comply with economic regulations, or bootlegging of cigarettes or alcohol to avoid heavy taxation. Other groups impose protection rackets on participants in purely legal economies like agricultural production, retail business, or transportation, either in exchange for protection the state is failing to provide or simply as pure extortion (Schelling, 1967).

Regardless of the form it takes, however, protection racketeering is almost always compatible with democracy. The state itself, democratic or otherwise, shares key characteristics with protection rackets. In exchange for taxation, democracies around the world regulate economic activities and maintain social order — order imposed and maintained by the threat of coercion (Tilly, 1985). Criminal groups do not seek to replace the democratic state, whose infrastructure and social order they take advantage of (Lessing, 2017); at most they aim to

carve out pockets of social and political influence in communities of strategic economic interest (Trejo & Ley, 2020). Nor do they demand radical or transformative policy changes unlikely to make it through the democratic process. The most radical demand that would be relevant to criminal enterprises — the legalization of narcotics and other prohibited goods — only cuts against their economic interests by lowering prices and eliminating the need for black market regulation.

What, then, do criminal organizations seek of the democratic state? I anticipate that the democratic system offers three core rewards. The first is the ability to engage in illegal economic activities without suffering state repression. Influencing elected officials allows criminal groups to safeguard and expand their illicit activities without attracting retribution from government authorities. National policymakers set the central priorities of the state's security forces, law enforcement, and judicial apparatus. They decide which criminal groups to crack down on, which economic sectors to prioritize, and which regions of the country to emphasize in combating crime and violence. They appoint the senior leadership of national police and military units involved in repressing criminal groups, and they hold sway over even nominally independent judiciaries.

Local elected officials, too, often have substantial *de facto* and *de jure* control over the actions of law enforcement personnel, from police officers on the street to investigators and prosecutors.[3] Local police are the state agents that are present in the communities where criminal actors operate; they are well positioned to interfere in their quotidian activities and to share intelligence upward. Criminal groups who have successfully captured local officeholders can use their influence to ensure that police do not interrupt their operations and prosecutors do not bring cases against their leaders.

Perhaps just as valuable as blunting repression is redirecting it. Criminal groups often face intense competition from rivals — other criminal organizations seeking to capture the

[3]The degree of control local elected officials enjoy over law enforcement varies but is generally substantial. In some settings, like Colombia, police are nationalized; even so, mayors contribute to financing and directing their local operations (Castillo, 2020).

same retail drug markets, trafficking routes, extortion opportunities, or black market natural resources. In contexts where multiple criminal organizations operate and state resources are limited, security forces deploy repression selectively, choosing which groups to target and which to leave alone (Lessing, 2017). This decision is of paramount importance to criminal actors; even weak states have the coercive wherewithal to severely damage or eliminate criminal challengers. Actors who have co-opted elected officials through corruption or capture can influence this choice, heading off such competitors by turning the machinery of law enforcement against them.

Influencing elections and elected officials offers a final crucial advantage. The state is more than a purveyor of repression or forbearance — it is also a lucrative source of income in its own right. Elected officials and the bureaucrats that report to them control substantial budgets, allocate contracts, and can redirect funds through corruption, money laundering, and theft. The state, then, represents a valuable prize: criminal groups can lean on captured officials to seize resources for themselves and their allies. These three core benefits — decreasing repression, redirecting law enforcement attention, and capturing state budgets — make intervening in electoral politics a compelling proposition.

5.3 Corruption and capture in 21st-century Mexico

5.3.1 Background

To evaluate these claims, I turn to evidence from Mexico. Large-scale criminal organizations have operated in Mexico for decades. Throughout the 20th century, they primarily focused on trafficking drugs — originally marijuana and opium poppy, giving way to cocaine in the 1980s — to the large consumer market in the United States. These cartels operated through covert but increasingly institutionalized agreements with the Mexican state. These arrangements were initially local. Local strongmen in rural communities of Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua taxed and protected poppy cultivation. As the market grew, state-

level politicians took over these protection rackets, enforcing and facilitating them with state police. These arrangements were generally profitable: violent disputes between traffickers were rare, smugglers got rich, and politicians received lavish kickbacks, some portions of which were then reinvested in the local economy (Astorga, 2001; Smith, 2022).

In the latter part of the century, this state-sponsored protection racket centralized further as demand for narcotics in the U.S. market boomed. The hegemonic Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), which had controlled national politics in a single-party dictatorship since the 1920s, allocated trafficking routes into the United States to different cartels: the Tijuana Cartel controlled traffic into California, the Juárez Cartel controlled overland routes from Chihuahua into Texas, and the Sinaloa and Gulf Cartels controlled drug production and trafficking along the western and eastern seaboards, respectively (Trejo & Ley, 2020). In exchange for this institutionalized system of forbearance, the PRI made two demands: that the cartels not go to war against each other, and that they not sell drugs to the domestic market (Rios, 2015).

This equilibrium began to fray at the turn of the century. As Mexico democratized and the PRI lost control of state governments, its agreements with criminal organizations collapsed, sparking a wave of violent inter-cartel wars over trafficking routes (Snyder & Duran-Martinez, 2009; Trejo & Ley, 2017). In response to this surge in violence, President Felipe Calderón deployed the military to supplement police forces upon assuming office in 2006. But this only made matters worse: cartels responded to heightened repression by launching violent reprisals against security forces, adding cartel-state conflict to inter-cartel war (Lessing, 2017). Fueled by a steady flow of military-grade weapons from the U.S. market, violence skyrocketed (Dube *et al.*, 2013).

Criminal violence remained devastatingly high through the 2010s, as strikes against cartel leaders led their organizations to fragment and degenerate into internecine wars over trafficking routes and local markets (Phillips, 2015). This process of fragmentation was dramatic. From a handful of major cartels dominating the market in the 1980s and 1990s,

by 2010 nearly 100 armed groups were active in Mexico — though some were sub-units of larger cartels — and by 2019 that count had doubled to nearly 200 (Esberg, 2020). Modern Mexico suffers from a dizzying array of turf wars and criminal-state competition involving an evolving set of hundreds of armed actors.

Facing economic and military pressure from this process of fragmentation, cartels began to diversify into new economic sectors — synthetic drug production and retail, illegal logging, human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and extortion of licit economies like avocado and lime production. A common thread united this process of economic diversification. Whereas cartels had for decades prioritized controlling drug trafficking routes to the United States, the focus now shifted toward dominating local communities and extracting from local economies — feeding growing domestic drug consumption and extorting businesses and residents (Sheridan, 2020; Justice in Mexico, 2021). As one criminal leader in the central state of Michoacán put it, "everybody wants in on the avocados, the lime, the port [of Lázaro Cárdenas, key for importing illicit substances] and the [iron ore] mines" (Ernst, 2022).

In combination, the splintering of the criminal landscape and the increased importance of controlling territory rather than trafficking routes generated strong incentives for cartels to influence the state. Controlling trafficking routes requires the cooperation of elected officials and law enforcement in a few strategic corridors across the country. Running protection rackets over local economies while fighting a new and shifting set of rivals demands a greater degree of state cooperation. Under intense competition from security forces and rival groups, opportunities to extract resources from governments and redirect repression against their competitors became deeply appealing (Trejo & Ley, 2021). As a result, cartels across the country began to deepen their intervention in democratic politics.

5.3.2 Corruption

How did they do so? Mexican cartels have shown little ability to credibly threaten national politicians with violence. The president, members of Congress, and governors are

immensely powerful figures who command a robust infrastructure to ensure their personal security. Practically, national politicians both live and work in Mexico City, where many of the cartels that victimize their constituents have little presence. Governors, too, live and work in well-guarded installations in the state capital, removed from the rural areas and informal urban neighborhoods dominated by criminal groups. Coercing these politicians is no easy task.

Shaping who gets elected to these positions presents a similar challenge. The fragmentation of the landscape of criminal actors in 21st-century Mexico means that a single group rarely exercises dominant control over entire states. Rather, cartels and factions within cartels contest territory at the municipal level in large swathes of the country (Signoret *et al.*, 2021). As a result, rarely can a single cartel marshal the threat of coercion against a large enough set of voters to ensure the election of a governor, senator, or president.

Data on political violence supports this conclusion. Data Cívica, a Mexican human rights NGO that collects detailed event data on acts of political and electoral violence, has tracked attacks on politicians and bureaucrats since 2018. This data, depicted in Figure 5.1, reveals a striking heterogeneity by level of government. Municipal politicians — mayors and city councilors — have suffered 80% of threats and attacks (and 84% of acts of lethal violence). State-level officials have been the victims in 15% of threats and attacks, and federal politicians in a mere 4% and 3% of lethal attacks. As my theoretical framework would predict, the local elected officials who are most vulnerable to criminal coercion have suffered the brunt of violence; cartels have only rarely employed violence against national politicians.

Instead, extensive evidence suggests that these criminal organizations have pursued a strategy of corruption to influence state and national elected officials. A raft of governors have been indicted or convicted for collusion with organized criminal groups, alongside several high-profile members of presidential administrations.[4] These agreements were sometimes

[4]Top law enforcement bureaucrats have been convicted of collusion as well. General Salvador Cienfuegos, Secretary of Defense during the Enrique Peña Nieto presidential administration (2012-18) was convicted

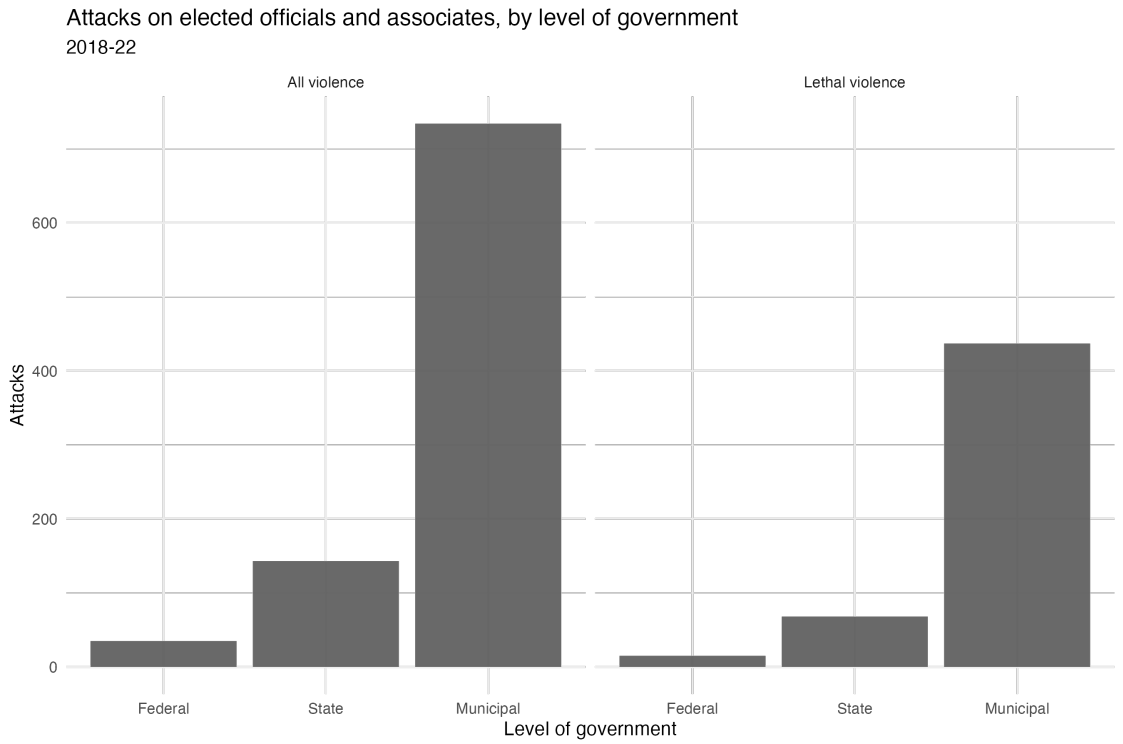

Figure 5.1: Attacks on elected officials and associates, by level of government

facilitated by social ties. Fausto Vallejo, who was governor of the Pacific state of Michoacán from 2012 to 2014, resigned after a photo emerged of his son with the leader of the Caballeros Templarios Cartel (Gurney, 2017).

More often, they were based on straightforward bribery. Mario Villanueva was governor of the Caribbean state of Quintana Roo from 1993 to 1999, as the PRI's stranglehold on national power was fraying. Villanueva would go on to be convicted of money laundering and cocaine trafficking in both Mexico and the United States. His indictment in the Southern District of New York sketched out his arrangement with the Juárez Cartel. During Villanueva's term in office, the cartel shipped more than 200 tons of cocaine from Colombia by boat and then overland across the U.S. border. Throughout this period, the indictment alleges, the

of accepting lucrative bribes in exchange for favoring the H-2 Cartel and repressing its rivals (Ahmed & Feuer, 2020). Genaro García Luna, Secretary of Public Security during the Felipe Calderón administration (2006-12), was convicted of setting national anti-crime policy to systematically favor the Sinaloa Cartel over its competitors. Edgar Veytía, the former attorney general of the state of Nayarit, claims that Calderón himself set this policy. If true, this would represent not just grand bureaucratic corruption but the highest possible level of criminal-politician collusion (Feuer & Abi-Habib, 2023)

cartel paid Villanueva between $400,000 and $500,000 per load of cocaine transited through Quintana Roo for a total of at least $11 million (USA vs. Villanueva, 2002).

Villanueva was far from alone. Roberto Sandoval, governor of the small Pacific state of Nayarit from 2011-17, took bribes from first the H-2 Cartel (the Nayarit chapter of the Beltrán Leyva Cartel) and then the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (Morris, 2020). In a 2015 indictment, the Drug Enforcement Agency alleged that Eugenio Hernández, governor of the border state of Tamaulipas from 2005-10, took bribes from the Zetas Cartel (Contreras & Buch, 2015). Farther west, a former leader of the Zetas claimed that the organization paid Humberto Moreira, governor of Coahuila from 2005-11, $2 million per month (Proceso, 2017).

Sometimes criminal groups offered campaign contributions as well as personal bribes. The Gulf cartel paid Tomás Yarrington, governor of Tamaulipas from 1999 to 2006, "millions of dollars" of bribes during his term in office (USA vs. Yarrington, 2013). But their relationship began earlier: desperate for cash in his 1998 campaign for the governorship, Yarrington appealed directly to the cartel for support. Gulf Cartel leaders responded by delivering several installations of $500,000 - $1 million during the campaign cycle (Reyes, 2017). Farther down the Caribbean coast, the Gulf Cartel also gave $12 million to support the successful 2004 campaign of Fidel Herrera for the governorship of Veracruz (Rosas, 2013).

Finally, criminal groups sometimes courted politicians by marketing their other core endowment: the use of force. In addition to paying bribes, the Zetas Cartel allegedly offered to coerce Humberto Moreira's political and economic rivals on his behalf. An ex-Zetas source testified that

> "We would hold roundtables with the governor [...] ranchers, politicians, like senators. The arrangement was that we would kill, kidnap, rob, and extort whoever they wanted, and also offer them protection, and in exchange we had carte blanche to carry on with our activities throughout the state" (Proceso, 2017).

What did corruption buy the cartels? The primary benefit was forbearance: the promise

that the colluding politicians would ensure that police, prosecutors, and other state officials did not interfere in the cartel's criminal activities. The "carte blanche" that Moreira offered the Zetas was the common denominator of these arrangements. Moreira allowed the cartel to substantially expand its retail drug sales for the local market: "Governor Humberto Moreira allowed us to set up over 400 'tienditas' [dispensaries] to sell drugs and alcohol in Saltillo and its surrounding areas [as well as] 240 in Piedras Negras, 100 in Acuña and 80 in the Cinco Manantiales region," a former Zetas leader testified (Dudley, 2017). The Zetas' bribes to Eugenio Hernández similarly bought the cartel "the unfettered ability to operate in Tamaulipas while Mr. Hernández was governor" (Contreras & Buch, 2015).

This cooperation was often proactive. Mario Villanueva provided "resources to offload, transport, store, and protect the cocaine shipments" the Juárez Cartel sent through Quintana Roo (USA vs. Villanueva, 2002). This collusion entailed deputizing a range of state institutions. Mexican prosecutors alleged that Villanueva designated a state-owned hangar at the Chetumal International Airport for the traffickers to store their shipments. He also ordered the construction of at least two runways for planes to covertly use — including, astonishingly, one at his house — and lent state vehicles and aircraft to help transport the cocaine to the U.S. border. The state police were primarily responsible for carrying out these activities; Villanueva provided cartel leadership with intelligence to avoid being caught by security forces that were not involved in the scheme (Segundo Circuito vs. Villanueva, 2010). "At that time in Cancún," a law enforcement official stated, "the police worked for the cartel" (McKinley, 2007).

In addition to facilitating drug shipments, these governors often deputized state security forces to repress their criminal allies' rivals. During Javier Duarte's term as governor of Veracruz from 2010-16, the Zetas and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel engaged in a bloody contest over control of the state's lucrative maritime ports. President Felipe Calderón accused Duarte, who has since been arrested for corruption and money laundering, of deploying state police on the Zetas' side (Padilla, 2016). In Nayarit, Roberto Sandoval followed the

same playbook. Sandoval and his infamously brutal attorney general, Edgar Veytia, put the state police at the disposal of the H-2 Cartel:

> "[Veytia] helped [the cartel] to locate and assassinate their rivals. He used all of the forces at his command to give H-2 complete control of drug trafficking in the state: according to witnesses in Compostela, for example, every week Policía Nayarit officers would escort a truck full of H-2 gunmen into their town to help them to 'disappear people"' (Morris, 2020)

This assistance to the H-2 Cartel extended to intelligence and forensics as well. Sandoval and Veytia "instructed corrupt Mexican law enforcement officers to target rival drug traffickers for wiretaps and arrests" and assisted "in covering up the murder of a rival drug trafficker" (Marzulli, 2019).

Finally, corruption allowed criminal organizations to siphon off funds from the state. The case of the Zetas Cartel in Tamaulipas is illustrative. According to testimony by a Zetas accountant, a major goal of the cartel's $12 million donation to Fidel Herrera's 2004 campaign for governor of Veracruz was to secure favorable contracts. The Zetas developed a series of legal enterprises to launder drug proceeds and generate supplemental income. One such company, ADT Petroservicios, bid for contracts from the Mexican national oil utility PEMEX. "When the candidate [Fidel Herrera] won the governorship," the Zetas accountant testified, "he was going to give them projects, and then, they were going to get government contracts through PEMEX from the federal government." The Zetas also leaned on their relationships with government officials to secure preferential contracts to sell coal to the state electricity utility. These benefits extended to financial crimes as well: a cartel money launderer testified that the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit helped to "manufacture debt" to reduce the tax burden on the Zetas' licit businesses (UT School of Law, 2017).

These agreements between cartels and governors illustrate both the promises and pitfalls of the strategy of corruption. I have argued that criminal groups' inability to reliably threaten coercion against politicians increases the risk that those politicians renege on their commitments. Indeed, governors sometimes betrayed their criminal allies. In Veracruz,

Javier Duarte seems to have attempted to ally with both the Zetas and their mortal rivals the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (Balderas & Janowitz, 2016; Padilla, 2016). Spanish prosecutors allege that Humberto Moreira reneged on his agreement with the Zetas and attempted to move money without giving the cartel its cut. In response, the Zetas murdered his son, tragically demonstrating that even high-profile governors can miscalculate their immunity to coercion by powerful criminal groups (Guindal, 2016).

Roberto Sandoval, too, betrayed his criminal allies. After five years of hand-in-glove collaboration with the H-2 cartel, in a 2017 massive joint operation Edgar Veytia's state police and the Navy killed the cartel's leader, Juan Francisco Patrón Sánchez, and seven of his men in a two-hour shootout. The following day, another operation ambushed and killed the cartel's second-in-command. The reeling H-2 Cartel never recovered. Why the sudden change of heart by Veytia and Sandoval? The cause was straightforward to observers: "it would seem that the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, who now moved into Nayarit en masse, had outbid Patrón Sánchez and become Veytia's new paymasters" (Morris, 2020).

In all, this evidence shows that the proceeds of corruption can be immense: by agreeing to quid pro quos with a series of governors across the country, Mexican cartels were able to reduce law enforcement interference in their activities, inflict damage on their rivals, and extract funds and favorable contracts from the state. But it also highlights the limitations of corruption. Governors sometimes reneged on their agreements, betrayed their criminal allies, or lost power due to turnover or prosecution. When possible — as will be examined in the following section — democracy-compatible armed groups prefer to pursue a strategy of capture.

5.3.3 Capture

Whereas criminal groups in Mexico used corruption to influence elected officials at the state and national level, I argue that they employed a strategy of capture to sway local governments. In contrast to national leaders, local elected officials are deeply vulnerable to

coercion by criminal groups. Mayors and city councilors live and work in many communities where cartels exercise dominant control. Violence against these politicians and their family members, staff, and associates is startlingly common. Data Cívica records 676 acts of physical violence — assassinations, kidnappings, and disappearances — against municipal politicians and their networks between 2018 and 2022. The geographic scope of this violence is astonishing, affecting 358 municipalities across 29 of the country's 31 states. Figure 5.2 visualizes the spatial distribution of these attacks.

By focusing on physical attacks, moreover, this count substantially understates the degree of involvement by criminal groups in local politics. In 2013, a survey by the National Conference of Mexican Municipalities (CNMM) found that a staggering 40% of the 2,457 mayors in the country had received threats from organized criminal groups, a number that almost certainly increased sharply in the following years. The CNMM's president, Leticia Quezada, reported that these mayors "live every minute of their lives in fear and terror, unable to govern" (Proceso, 2013).

Importantly, this violence is almost invariably tightly targeted: threats, kidnappings, and assassination attempts against individual politicians using small arms. None of the acts of violence recorded by Data Cívica use explosives, and only a small fraction — 2.5% — targeted party installations rather than individuals. The dataset includes no attacks against polling places or political rallies. As the theory would predict, this is a pattern of violence much more consistent with the use of functional violence to influence voters and politicians than spectacular violence aimed at discrediting democracy.

The degree of criminal pressure on local elected officials can be extreme. Some local officials have fled their municipalities and attempt to govern remotely (Sieff, 2020). In border towns, mayors often live in the United States and only cross into Mexico for the workday (Proceso, 2013). Criminal domination over local politics is especially stark in the Tierra Caliente region of Michoacán and Guerrero, southwest of Mexico City. The mayor of Apatzingán, Michoacán, in the mid-2010s acted as a direct agent of the Caballeros Templarios

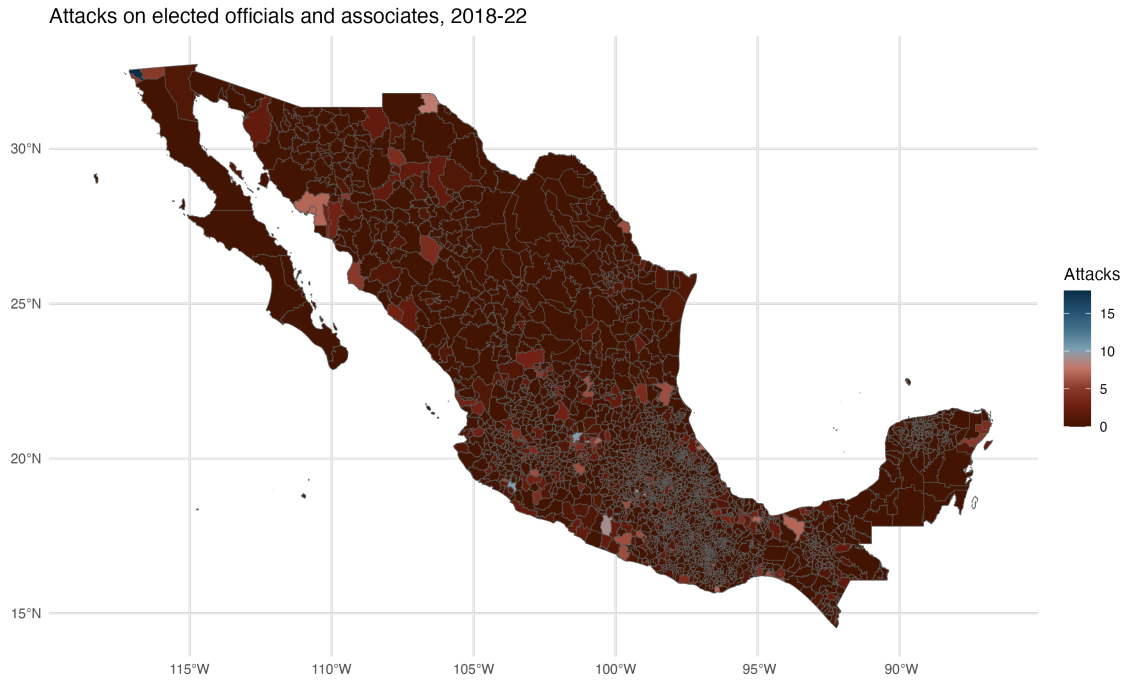

Figure 5.2: Attacks on elected officials and associates, 2018-22

Cartel. A city councilor recounted the period:

> "I was full of fear, I couldn't fit more fear. What he (the mayor) said, the threats, I couldn't have been more scared. It was two years of panic. Of bloodshed. [Cartel members] came to City Hall saying 'Gentlemen, you're not supporting the movement.' They scolded the councilors, because they felt we weren't supporting the *templario* cause with enough energy. The pressure we felt was brutal" (Becerra-Acosta M., 2014).

In the north-central state of Zacatecas, the governor claims that more than half of the mayors have received criminal threats. "They lock them in the car trunk, drive them around, torture them for a while," said state representative Alma Gloria Dávila. "And then they threaten their families" (Sheridan, 2020). "Even if you're a mayor who wants to stay clean," notes analyst Falko Ernst, "it becomes about physical survival for you and your family" (Sieff, 2020).

Criminal groups also exert their influence over local elections. In Tierra Caliente, the

Caballeros Templarios decreed that voters should support the PRI in the 2011 elections — blanketing communities with threatening phone messages, newspaper editorials, and flyers — and demanded that candidates from the other major parties halt their campaigns. The PRI enjoyed a historically successful election across levels of government (Trejo & Ley, 2021). In ensuing elections, cartels in Tierra Caliente have complemented the coercion of voters and candidates with illegal campaign contributions to their favored candidates and vote-buying campaigns on their behalf (ICG, 2021b).

The rewards to capturing local governments are substantial. As primarily economically-motivated actors, criminal groups tend to have relatively little interest in shaping programmatic policy in the mayor's office and city council. But local governments offer more particularistic benefits. Perhaps most valuable is subjugating the municipal police to the cartel's will. As in the case of state police described in the previous section, captured local police may not interfere in cartel activities and may help repress their economic and political rivals. Agreements between cartels and local politicians "effectively transform local police into cartel gunmen" (Sieff, 2020). Criminal groups delegate municipal police to kill their enemies and protect drug shipments (ICG, 2021b). "Under the cartels' control," Trejo & Ley (2021) note, "municipal police officers serve as informants and enforcers of the cartels' decisions in the localities."

As important are the immediate financial benefits of capture. Cartels often tap directly into government coffers. Leticia Quezada, president of the CNMM, noted that criminal groups "look at the budget that [the mayors] have and demand a certain percentage of public works projects" (Proceso, 2013). Cartel embezzlement from public-sector contracts is common, particularly in public works and social programs, as are requirements that local authorities offer well-paying administrative posts to cartel associates (ICG, 2021b). A mayor in Tepalcatepec, Michoacán stated that the Caballeros Templarios simply demanded 10% of the full municipal budget (Trejo & Ley, 2021). In Apatzingán, the cartel extorted city councilors personally. "From the moment we entered the council," one councilor explained,

"[the *templarios*] explained to us they were going to deduct $1,530 from us monthly," an amount representing over a third of their salary (Lohmuller, 2017).

Quantitative analysis

To more systematically analyze the effects of these attempts to capture local governments, I turn to quantitative data. I center my analysis on the 2018 Mexican local elections. In 2018, municipalities in 25 of 31 states held elections for municipal presidents (mayors) and city councils.[5] These were the most violent elections in modern Mexican history. Despite the rapid escalation of the drug war in the late 2000s and 2010s, violence against politicians remained relatively rare. That changed dramatically in the 2018 cycle: 48 candidates to local or national office and 104 elected officials were assassinated in the run-up to the election, and scores more received threats of harm or survived physical attacks (Schedler, 2022).

In keeping with my theoretical expectations about the rewards of capture, I assess the effects of these interventions on three outcomes: 1) illicit economic activity, 2) extraction of state resources via corruption of local officials, and 3) violent responses by rival actors (the state or other cartels). I anticipate that capture will afford criminal groups the opportunity to expand their illicit economic activities free of state repression, and the capacity to siphon off government resources via corruption of elected officials and bureaucrats. Since law enforcement cooperation should help deter challenges, I anticipate that capture should not lead to increased conflict with the state or other armed groups.

Data

I measure attempts to capture local governments with attacks on local politicians during the 2018 campaign period. I turn again to Data Cívica's dataset of political violence. Between January and June 2018, Data Cívica recorded 77 acts of violence against local politicians in 59 municipalities holding municipal elections, spanning 15 of Mexico's 32 states. These

[5] 2018 was also a national election year, with voters casting ballots for federal deputies, senators, and the presidency. Mexican states have staggered electoral cycles.

included instances of lethal and non-lethal violence committed against candidates for and current holders of local elected office — mayors and city councilors (both *regidores* and *síndicos*) — as well their relatives and campaign associates. I argue that these acts of violence represent attempts by criminal organizations to influence who wins local office and how they govern once elected.

Two elements of this measurement strategy merit discussion. First, I am unable to reliably attribute perpetrators to acts of violence. This limitation afflicts nearly all studies of criminal and political violence in contemporary Mexico. Criminal groups rarely claim credit for political assassinations. The state is not much help either: 95% of homicides nationally go unsolved (Animal Político, 2022). I am thus unable to determine which criminal organization committed a given act of violence. While unfortunate, this limitation is ameliorated by the fact that my theoretical expectations are the same for all cartels operating in the country: as organizations with democracy-compatible goals, I expect that all will pursue a strategy of capture when able.

Nor can I definitively show that the perpetrator was a criminal group. In practice, however, the vast majority of perpetrators of political assassinations are (Hernández Huerta, 2020). Mexico has strict gun control laws, and most specialists in coercion outside the state are employed by criminal groups, some of which actively recruit retired members of security forces (UT School of Law, 2017). While some acts of violence may represent personal or political grievances among politicians, they are generally carried out by *sicarios* contracted from criminal organizations in exchange for political rewards (Blume, 2017). These events would therefore represent indicators of capture as well.

A second concern with this measurement strategy centers on the relationship between capture and violence. Attempts to capture local governments may be non-violent. Armed groups may seek to influence local governments through positive inducements, bribing politicians to cooperate or running allied candidates for office. Attempts to capture local governments through violence may thus represent a subset of all attempts of capture. The attempts

I identify may also be less successful ones — evidence of failed coercion and unsuccessful threats (Schelling, 2008). Importantly, however, this form of measurement error should cut *against* the likelihood of finding a treatment effect: by smuggling treated units into the control group, it should attenuate the difference between treated and control municipalities. By this logic, the differences I find between treated and control municipalities may, if anything, understate the effects of capture.

I take data on a series of criminal activities from crime records published by the National Secretariat for Public Security (SNSP). The SNSP publishes monthly counts of different types of crimes at the municipal level. I focus on three crimes in particular. The SNSP unfortunately does not offer a good metric for drug trafficking, which is notoriously difficult to measure. But it does record instances of extortion of people and businesses — as discussed earlier, an economic activity nearly universal among Mexican criminal groups in the late 2010s. The SNSP also counts instances of crimes "committed by public servants," which I use as a measure of corruption: instances of cartels extracting resources illicitly from the state. As the earlier analysis of qualitative evidence suggests, a range of different crimes by public servants could suggest the extraction of state resources by cartels. Elected officials or bureaucrats may directly embezzle funds on behalf of criminal organizations, or may misappropriate them through improper contracting or office selling. All of these behaviors should register as crimes committed by public servants.

Finally, the SNSP records overall counts of homicides, a commonly used proxy for conflict between criminal groups in Mexico.[6] While not all homicides are committed by criminal actors, a majority — as many as two-thirds, in some estimations — do reflect turf wars between criminal groups (Justice in Mexico, 2021). Importantly, homicides should capture both casualties suffered by cartel hitmen in confrontations and victimization of civilians for collaborating with rival groups (Kalyvas, 2006). Since the municipalities in my sample vary

[6]Conclusively determining which homicides are related to organized crime is difficult: the Mexican government attempted to do so but stopped releasing this data publicly in 2013 (Molzahn *et al.*, 2013; Dell, 2015).

substantially in size, I normalize all three measures (extortion, corruption, and homicides) by municipal population to generate per capita rates.

To measure state repression of criminal activities, I draw information from Mexico United Against Organized Crime (MUCD), an NGO that uses public records requests to aggregate data on anti-drug enforcement operations conducted by a range of federal law enforcement and public security agencies. Anti-drug operations are typically carried out by national authorities but hinge on the cooperation of local officials, since they are the ones present in communities who boast local knowledge of illicit activities. MUCD records the eradication of illicit crops (poppy and marijuana) as well as seizures of drugs and precursor materials. I generate an indicator variable that equals 1 if one or more enforcement actions took place in a municipality during a given time period and 0 otherwise.

Finally, I aggregate a series of basic time-static socioeconomic covariates drawn from Uribe *et al.* (2022).[7] I record municipal population, satellite-measured luminosity as a proxy for economic output (Mellander *et al.*, 2015; Dugoua *et al.*, 2018), and several measures of local state presence and capacity: per capita counts of police stations and hospitals to capture state coercion and service provision, respectively; and road density to measure infrastructural development and access to markets.[8]

Research design

To estimate the effects of local government capture, I use a trajectory balancing approach introduced by Hazlett & Xu (2018). Trajectory balancing combines elements of difference-in-difference and synthetic control methods to generate a group of control units optimized to mirror the trajectory of the treated group along the outcome of interest and a range of covariates. By weighting control units to match the trajectory of their treated counterparts, trajectory balancing ensures that the mean values of the outcome variable for the treat-

[7]Time-varying measures are unfortunately not available at the level of temporal granularity necessary.

[8]Population estimates are taken from the 2010 national census; the other quantities are estimated from data current as of 2021.

ment and synthetic control group match exactly for each pre-treatment time period, and then estimates treatment effects for each post-treatment time period and an overall average treatment effect on the treated (ATT). Standard errors are estimated via bootstrap.

I examine the 65 municipalities that saw violence against politicians or their networks during the 2018 local election cycle.[9] Election periods are typically when pacts between criminal groups and politicians are brokered: politicians promise to advance cartel interests when elected, and the cartel supports their campaigns with money and coercion of rivals and voters (ICG, 2021b). To examine the effects of attempts to capture these municipalities, I need a baseline set of municipalities to compare against — municipalities that resemble the treated units along observed and unobserved covariates but did not experience attempts to capture their local governments in 2018.

To construct this control group, I subset the universe of municipalities in the country to those which adjoin one of the 65 municipalities in my treatment group. By merit of proximity, these municipalities are likely to resemble the treated units along socioeconomic and political traits. More importantly, criminal groups seeking to capture local government in a given municipality are likely present and active in neighboring municipalities as well. As Trejo & Ley (2021) demonstrate, cartels sought to stake out "subnational territorial regimes" across adjoining municipalities. If this assumption holds, on average the control units will resemble the treated units in the presence of criminal groups. But they will differ in those groups' attempts to capture democracy in the 2018 election cycle — the quantity for which I hope to estimate a causal effect.[10] Figure 5.3 visualizes the spatial distribution of this sample, which encompasses all major regions and most states in Mexico.

Mayors in Mexico serve three-year terms. I therefore generate a five-year balanced panel

[9]Elections were held everywhere on July 1, 2018, with a few scattered municipalities holding extraordinary elections at other times throughout the year. I include all violent events during the 2018 calendar year. Scholarship on electoral violence suggests that violence in the context of elections typically occurs in the months prior to the election in order to change the outcome of the vote, and in the months after to contest the outcome and shape the incoming government (Birch *et al.*, 2020).

[10]To avoid categorizing treated units as control units, I discard adjoining municipalities that experienced an act of violence against political actors between 2017 and 2020.

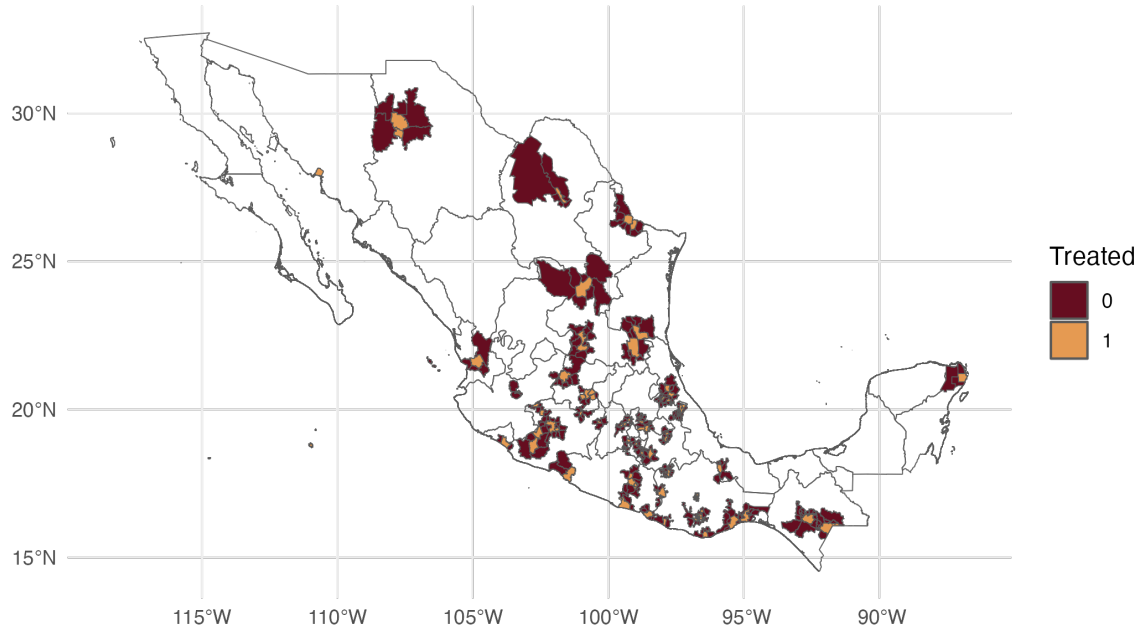

Figure 5.3: Municipalities in sample

encompassing every municipality in this sample from 2017 to 2021 — two years prior to treatment to establish trajectories and three years after — measured at six-month intervals.[11] Since mayors and city councilors elected in 2018 took office in the fall of the same year, I consider the post-treatment period as beginning in January 2019. I weight the control group using mean-balancing of the outcome variables and, in secondary models, the time-invariant covariates outlined above: (logged) population, (logged) luminosity, per capita police stations and hospitals, and road density. I also log the outcome variables to account for leftward skew and truncation at zero.

[11]The only exception is the model of state enforcement actions. The MUCD data is available through the end of 2020, so that model only uses a four-year panel.

Results

Using trajectory balancing, I estimate the effect of government capture on four quantities: extortion rates, rates of corruption by public officials, anti-drug enforcement actions by law enforcement, and homicide rates. In all four cases, mean-balancing works well. On average, the treated municipalities experience higher levels of extortion, corruption, enforcement actions, and homicides than the control municipalities in the pre-treatment period. Mean-balancing adjusts for this imbalance effectively: after weighting, the average values of the outcome variables for the control groups exactly match the trajectory of the treatment groups. Figures C.1 to C.4 (Appendix) visualize the unweighted and weighted trajectory balance for the four models. Figures C.5 to C.8 (Appendix) present coefficient plots across pre- and post-treatment time periods for each model.

I first turn to extortion. I expect that local state capture will lead to expanded illicit economic activity since criminal groups have less fear of repression. Model 1 supports this intuition: the treatment effect of capture on per capita extortion, averaged across the post-treatment time periods, is positive and statistically significant ($p < .05$). Attempted capture generates a 15% increase in extortion rates, representing a substantial incline in crime — and in the extorting cartel's profits. This increase suggests that cartels who gain influence over mayors and city councilors through violence feel empowered to scale up their protection racketeering activities.

A similar relationship holds for corruption (Model 2). The effect of capture is highly statistically significant ($p < .01$), predicting a 20% increase in rates of crimes committed by public employees. This suggests that attempts to capture local governance institutions may substantially increase the degree of embezzlement and misallocation of contracts and patronage. The combination of increased levels of extortion and corruption implies that capturing local governments grants cartels the latitude to expand the rents they extract from both the population and the state.

Strikingly, this increase in extraction does not seem to have precipitated a violent re-

Table 5.2: Effects of local government capture

	Extortion (1)	Corruption (2)	Enforcement (3)	Homicides (4)
Capture	0.1525*	0.1945**	0.0396	0.015
	(0.0654)	(0.0749)	(0.0438)	(0.0644)
Covariates	No	No	No	No
Treated municipalities	65	65	65	65
Municipalities	381	381	381	381
Observations	3810	3810	3048	3810

*Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05, .: 0.1. Average Treatment Effects on the Treated (ATT), estimated via trajectory mean balancing with bootstrapped standard errors.*

sponse from federal security forces or rival cartels. Treated municipalities did not observe an increase in anti-drug enforcement actions by federal law enforcement units (Model 3). Nor did they experience higher rates of homicides, which would signal competition from rival criminal groups, in the years after capture (Model 4). This result implies another benefit of government capture. One might expect the substantial increase in illicit economic activities documented in Models 1 and 2 to trigger either repression from federal security forces or competition from rivals seeking a slice of the pie. We do not observe either of these responses, suggesting that capturing local government both opens new economic opportunities and safeguards those opportunities from reprisal.

Robustness

These results are largely robust to alternative configurations of the sample and specifications of the model. To increase the dimensions along which I match the control observations to the treated observations, I first add the time-static municipal covariates enumerated above to the four main models. The results, depicted in Table C.1 (Appendix), change little. I also adjust the means by which I weight the control units. Hazlett & Xu (2018) recommend an alternative method of trajectory balancing that seeks to balance not just the mean values

of outcomes and covariates in pre-treatment periods but also their higher-order interactions in order to avoid imposing an assumption of linearity. I employ this estimation method, which prioritizes mean balancing but also optimizes higher-order functions through a kernel approach, in Table C.2 (Appendix); the results again change little.

I also assess whether my choice of potential control units may be driving the results. By limiting the pool of control units to municipalities adjoining treated units, I aim to achieve balance on unobservable traits including, crucially, cartel presence. But doing so also rules out other potential control municipalities that may better mirror the treated units. I therefore expand the pool of potential control units to every municipality in each state with one or more treated municipality. The results (Table C.3, Appendix) are virtually unchanged.

Finally, these results may be an artifact of inherent features of the trajectory balancing approach. I estimate the same models using a standard difference-in-difference setup,

$$\text{Outcome}_{it} = \beta_1 \text{Treated}_{it} + \beta FE_{municipality} + \beta FE_{time} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where i and t index municipalities and time periods respectively. (Since the municipal covariates are time-static, they drop out in estimation.) The results, depicted in Table C.4 (Appendix), are generally similar, though the effect of capture on corruption loses statistical significance.

To be sure, empirical limitations remain. Data availability prevents me from assessing the effect of capture on drug trafficking — still the preeminent economic activity of most cartels even after the diversification of the 2010s. The measure I use to proxy for corruption, crimes committed by public servants, may include a range of behaviors unrelated to organized criminal groups, such as self-enrichment and other self-serving abuses of office. Perhaps most importantly, I am unable to determine which criminal group is involved in either government capture or the outcomes I evaluate. I assume that the same cartel seeks to capture the

municipal government and then reaps the corresponding rewards — expanding its extraction from the community and the state and heading off repression by security forces or rivals. It is possible that the perpetrators of extortion and corruption in treated municipalities are not the same group responsible for capture. This type of measurement error would overstate the effects of capture by wrongly attributing acts of extortion and corruption committed by other criminal actors.

Importantly, however, there are also reasons to think these quantitative results may understate the effects of capture. As discussed in the research design section, by focusing my attention on instances of violent intervention in local democratic politics, I may miss instances of successful capture — threats credible enough to ensure compliance without the use of force. If I incorrectly categorize these instances of unobserved capture as control units, the treatment effects I find here may be downwardly biased, underestimating the true effects of capture.

A related issue concerns measurement error. Criminal presence in a community — and especially criminal capture of government — may affect crime reporting. Citizens may be too scared to report extortion of their families or businesses, or bureaucrats may be deterred from transmitting those reports to federal databases. Misbehavior by public employees may similarly be covered up if the cartel controls city hall. By reducing reporting in treated municipalities, this type of measurement error would also understate the effects of capture on extortion and corruption.

It is unlikely that this dynamic would afflict my measures of enforcement and homicide to the same extent. The enforcement data is collected centrally by the federal law enforcement agencies charged with conducting anti-drug operations. Homicide data is consistently among the most reliable crime data given the gravity and visibility of murder. The outcome variables in Models 3 and 4 are thus less likely to be downwardly biased, and more likely to represent true null results — a telling absence of violent reprisals from the state and criminal rivals in the wake of capture.

5.4 Conclusion

I have argued that criminal organizations have nearly universally democracy-compatible goals. As a result, they have strong incentives to co-opt elections and the policymaking process to advance their economic aims. When seeking to influence powerful national politicians who they cannot reliably coerce, criminal groups offer bribery, kickbacks, and other quid pro quo arrangements. When dealing with more vulnerable local elected officials, they pair positive inducements with the threat of force. In both cases the benefits of intervention are substantial: free rein to conduct and expand their illicit activities without state interference, the active collaboration of the state to support them and punish their enemies, and opportunities to loot government coffers.

Qualitative and quantitative evidence from a range of cartels in 21st-century Mexico provides support for these claims. When targeting elected officials these groups were unable to credibly coerce — governors and federal officials in Mexico City — they pursued a strategy of corruption. Cartels offered a series of governors large bribes, campaign contributions, and guns for hire in exchange for law enforcement cooperation and access to state resources. When seeking to influence local elected officials in communities cartels dominated, they used a strategy of capture instead, simply demanding patronage, municipal funds, and the compliance of local police at the point of a gun.

The consequences of these interventions for Mexican democracy are deeply concerning. The ability of criminal groups to secure the cooperation of a succession of governors across the country suggests a profound and continuing crisis of corruption. At the local level, the outlook is bleaker still. Community leaders are robbed of agency, forced from their communities, and killed in tragic numbers. From town councils to governors' mansions, these interventions damage public faith in democracy, twist policy outcomes, entrench violence across society, and rob citizens of much-needed public goods. This generates a vicious circle: the rewards of corruption and capture allow criminal groups to expand and thrive, increasing

their ability to penetrate the state further. Confronting this challenge requires systematic and sustained reforms. In the sixth and final chapter of this dissertation, I discuss potential responses to better insulate democracy from violent capture.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Overview

Violence in democratic politics is alarmingly common. By the best global estimates we have — surely substantial under-counts — since the end of the Cold War the world has suffered more than 4,000 acts of violence meant to disrupt or alter elections and nearly 10,000 attacks on politicians, political parties, and rallies (LaFree & Dugan, 2007; Fjelde & Höglund, 2021). These acts of violence have far-reaching effects: beyond the immediate, tragic harms suffered by politicians, bureaucrats, and ordinary citizens, they damage public faith in democracy and hamstring the quality of democratic governance.

Often, the perpetrators of this violence are non-state actors. Examples abound. In the Philippines, the New People's Army insurgency launched a campaign of violence to disrupt the 2013 general elections, including attacking soldiers carrying election equipment (AFP News, 2013). In 2018, members of a conservative paramilitary group assassinated Rio de Janeiro city councilor Marielle Franco, a rising star in Brazilian progressive politics (Ramalho, 2019). Two years later, U.S. security forces disrupted a plot by a right-wing militia to kidnap and kill Gretchen Whitmer, the liberal governor of the state of Michigan (Zapotosky *et al.*, 2020).

How should we understand these attempts to manipulate democratic politics through violence? I have argued that a wide range of armed groups are driven to seek to influence the democratic process. Elected officials are the most powerful figures in democracy: they set policy, allocate resources and contracts, and direct law enforcement personnel. They are also the visible face of the democratic state and, alongside the elections that select them, the core symbols of its legitimacy and viability. Armed groups who wish to discredit the state's political project or enact their own face thus powerful incentives to influence these officials and their behavior.

I argue that the form these interventions take is a function of two variables: 1) how compatible an armed group's goals are with democracy as a system of governance, and 2)

how much coercive power the group can bring to bear against voters and elected officials. The combinations of these variables correspond to one of four ideal-typical strategies, each of which prescribes a distinct course of violent and non-violent behavior. Groups with highly democracy-compatible goals seek to appropriate the machinery of democracy to further those goals. When they lack coercive capacity, they do so by offering elected officials positive inducements (*corruption*). Where they have a greater degree of coercive wherewithal, they pair these positive inducements with negative ones, threatening voters and candidates to ensure the election of compliant officials and then coercing those officials into enacting the group's political or economic agenda (*capture*).

Groups with democracy-incompatible goals take a diametrically different approach. They seek instead to discredit public perceptions of democratic rule and tear down democratic institutions to replace them with non-democratic alternatives. When they lack coercive capacity, they launch high-profile acts of violence against elections and other symbols of democracy (*delegitimization*); when they are coercively ascendant, they impede the conduct of elections and systematically uproot elected officials and the bureaucracies they command in order to replace them with newly constructed non-democratic institutions (*displacement*).

A third set of armed groups seek to advance a mixture of democracy-compatible and -incompatible goals. These groups are torn between an urge to destroy the infrastructure of democratic rule and to bend it to their ends. This tension is manifest in their behavior. These groups commonly pursue a bifurcated strategy: delegitimizing the democratic state where they have limited coercive capacity, and quietly governing through democratic institutions in communities where they can command the obedience of voters and elected officials.

I evaluate these predictions against a range of evidence from Latin America. I first examine the case of a low-compatibility armed actor in the Peruvian Maoist insurgent group Sendero Luminoso. Through a multi-method analysis of the group's rhetoric and doctrine, I unpack the logic behind Sendero's deep opposition to democracy. I then demonstrate the effects of this opposition. In Lima and other urban centers where it had little coercive

sway, the insurgents settled for sporadic high-profile attacks on political elites and party headquarters. But in the "liberated zones" the group carved out in the rural highlands, it went much further, blocking elections, killing or evicting local elected leaders, and replacing municipal governments with revolutionary popular councils. These interventions, I show, had lasting effects on public trust and participation in democracy.

A second case study examines a medium-compatibility organization in the FARC in Colombia. While the FARC shared some of Sendero's complaints about electoral and democratic politics, it believed that the democratic process could accommodate many of the group's political and economic goals. As a result, the FARC's engagement with democracy diverged from its Peruvian counterpart's behavior. Like Sendero Luminoso, it emphasized spectacular attacks on high-profile politicians and elections in epicenters of state strength. But unlike Sendero Luminoso, when the FARC enjoyed the ability to command local voters and politicians, it usually chose to capture democratic institutions rather than replace them. I find that the FARC worked within the democratic system in a variety of ways, from establishing co-governance arrangements with mayors and seizing state bureaucracies to running candidates of its own.

A final chapter turns to highly democracy-compatible groups. I show that a broad set of criminal organizations in Mexico sought to influence local and national democracy. When dealing with elected officials over whom they had little coercive sway — governors and national authorities — these groups followed a strategy of corruption, offering bribes and other benefits in exchange for forbearance and cooperation. When pressuring local elected officials in communities they dominated, cartels paired bribes with threats of violence. An analysis of the 2018 municipal elections shows that these interventions paid off: attempted capture of local governments led to increased levels of extortion and theft from public coffers. Capture of elected officials, this analysis suggests, can be highly effective.

6.2 Future research

6.2.1 Compatibility with democracy

Whose democracy?

These findings suggest a number of avenues for future research on intervention in democracy by armed groups. I focus here on two: lines of inquiry around 1) the concept of compatibility with democracy and 2) the violent and non-violent strategies armed groups can pursue to manipulate democratic outcomes. The notion of compatibility with democracy lies at the heart of my theoretical account. What matters, I have argued, is whether a group's goals are compatible with an abstract, minimalist notion of democracy: whether the group aims to create a political order consistent with free elections and mass suffrage, and whether it believes it can achieve those aims through a democratic process.

In practice, however, armed actors often frame their objections not in reference to an abstract idea of democracy but in terms of the democracy they are confronted with. Sendero Luminoso condemned Peruvian democracy, not every democracy, as being a dictatorship of the oligarchy; the FARC decried corruption, vote buying, and foreign influence as problems specific to Colombian democracy in particular. On some level this makes sense: both groups explained their positions in relation to the political context in which they found themselves.

But it raises the question of whether it is perceptions of the democracy they have, not the democracy they could have, that determines armed groups' behavior. Is there any version of democracy that Sendero Luminoso would have seen as acceptable? Would variation in the form or quality of Peruvian democracy have caused the group to change its behavior? I believe the answer is no — the group was uncompromisingly dedicated to creating a dictatorship of the proletariat — but it might be yes for less dogmatic and radical organizations. Further attempts to parse this distinction would be fruitful.

Endogeneity

A related issue concerns the endogeneity of compatibility with democracy to other factors. For analytical tractability, I have treated compatibility with democracy as exogenously given, a trait assigned to armed groups at their creation and sustained throughout their life. I believe there is a reasonable basis for this assumption: an organization's understanding of democracy and political order tends to be foundational to its identity. My examination of the FARC case provides evidence for this conclusion. Despite shifts in the military capacity and political composition of both the FARC and the Colombian government, the FARC's attitudes toward democracy did not change markedly over the course of the war.

But in practice this assumption of exogeneity surely does not always hold. Armed groups' ideologies may shift over time as experience alters their leaders' view of the world or leaders turn over. More problematically from an analytical perspective, a group's ideology could evolve in response to changes in its strategic environment. Military or political setbacks may trigger a shift toward a more hardline approach, while rapprochement with the state may provide opportunities for more extensive engagement with democratic institutions. Shifts in popular sentiment may have a larger effect still. If support for an armed group's political platform moves from being a minority position to a majority one, the appeal of a majoritarian democratic system as a mechanism for achieving the group's goals presumably increases sharply. Future research exploring this endogeneity — and the extent to which it affects armed group behavior — would be welcome.

6.2.2 Strategies of intervention

Violence and non-violence

The evidence I examine also suggests questions about the strategies of intervention in democracy available to armed groups. A first question centers on the type of violence these strategies entail and whether they require violence at all. I have argued that violent inter-

ventions in democracy entail specific forms of violence depending on their aims: spectacular violence to discredit democracy in the public's perception, and functional violence against voters and politicians to change its outcomes. The evidence I examine largely supports this proposition. But it also suggests exceptions.

As predicted by the theory, Mexican criminal groups employed functional violence — targeted threats and assassinations of candidates and elected officials — to capture local governments. Violent event records suggest only very rare instances of spectacular violence against actors involved in the democratic process. Importantly, however, democracy-compatible criminal groups do regularly commit acts of spectacular violence, in Mexico and elsewhere (Durán-Martínez, 2018; Marston & Bell-Martin, 2023) — employing what Fujii (2013) terms "extra-lethal violence" to shock audiences, project power, and send a message to the state and other rivals.

These and other criminal groups also sometimes leverage spectacular violence to influence election outcomes. Large-scale, shocking acts of violence serve to delegitimize incumbent elected officials, reduce their political capital, and damage their chances of reelection. Such acts can also be used to influence the policymaking process by applying political pressure to force leaders to agree to criminal groups' demands (Lessing, 2017). Though relatively rare, spectacular violence does sometimes occur under a strategy of capture.

Other acts of violence defy easy categorization as functional or spectacular. This is partly a measurement issue: the difference between spectacular and functional violence is ultimately a question of motives, which are almost always difficult to accurately infer. But it is also possible that some acts of violence belong to both categories. If the FARC had succeeded in assassinating Álvaro Uribe, it would have cast a seismic blow against the legitimacy of the democratic state — but it would also have likely changed the national government's policy toward the insurgents and the conduct of the war. Similarly, participants in the January 6, 2021 invasion of the U.S. Capitol seem to have sought both to subjugate the symbolic seat of legislative power and to influence the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. Cases

like these suggest that further research is needed to carefully unpack which logics of violence against democracy we should see under which conditions.

Choosing between strategies

Another set of questions for future research centers on armed groups' choice of strategies. The evidence I examine from Mexico raises a first such question. I have argued that capture is a superior strategy to corruption because it diminishes the risk that elected officials renege on their commitments to armed groups. Yet the Zetas and other cartels appear to have profited substantially from corrupt agreements with governors. Secure in their mansions, these governors sometimes reneged on their promises. But more often they seem to have followed through on their commitments to aid the cartels' drug trafficking operations, offer their associates preferential contracts, and repress their rivals.

Is corruption as effective as capture? In some cases it may be. One potential mediating variable might be the political cost of compliance. If doing as the armed group desires is relatively politically costless for politicians — if their voters and political patrons are unlikely to notice or care — positive inducements may be sufficient to ensure compliance. Incentives to defect are much higher for politically or personally costly demands — demands to set policies that are visible, unpopular, or risk the politician being deposed from power or prosecuted. In those cases, I expect that armed groups will prefer to underwrite their contracts with the threat of punishment wherever they are coercively capable.

A second question concerns the object of capture. I have emphasized the value of capturing elected officials as the locus of power in a democratic state. In practice, however, evidence suggests that armed groups sometimes attempt to capture the bureaucracies these elected officials command instead of pursuing the officials themselves. I observe this behavior in the cases I study: rather than capture elected officials, Mexican criminal groups sometimes cut deals with police commanders or military units, the state bureaucracies most relevant to their operations, instead. The literature on rebel governance also documents this

phenomenon. Mampilly (2011) and Sweet (2020) explain how insurgent groups appropriate state bureaucracies for healthcare, tax administration, and economic regulation.

How should we understand the choice to capture bureaucracies instead of the elected officials that direct them? It could reflect the armed group's judgment about the local balance of power: in some settings, security forces may possess substantial political influence over mayors or city councils. It may also be an appealing option if elected officials are incorruptible or absent, or if armed groups can draw on personal relationships with high-ranking bureaucrats. Deeper investigation of how armed groups make this decision would be welcome.

A final question revolves around the use of violence. Violence is central to the strategies I theorize here. But some forms of intervention in democracy may entail no violence at all. When the state permits it — or when they can hide their involvement — armed actors can engage in democratic politics like everyone else (Matanock & Staniland, 2018). They can campaign on behalf of candidates, finance their campaigns, mobilize voters and buy votes; they can lobby elected officials for policy changes through non-violent mobilization and personal appeals. In Colombia, right-wing paramilitaries campaigned directly for their chosen candidates, organizing events and donating time as well as logistic and economic support (Sala de Casación Penal, 2011). In support of Álvaro Uribe's 2002 presidential campaign, paramilitary leaders organized buses to move voters to rallies, ordered t-shirts, and urged local businesses to chip in (Sala de Justicia y Paz, 2014).

Since all armed actors are capable of using coercion, it can be difficult (both for analysts and for the targets of these efforts) to identify truly non-violent strategies. But where they do exist, they should be independent of the coercive capacity variable that I believe structures the choice of coercion-reliant strategies. Further unpacking how armed actors select between coercive and non-coercive means of intervening in the democratic process would be a productive endeavor.

6.3 Implications

6.3.1 Implications for scholarship

Beyond the question of how armed groups intervene in the democratic process, these results suggest a number of broader implications for theories of political violence and democratic politics. I highlight three here. First, this dissertation offers a new lens for understanding violence against elected officials. I have sought to document the prevalence and importance of this form of political violence, which both exacts a large human toll and shakes the legitimacy and functioning of democratic governance. Yet theoretical explanations for this specific form of violence are relatively few in political science. Scholarship on civil war focuses on clashes between combatants and victimization of civilians, but rarely studies the government officials who sit at the intersection of state and citizen. Literature on terrorism does not often examine elected officials as a specific target of violence; literature on electoral violence does but stops shortly after election day.

A small but growing wave of research on violence against politicians in Mexico (Blume, 2017) and Brazil (Bullock, 2021; Carvalho, 2022) has honed in on candidates and elected officials as a distinct population of study as targets of violence. This literature emphasizes the role of the politicians themselves as indirect instigators of violence against their political rivals. By this logic, violence is largely driven by candidates and elected officials who hire specialists in coercion to eliminate or restrict their rivals.

I think this approach is fruitful, and importantly underlines the deep connections between political elites and private specialists in violence in democracies (Trejo *et al.*, 2018; Noria Project, 2021). But my findings suggest that the direct perpetrators of violence require close scrutiny as well. The specialists in coercion that politicians turn to in Brazil and Mexico belong to armed groups: drug cartels, militias, and street gangs. Theorizing violence against politicians, I argue, requires a deep understanding of those groups' motives, interests, and

strategies — understanding the agreements they reach with politicians and the rewards they reap in return.

Second, these results speak to longstanding debates about processes of state-building. Both canonical models of state formation (e.g. Olson, 1993; Tilly, 1993; Scott, 2009) and newer work on rebel governance (e.g. Huang, 2016; Arjona, 2016; Kasfir *et al.*, 2017) model state-building as a process that starts from scratch. Motivated by the threat of war and an interest in maximizing revenue, early states created institutions for taxation, regulation, and administration from the ground up. The literature on rebel governance suggests a similar process for state-builders in the modern world. By this account, insurgents invest substantial resources to build a "parallel" apparatus of statehood, establishing new courts, schools, hospitals, diplomatic offices, and institutions for collective organization.

But contemporary state-builders do not operate in an institutional vacuum. As I have shown in this dissertation, armed groups with political aspirations can appropriate state institutions rather than devote the resources necessary to construct their own. Even in weak states, many government bureaucracies are functional, institutionalized bodies with procedural experience and specialized human capital. Capturing these institutions is often much more efficient than constructing new ones and more conducive to more effective governance. The FARC's appropriation of government institutions for dispute resolution and land registration illustrates the appeal of this approach.

Nor is the institutional ecosystem that aspiring state-builders operate in limited to the state. Political order in many communities is provided not by the state but by communal authorities, civil society, or traditional leaders (Baldwin & Holzinger, 2019). Armed groups may choose to capture these institutions instead of — or in addition to — the state's governance apparatus. Arjona (2014) documents how both the RENAMO insurgents in Mozambique and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Sudan governed civilian affairs through traditional chiefs. The Afghan Taliban similarly took advantage of civil society to govern, recruiting judges to staff their insurgent courts from networks of religious schools in northern

Pakistan (Baczko, 2013).

Contemporary state-builders can thus select from a range of options. How do armed groups choose whether to construct novel institutions or to cannibalize existing state or non-state governance structures? I have offered one answer: democracy-incompatible armed groups prefer to build new institutions rather than co-opt the democratic state. But what about civil society or traditional institutions? And how do democracy-compatible groups select which state bureaucracies to seize and which to ignore or replace? Understanding processes of state-building in a cluttered landscape of governance institutions requires new theories.

Finally, the analysis advanced in this project underlines the importance of ideology and political commitments. Studies of political violence are often curiously devoid of politics. For the sake of parsimony, armed groups are frequently portrayed as undifferentiated maximizers of power or wealth, actors whose behavior is determined by their structural constraints and rational incentives (Gutiérrez Sanín & Wood, 2014). But this simplifying assumption elides crucial information. As the divergence between Sendero Luminoso and the FARC reveals, conventional categories of non-state actors — insurgents, militias, and criminals; center-seekers and secessionists; leftist and rightists — are often insufficient to capture the ideological and political commitments that shape these actors' goals and strategies. Understanding the behavior of violent actors, in democratic politics and other realms of contestation, requires taking seriously their political aims and vision of the world.

This is no straightforward task. In Latin America, the Marxist insurgents that dominated the 20th century have been replaced by a new, diverse set of violent actors that defy easy categorization. These groups combine economic motives with political goals and harbor complex attitudes toward democratic politics. Criminal groups like El Salvador's *maras* have become key players in local politics and shapers of economic policy. Vigilante groups in Mexico, grassroots organizations created to repel abusive cartels, have begun negotiating fiscal assistance from the central government on behalf of violence-afflicted communities

(Kryt, 2019). In Bolivia, deposed president Evo Morales called for the creation of "armed militias" to protect citizens from the state (AFP, 2020). In Venezuela, a diverse set of armed actors — leftist insurgents, regime-allied paramilitaries, local militias, and criminal organizations — are increasingly involved in national politics (International Crisis Group, 2020). In Latin America and elsewhere, theorizing and responding to the threat of violent intervention in democracy hinges on understanding how armed actors view the political world and their place in it.

6.3.2 Implications for policy

What does all of this suggest for democratic consolidation and human security? The immediate implications are grim. For the groups I study, political violence seems to work more often than not. Sendero Luminoso succeeded in derailing Peru's democratic transition, prosecuting a campaign to delegitimize democracy and discredit the "legal left" and ultimately contributing to a return to autocracy under Alberto Fujimori. In the communities where the insurgents held most sway, their systematic persecution of elected officials drove out the democratic state and forced residents to adopt Sendero's revolutionary institutions; this ruthless form of displacement left towns without elected governments for years and sowed a lasting distrust in democracy.

Both the FARC and the Mexican criminal organizations I study often leveraged violence successfully as well. The FARC subjugated local governments to govern on its behalf, appropriated bureaucracies to fit its ends, and stole from municipal coffers. The Zetas, Jalisco New Generation Cartel, and other criminal groups leveraged coercion against local governments to reap similar rewards — freedom from repression and competition and increased opportunities to extort businesses, traffic narcotics, and plunder public accounts. Strategically deployed coercion, this evidence suggests, can succeed in both undermining and capturing democracy.

But democratic governments are not helpless. Most immediately, security policy reforms

can blunt attempts to violently intervene in the democratic process. Of the four strategies I theorize, only corruption works if the armed actor cannot use violence against voters and politicians. States can invest in security personnel to strengthen their capacity to ensure safe access to polling sites, harden symbolic targets, and increase protection for candidates and elected officials. This is certainly more easily said than done, especially for states struggling with budget constraints and stretched thin by security threats across electoral constituencies. But not all reforms require hefty budgets. International Crisis Group (2023) argues that procedural reforms to better integrate the local knowledge of municipal police in Mexico with the greater capacity of federal security forces can meaningfully reduce violence against local elected officials.

Perhaps more important than security policy reforms, however, are reforms to democracy itself. Governments facing an armed group determined to undermine the democratic system find themselves in a contest for the legitimacy of democracy. Both delegitimization and displacement aim to reduce public confidence in democracy as a viable model of governance. Delegitimization does so by using high-profile acts of violence to cast doubt on the democratic state's ability to select and safeguard its national leaders. Displacement goes further, impeding the functioning of democratic governance by persecuting the elected officials and bureaucrats charged with providing public services and maintaining political order.

Democratic governments — whose own legitimacy rests on the legitimacy of the democratic process that elected them – should respond to these attacks with redoubled efforts to convince their citizens that democracy works for them. Claims by armed groups that democracy is a failed system of governance carry much less weight when citizens are confident that their elected officials represent their interests and are capable of improving their lives. The best response to an effort to diminish democracy is an effort to improve it.

Democracy reforms can also protect against attempts to co-opt the state through corruption or capture. State policies can help innoculate democratic institutions against armed groups pursuing a strategy of corruption. Anti-corruption schemes, rule of law reforms,

and policies to enhance transparency increase the probability that corrupt deals between politicians and armed groups are detected and prosecuted.

A healthy and independent free press is an invaluable tool to complement these efforts. So, too, is a robust level of party competition. Evidence from around the world (Gordon, 2009; Lorentzen & Lu, 2018) demonstrates that prosecutions of corrupt officials are often driven by politics. Party leaders are reluctant to prosecute their co-partisans or political allies.[1] As a result, efforts to root out corruption across parties are more likely to succeed when multiple political parties have power over prosecution.

Perhaps less obviously, robust multiparty democracy also offers a bulwark against capture. In related work (Uribe, 2023b), I argue that high levels of local party competition inhibit attempts to violently capture elections. Competitive constituencies have more and higher quality rivals for armed actors and their allies to confront. In an electoral stronghold, an armed group may only face one viable candidate — one opponent to intimidate out of the race or to scare or bribe into campaigning elsewhere. Competitive constituencies are likely to feature more and better candidates, more party operatives, and more brokers (Griffin, 2015; Shaukat, n.d.). Coercing this larger set of stakeholders presents a more challenging task, and displacing only one rival may be insufficient; her voters may defect to another candidate rather than to the armed group's ally.

Moreover, electoral competition attracts attention. Reports of electoral violence, intimidation, or corruption in party strongholds may not catch the attention of policymakers, especially if the local party is not in power or lacks connections to the security establishment. Interference by armed groups in competitive constituencies is more likely to make waves. Having multiple parties focused on a community brings more observers, a greater likelihood that a victimized party will have ties to national policymakers and security forces, and creates strong incentives for parties to show their commitment to pivotal voters by

[1]This observation is consistent with research that argues that large-scale collusion between elected officials and criminal groups in 20th-century Mexico was made possible by single-party rule (Snyder & Durán Martínez, 2009; Trejo & Ley, 2017).

responding forcefully to reports of voter intimidation.

In Chapter 2, I argued that the inclusivity and openness of democracy make it particularly vulnerable to violent intervention. By devolving power to elected officials chosen from below, democracies create a host of opportunities for armed groups to use violence to meddle in local political processes. But the remedy to this vulnerability, this dissertation suggests, is not less democracy but more — more responsive leaders, more accountable institutions, and more effective governance.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix to Chapter 3

A.1 Compatibility with democracy

Table A.1: Overview of CeDeMa corpus

Country	Groups	Documents	Min. year	Median year	Max. year
Argentina	70	385	1956	1973	2021
Bolivia	11	47	1967	1990	2012
Brasil	13	68	1963	1971	2020
Chile	71	677	1965	2008	2021
Colombia	27	3239	1959	2011	2022
Costa Rica	1	1	1971	1971	1971
Cuba	4	54	1955	1957	1988
Ecuador	17	427	1984	2009	2021
El Salvador	15	337	1962	1983	2011
Guatemala	9	253	1962	1989	2016
Haiti	1	2	2004	2004	2004
Honduras	7	18	1980	2008	2010
México	50	1213	1963	2005	2021
Nicaragua	7	117	1958	1978	2010
Panamá	3	38	1959	2007	2015
Paraguay	3	41	1959	2013	2020
Perú	11	405	1964	1990	2021
Puerto Rico	13	119	1968	2004	2020
República Dominicana	5	12	1959	1961	2011
Uruguay	8	72	1965	1971	2010
Venezuela	15	174	1960	2003	2021

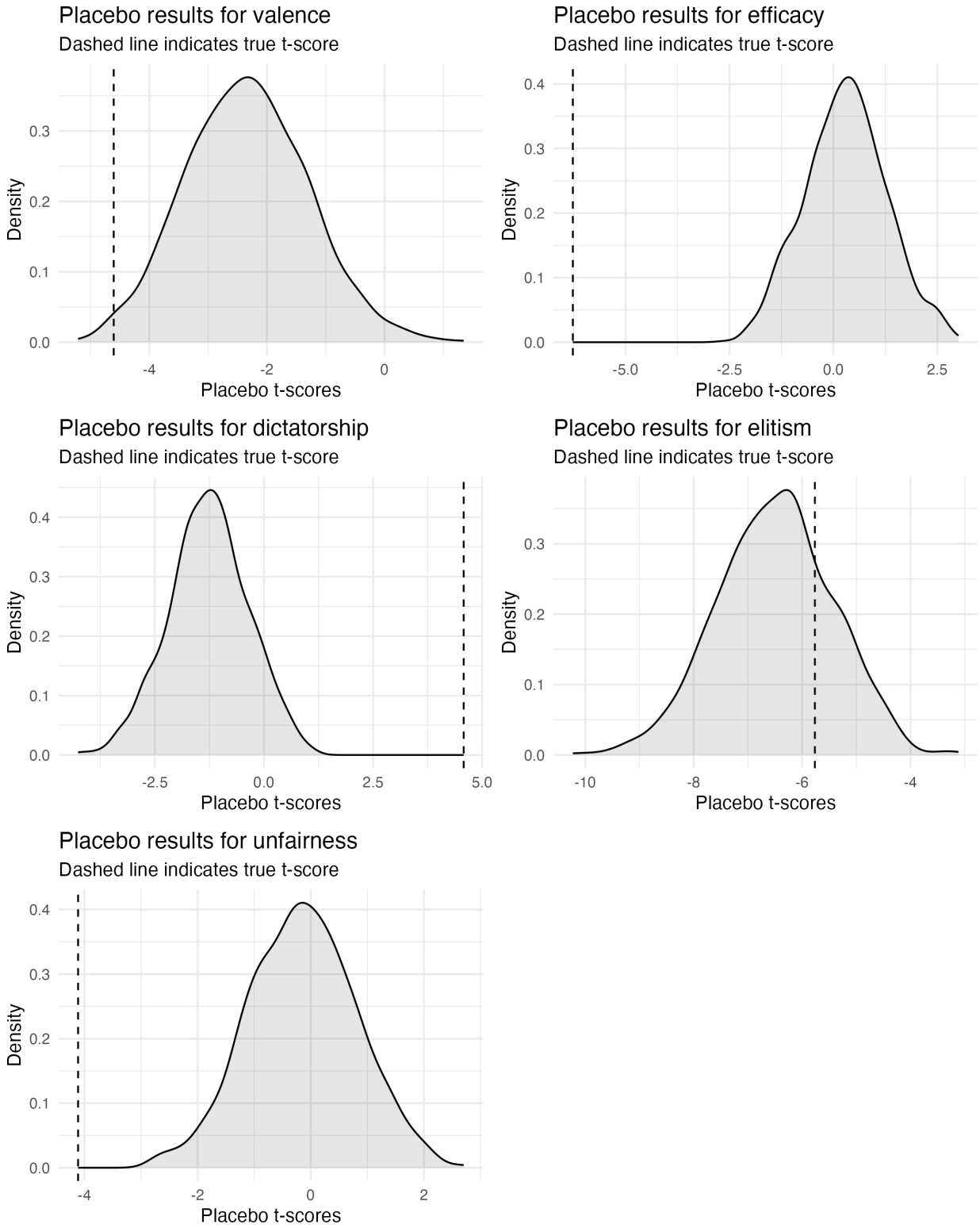

Figure A.1: Placebo tests for Sendero Luminoso's rhetoric around democracy

Table A.2: Highest and lowest scoring words for each dimension of rhetorical analysis

Valence		Efficacy		Dictatorship		Elitism		Unfairness	
Word	Score	Word	Score	Word	Score	Word	Score	Word	Score
apoyo	0.32	eficaz	0.45	dictadura	0.44	elite	0.61	injusta	0.41
bueno	0.31	eficiente	0.34	fusilamientos	0.30	entrena	0.32	inmoral	0.37
espaldarazo	0.29	coordinada	0.31	autodenominada	0.30	entrenando	0.31	inaceptable	0.36
bienvenida	0.29	adecuada	0.29	represores	0.29	entrenan	0.30	inhumano	0.34
solicitamos	0.28	equilibrada	0.28	franquismo	0.28	academia	0.28	injustificable	0.34
respaldo	0.28	fluida	0.27	fusilamiento	0.27	disciplina	0.27	inhumana	0.34
impulso	0.28	eficaces	0.26	nazi	0.26	guardia	0.26	atentatorio	0.33
solicitando	0.27	acercarnos	0.25	somocista	0.26	entrenados	0.26	indignidad	0.32
refrendamos	0.27	estrecha	0.25	dictador	0.25	talentosos	0.26	reprochable	0.32
requerimos	0.27	trabajaremos	0.25	cordobazo	0.24	miembros	0.26	incomprensible	0.32
esperamos	0.27	garantice	0.24	ajusticiamiento	0.24	staff	0.26	condenable	0.32
agrado	0.26	dinamico	0.24	clandestino	0.23	comanda	0.25	injustas	0.31
facilidades	0.26	permita	0.24	clandestinidad	0.23	profesionalismo	0.25	repudiable	0.31
fortalecida	0.26	transparente	0.24	dictatorial	0.23	milicia	0.24	criticable	0.31
orientaciones	0.25	deseamos	0.24	nazis	0.23	adinerados	0.24	censurable	0.31
complementadas	0.25	apropiada	0.24	purgas	0.23	selecto	0.24	inequitativo	0.31
concretar	0.25	desarrollamos	0.24	uruguaya	0.23	division	0.24	indigna	0.31
detalles	0.25	equitativa	0.24	torturaba	0.23	paramilitar	0.24	menosprecio	0.31
refrendado	0.25	oportuna	0.24	tormentos	0.22	foguear	0.24	coercitivas	0.31
agradecemos	0.25	segura	0.24	colaboracionista	0.22	apuros	0.24	prepotente	0.30
avaricia	-0.21	desconociendo	-0.28	democracias	-0.29	relativista	-0.22	llamada	-0.27
suplanta	-0.21	ineficientes	-0.28	concordia	-0.29	abundancia	-0.22	halla	-0.27
destruye	-0.21	inconsistente	-0.28	intercultural	-0.29	gravitacional	-0.22	ubicada	-0.27
roba	-0.21	insuficiente	-0.29	impere	-0.29	capas	-0.22	proximidades	-0.27
amnesia	-0.21	ineptitud	-0.29	multilateralismo	-0.29	podredumbres	-0.22	recodo	-0.27
nefastos	-0.21	inexistente	-0.29	gobiernen	-0.30	resultante	-0.23	cima	-0.27
conspirador	-0.21	nula	-0.29	participativa	-0.30	estimar	-0.23	punta	-0.27
mutila	-0.21	incomprensible	-0.29	transparencia	-0.30	propagan	-0.24	llegar	-0.28
disfraz	-0.21	inconstitucional	-0.29	pluralidad	-0.31	polarizaciones	-0.24	reloj	-0.28
perverso	-0.21	incompetente	-0.29	estabilidad	-0.31	gotas	-0.24	saliendo	-0.28
fraudulencia	-0.21	inmoral	-0.30	paz	-0.31	deformaciones	-0.24	cruza	-0.28
engendra	-0.21	ineficacia	-0.30	imperen	-0.31	hojas	-0.24	entra	-0.28
asesina	-0.21	obsoleta	-0.30	igualdad	-0.32	latitudes	-0.25	orilla	-0.29
malvado	-0.22	inaplicable	-0.31	pluralismo	-0.32	concentraciones	-0.25	ubica	-0.29
estereotipo	-0.22	incompetencia	-0.31	pluralista	-0.33	luminosa	-0.26	pared	-0.29
parasitaria	-0.22	impracticable	-0.31	respeto	-0.35	extinciones	-0.27	colina	-0.29
maldad	-0.23	inviable	-0.32	gobernanza	-0.36	nebulosas	-0.27	cercana	-0.31
marginal	-0.24	inoperante	-0.33	gobernabilidad	-0.37	superficial	-0.30	atravesar	-0.31
malvados	-0.24	inservible	-0.34	equidad	-0.37	masa	-0.41	esquina	-0.31
malo	-0.31	ineficaz	-0.45	democracia	-0.44	masas	-0.61	situada	-0.33

The 20 words most associated with the "high" end of the dimension (top pane) and the 20 words most associated with the low end of the dimension (bottom pane). Universe is all sentences in the corpus that mention democracy.

A.2 Quantitative results

Since the treatment variable in my main specifications, *High capacity*, is binary, employing linear probability models in first-stage estimation may bias the results. Because using a logit or probit link function in the first stage renders the estimator inconsistent (the so-called "forbidden regression"), I instead follow the approach proposed in Wooldridge (2010). I use a probit link function to regress *High capacity* on the instruments and fixed effects,

$$\text{High capacity}_{i,t} = f(\beta_1 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta_3 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} \times \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta FE_{district} + \epsilon_{it})$$

and then insert the predicted values of this regression as values of the instrument in the original 2SLS model. The results of this approach, depicted in Table A.3, are effectively unchanged. (All observations drawn from districts with no variation in capacity drop out in probit estimation, reducing the effective sample size substantially).

Table A.3: Robustness to non-linear modeling of endogenous variable

	Attack on democracy (A1)	Functional violence (A2)	Spectacular violence (A3)	Protest voteshare (A4)	Conservative voteshare (A5)
High capacity	0.343**	0.195*	0.219**	0.571**	-0.440**
	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.055)	(0.125)	(0.099)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,404	4,404	4,404	887	894
R^2	0.17967	0.20065	0.06720	-0.00584	-0.27759
Within R^2	0.01167	0.03387	-0.07288	-0.87850	-0.83515

*Two-stage least squares models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

Table A.4: Robustness to one-way fixed effects

	Attack on democracy (A6)	Functional violence (A7)	Spectacular violence (A8)	Protest voteshare (A9)	Conservative voteshare (A10)
High capacity	0.178**	0.143**	0.069**	0.085**	-0.039**
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.021)	(0.012)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS
Observations	23,842	23,842	23,842	5,273	5,291
R^2	0.27468	0.25863	0.16228	0.47981	0.30645
Within R^2	0.04716	0.03507	0.02325	0.00711	0.00135

*OLS models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

Table A.5: Robustness to operationalization of violent event outcomes

	Attack on democracy (A11)	Functional violence (A12)	Spectacular violence (A13)	Attack on democracy (A14)	Functional violence (A15)	Spectacular violence (A16)
High capacity	0.610**	0.323**	0.287*	1.84**	0.060	1.78**
	(0.140)	(0.033)	(0.136)	(0.702)	(0.274)	(0.649)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	39.4	39.4	39.4
Observations	23,842	23,842	23,842	4,512	4,512	4,512
R^2	0.15797	0.23789	0.10371	0.12171	0.21263	0.05930
Within R^2	0.00911	0.02152	0.00245	-0.01992	0.00704	-0.04735

*All models use counts of violent events instead of indicators as outcome variables. OLS models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

Varying HMM parameters: transition probability = 0.4

Table A.6: Effects on violence against democracy: Pr(transition) = 0.4

	Attack on democracy (A17)	Functional violence (A18)	Spectacular violence (A19)	Attack on democracy (A20)	Functional violence (A21)	Spectacular violence (A22)
High capacity	0.171**	0.137**	0.067**	0.364**	0.215**	0.192**
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.080)	(0.078)	(0.052)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	39.3	39.3	39.3
Pr(transition)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Pr(emission)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	23,842	23,842	23,842	4,560	4,560	4,560
R^2	0.27888	0.26210	0.16395	0.19458	0.22086	0.10552
Within R^2	0.04303	0.03192	0.02174	-0.00011	0.02698	-0.03496

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first three columns is all Peruvian district-years from 1981-1993; sample in the latter three columns is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Table A.7: Effects on election results: Pr(transition) = 0.4

	Protest voteshare (A23)	Conservative voteshare (A24)	Protest voteshare (A25)	Conservative voteshare (A26)
High capacity	0.072**	-0.015	0.473**	-0.336**
	(0.019)	(0.013)	(0.106)	(0.078)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	22.7	23.1
Pr(transition)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Pr(emission)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	5,273	5,291	913	920
R^2	0.56265	0.63169	0.16595	-0.00249
Within R^2	0.00589	0.00038	-0.55238	-0.43452

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first two columns is all Peruvian districts in 1983, 1986, 1989, and 1993 local elections; sample in the latter two columns is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Varying HMM parameters: transition probability = 0.2

Table A.8: Effects on violence against democracy: Pr(transition) = 0.2

	Attack on democracy (A27)	Functional violence (A28)	Spectacular violence (A29)	Attack on democracy (A30)	Functional violence (A31)	Spectacular violence (A32)
High capacity	0.215**	0.181**	0.081**	0.299**	0.196	0.165*
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.104)	(0.102)	(0.069)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	32.1	32.1	32.1
Pr(transition) 0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Pr(emission) 0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	23,842	23,842	23,842	2,268	2,268	2,268
R^2	0.27656	0.26237	0.16115	0.22796	0.22552	0.14311
Within R^2	0.03996	0.03227	0.01846	0.06307	0.05246	0.00843

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first three columns is all Peruvian district-years from 1981-1993; sample in the latter three columns is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Table A.9: Effects on election results: Pr(transition) = 0.2

	Protest voteshare (A33)	Conservative voteshare (A34)	Protest voteshare (A35)	Conservative voteshare (A36)
High capacity	0.059*	0.001	0.286**	-0.224**
	(0.027)	(0.017)	(0.084)	(0.072)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	20.7	21.1
Pr(transition)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Pr(emission)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	5,273	5,291	414	416
R^2	0.56114	0.63155	0.35871	0.09037
Within R^2	0.00246	1.73×10^{-6}	-0.19906	-0.37194

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first two columns is all Peruvian districts in 1983, 1986, 1989, and 1993 local elections; sample in the latter two columns is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Varying HMM parameters: emission probability = 0.8

Table A.10: Effects on violence against democracy: Pr(emission) = 0.8

	Attack on democracy (A37)	Functional violence (A38)	Spectacular violence (A39)	Attack on democracy (A40)	Functional violence (A41)	Spectacular violence (A42)
High capacity	0.210**	0.177**	0.076**	0.263**	0.171	0.142*
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.095)	(0.094)	(0.064)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	38.7	38.7	38.7
Pr(transition) 0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Pr(emission) 0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Observations	23,842	23,842	23,842	2,268	2,268	2,268
R^2	0.27580	0.26205	0.15975	0.22545	0.22175	0.14644
Within R^2	0.03895	0.03186	0.01682	0.06003	0.04784	0.01229

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first three columns is all Peruvian district-years from 1981-1993; sample in the latter three columns is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Table A.11: Effects on election results: Pr(emission) = 0.8

	Protest voteshare (A43)	Conservative voteshare (A44)	Protest voteshare (A45)	Conservative voteshare (A46)
High capacity	0.060*	0.0009	0.286**	-0.228**
	(0.025)	(0.017)	(0.079)	(0.069)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	22.0	22.5
Pr(transition)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Pr(emission)	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Observations	5,273	5,291	414	416
R^2	0.56122	0.63155	0.35978	0.08803
Within R^2	0.00265	8.37×10^{-7}	-0.19706	-0.37546

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first two columns is all Peruvian districts in 1983, 1986, 1989, and 1993 local elections; sample in the latter two columns is all districts 1) in which Sendero Luminoso established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

A.3 Synthetic control

Table A.12: Pre-treatment characteristics

Covariate	True Carrión	Synthetic Carrión	Sample mean
Protest voteshare	24.995	24.995	18.307
Leftist voteshare	35.070	21.527	20.205
Illiteracy	0.439	0.438	0.365
Pct. Spanish	0.667	0.667	0.522
Population	34562	25798	54264
Cultivable land	0.068	0.068	0.052
Elevation	3343	2950	2292
Social movements	0.000	0.109	0.649
ln(State employees)	5.342	5.342	5.699
Road density	0.000	45.464	32.686

Table A.13: Synthetic Carrión province

Province (Department)	Weight
Corongo (Ancash)	0.319
Bongara (Amazonas)	0.298
Anta (Cusco)	0.211
Espinar (Cusco)	0.109
Paruro (Cusco)	0.037
Bolivar (La Libertad)	0.027

Appendix B

Appendix to Chapter 4

B.1 Compatibility with democracy

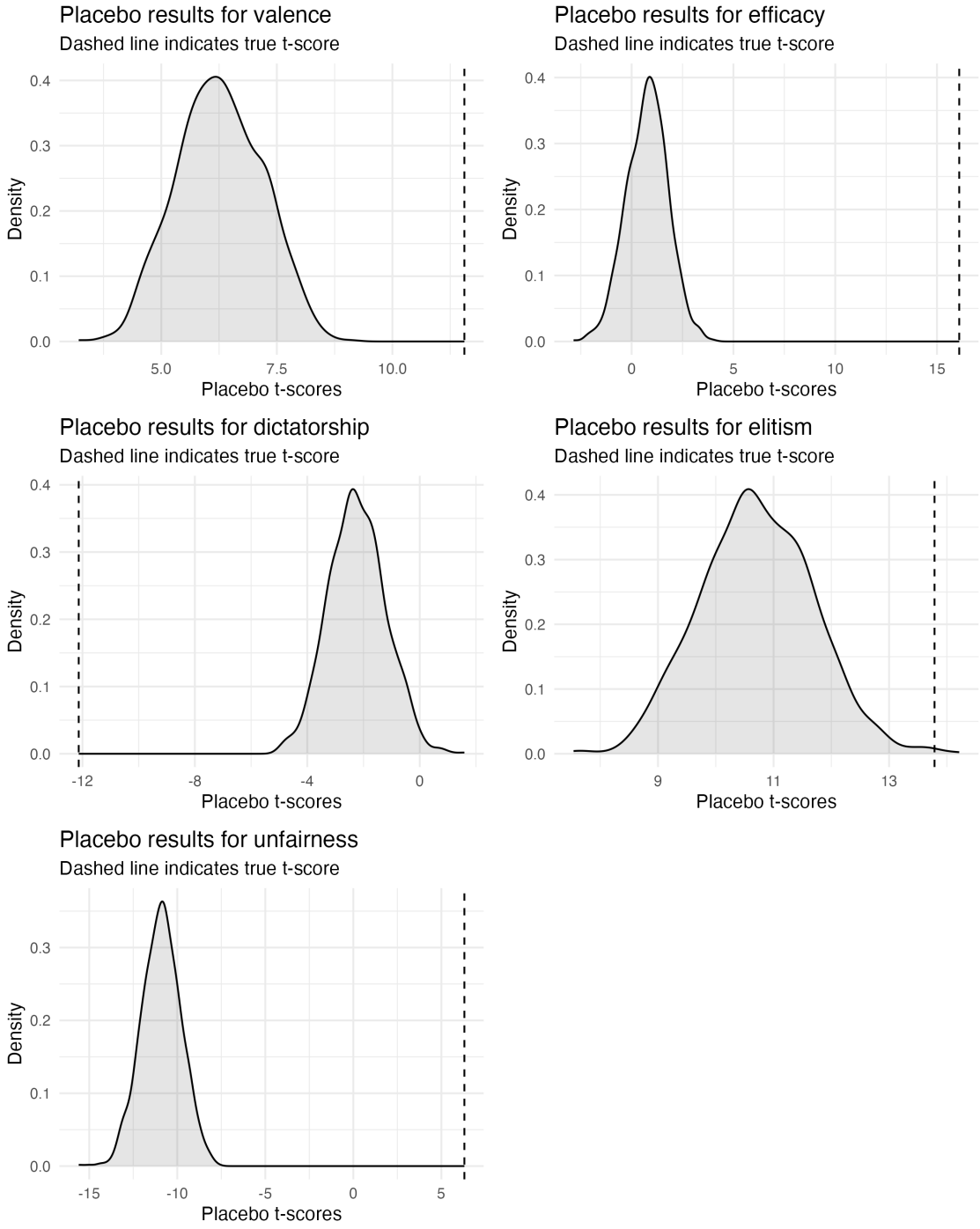

Figure B.1: Placebo tests for the FARC's rhetoric around democracy

B.2 Quantitative results

Since the treatment variable in my main specifications, *High capacity*, is binary, employing linear probability models in first-stage estimation may bias the results. Because using a logit or probit link function in the first stage renders the estimator inconsistent (the so-called "forbidden regression"), I instead follow the approach proposed in Wooldridge (2010). I use a probit link function to regress *High capacity* on the instruments and fixed effects,

$$\text{High capacity}_{i,t} = f(\beta_1 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta_3 \text{Suitability}_{i,t-1} \times \text{Price}_{t-1} + \beta FE_{district} + \epsilon_{it})$$

and then insert the predicted values of this regression as values of the instrument in the original 2SLS model. The results of this approach, depicted in Table B.1, are similar, though the effect on conservative voteshare loses significance.

Table B.1: Robustness to non-linear modeling of endogenous variable

	Attack on democracy (A1)	Functional violence (A2)	Spectacular violence (A3)	Protest voteshare (A4)	Conservative voteshare (A5)
High capacity	0.265**	0.211**	0.049	0.084**	-0.078
	(0.084)	(0.068)	(0.029)	(0.014)	(0.075)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,423	7,423	7,423	2,145	2,145
R^2	-0.17409	-0.09450	0.00738	0.10399	0.53788
Within R^2	-0.33582	-0.23818	-0.07770	-1.2536	0.03672

*Two-stage least squares models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

Table B.2: Robustness to one-way fixed effects

	Attack on democracy (A6)	Functional violence (A7)	Spectacular violence (A8)	Protest voteshare (A9)	Conservative voteshare (A10)
High capacity	0.066**	0.056**	0.013**	0.015**	-0.113**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.014)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	No	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS
Observations	15,708	15,708	15,708	4,191	4,191
R^2	0.15461	0.14594	0.08333	0.44629	0.51434
Within R^2	0.01872	0.01572	0.00356	0.01446	0.02101

*OLS models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

Table B.3: Robustness to operationalization of violent event outcomes

	Attack on democracy (A11)	Functional violence (A12)	Spectacular violence (A13)	Attack on democracy (A14)	Functional violence (A15)	Spectacular violence (A16)
High capacity	0.058**	0.048**	0.009**	0.225**	0.182**	0.043
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.074)	(0.061)	(0.026)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	19.1	19.1	19.1
Observations	15,708	15,708	15,708	8,827	8,827	8,827
R^2	0.17177	0.15781	0.08739	0.06358	0.07472	0.05525
Within R^2	0.00808	0.00695	0.00156	-0.10383	-0.07300	-0.03909

*All models use counts of violent events instead of indicators as outcome variables. OLS models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

Varying HMM parameters: transition probability = 0.4

Table B.4: Effects on violence against democracy: Pr(transition) = 0.4

	Attack on democracy (A17)	Functional violence (A18)	Spectacular violence (A19)	Attack on democracy (A20)	Functional violence (A21)	Spectacular violence (A22)
High capacity	0.047**	0.040**	0.009**	0.218**	0.176**	0.043
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.002)	(0.066)	(0.054)	(0.026)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	19.1	19.1	19.1
Pr(transition)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Pr(emission)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	15,708	15,708	15,708	8,827	8,827	8,827
R^2	0.17496	0.16469	0.08860	0.00639	0.03616	0.05416
Within R^2	0.00911	0.00740	0.00164	-0.16193	-0.11619	-0.04172

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first three columns is all Colombian district-years from 2002-15; sample in the latter three columns is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Table B.5: Effects on election results: Pr(transition) = 0.4

	Protest voteshare (A23)	Conservative voteshare (A24)	Protest voteshare (A25)	Conservative voteshare (A26)
High capacity	0.001	-0.029*	0.127**	-0.158*
	(0.002)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.075)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	24.7	24.7
Pr(transition)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Pr(emission)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	4,191	4,191	2,554	2,554
R^2	0.50626	0.55188	-0.17180	0.53755
Within R^2	8.01×10^{-5}	0.00132	-1.1972	0.02808

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first two columns is all Colombian districts in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 local elections; sample in the latter two columns is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the sample period and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Varying HMM parameters: transition probability = 0.2

Table B.6: Effects on violence against democracy: Pr(transition) = 0.2

	Attack on democracy (A27)	Functional violence (A28)	Spectacular violence (A29)	Attack on democracy (A30)	Functional violence (A31)	Spectacular violence (A32)
High capacity	0.056**	0.049**	0.009**	0.257**	0.227**	0.034
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.077)	(0.066)	(0.026)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	24.1	24.1	24.1
Pr(transition)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Pr(emission)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	15,708	15,708	15,708	6,331	6,331	6,331
R^2	0.17533	0.16538	0.08826	-0.00104	0.00740	0.07428
Within R^2	0.00956	0.00822	0.00127	-0.16255	-0.14195	-0.01919

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first three columns is all Colombian district-years from 2002-15; sample in the latter three columns is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Table B.7: Effects on election results: Pr(transition) = 0.2

	Protest voteshare (A33)	Conservative voteshare (A34)	Protest voteshare (A35)	Conservative voteshare (A36)
High capacity	0.0010	-0.029	0.137**	-0.231*
	(0.002)	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.093)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	14.6	14.6
Pr(transition)	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Pr(emission)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
Observations	4,191	4,191	1,850	1,850
R^2	0.50625	0.55177	-0.96219	0.53876
Within R^2	4.79×10^{-5}	0.00109	-3.7737	-0.00405

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first two columns is all Colombian districts in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 local elections; sample in the latter two columns is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the sample period and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Varying HMM parameters: emission probability = 0.8

Table B.8: Effects on violence against democracy: Pr(emission) = 0.8

	Attack on democracy (A37)	Functional violence (A38)	Spectacular violence (A39)	Attack on democracy (A40)	Functional violence (A41)	Spectacular violence (A42)
High capacity	0.055**	0.047**	0.010**	0.260**	0.231**	0.034
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.080)	(0.069)	(0.027)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	—	23.2	23.2	23.2
Pr(transition)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Pr(emission)	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Observations	15,708	15,708	15,708	6,331	6,331	6,331
R^2	0.17485	0.16469	0.08843	-0.00854	-0.00076	0.07513
Within R^2	0.00898	0.00740	0.00145	-0.17127	-0.15135	-0.01826

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first three columns is all Colombian district-years from 2002-15; sample in the latter three columns is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the war and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

Table B.9: Effects on election results: Pr(emission) = 0.8

	Protest voteshare (A43)	Conservative voteshare (A44)	Protest voteshare (A45)	Conservative voteshare (A46)
High capacity	0.0009	-0.032*	0.130**	-0.216*
	(0.002)	(0.016)	(0.020)	(0.088)
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estimator	OLS	OLS	IV	IV
F-stat. (IV)	—	—	16.0	16.0
Pr(transition)	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Pr(emission)	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Observations	4,191	4,191	1,850	1,850
R^2	0.50624	0.55189	-0.78872	0.54426
Within R^2	4.51×10^{-5}	0.00136	-3.3517	0.00793

*OLS and IV models with standard errors clustered within districts. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05. Sample in the first two columns is all Colombian districts in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 local elections; sample in the latter two columns is all districts 1) in which the FARC established presence during the sample period and 2) that belong to a department in which coca cultivation was recorded by UNODC.*

B.3 Caguán DMZ regression discontinuity

Table B.10: RD estimates of FARC democratic capture on land holdings

Quantile:	0.1 (A47)	0.3 (A48)	0.5 (A49)	0.7 (A50)	0.9 (A51)
Treated	-2.512**	-0.289**	-0.205**	-0.211**	-0.256**
	(0.298)	(0.083)	(0.063)	(0.062)	(0.064)
Geographic controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Treated obs.	13089	13089	13089	13089	13089
Control obs.	225671	225671	225671	225671	225671

*Quantile regressions with geographic controls (second-order polynomials of latitude and longitude) and 10km bandwidth. Dependent variable is expected log area of plot at given quantile. Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05.*

B.3.1 Robustness to varying bandwidth

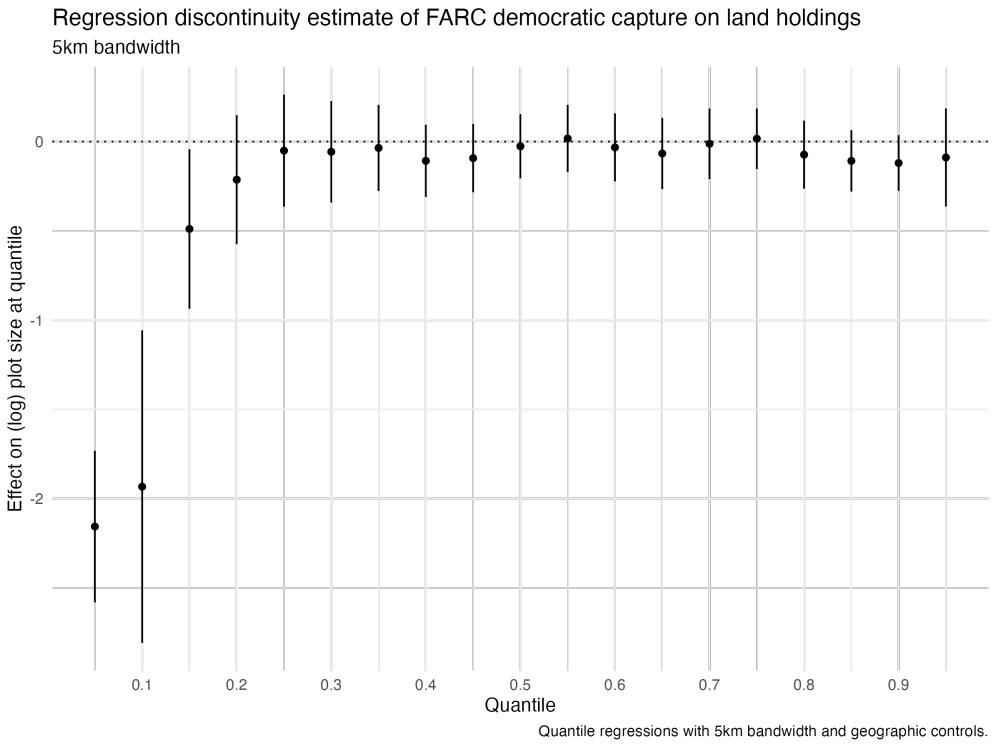

Figure B.2: RD estimate with 5km bandwidth

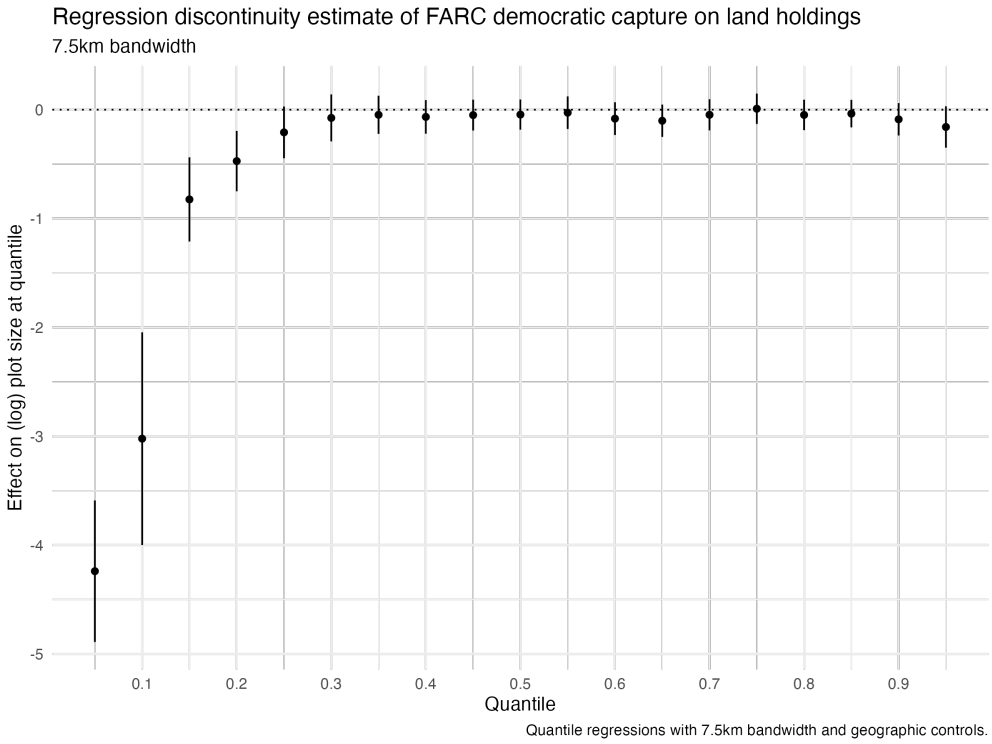

Figure B.3: RD estimate with 7.5km bandwidth

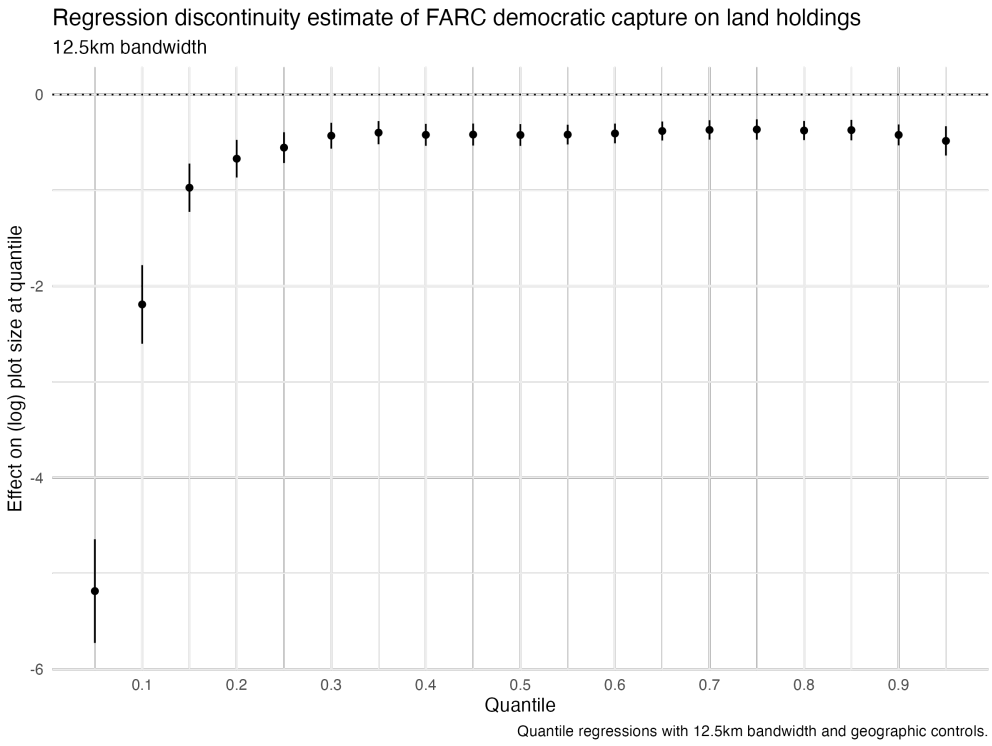

Figure B.4: RD estimate with 12.5km bandwidth

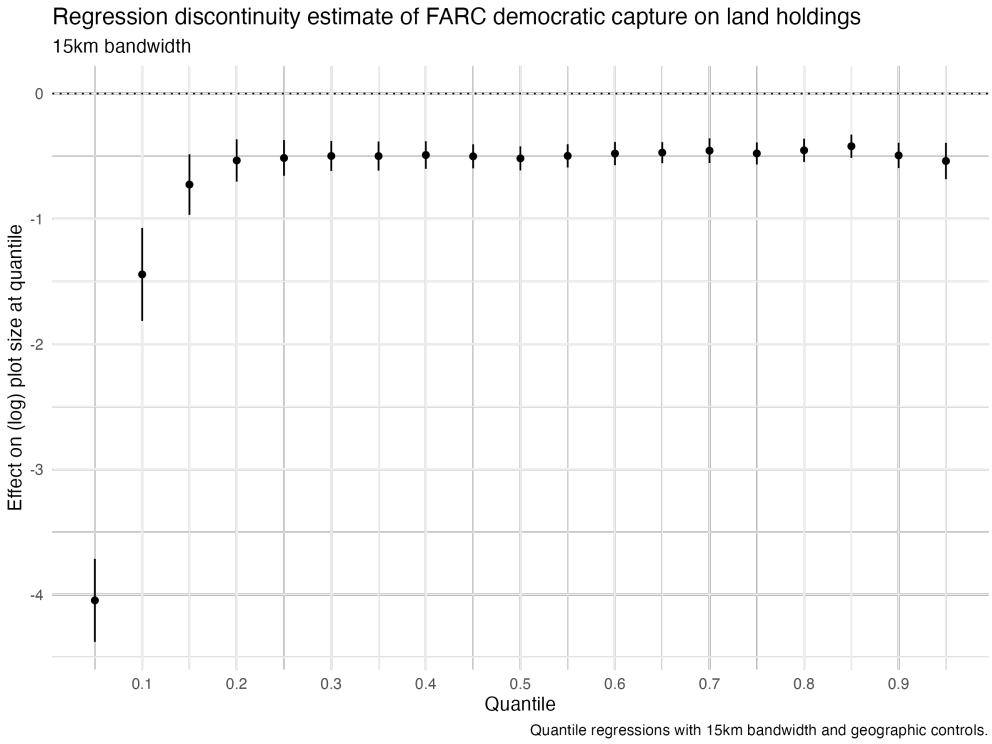

Figure B.5: RD estimate with 15km bandwidth

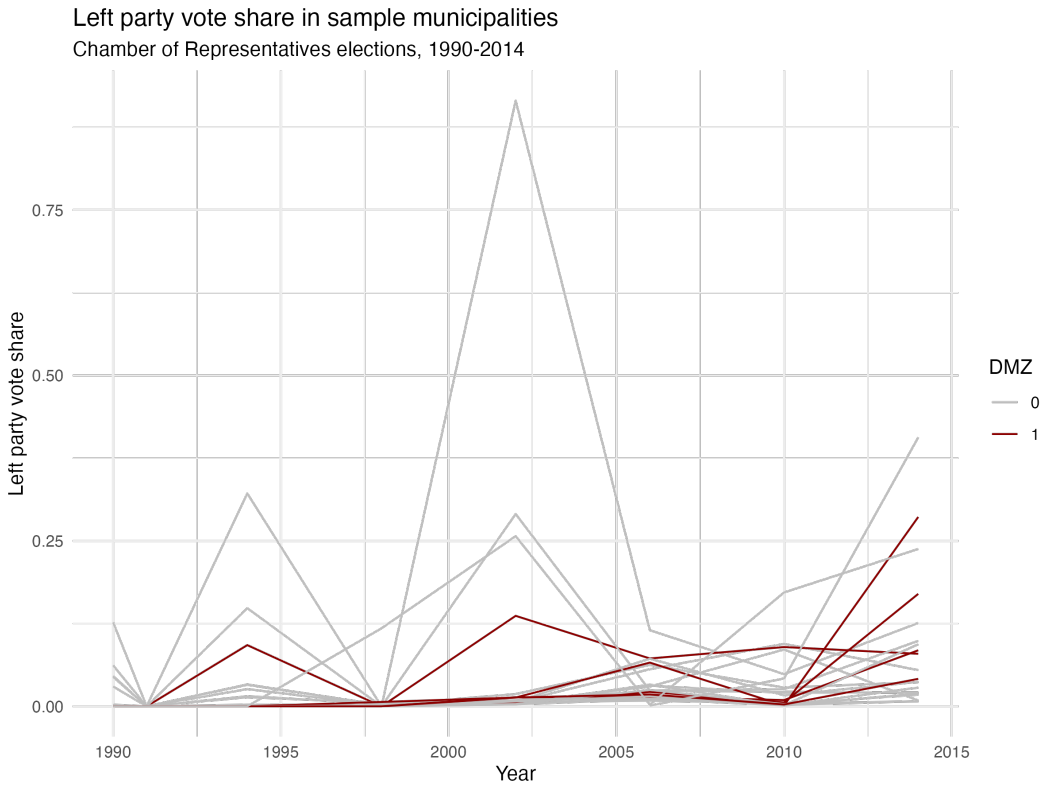

Figure B.6: Left party vote share in sample municipalities

Appendix C

Appendix to Chapter 5

C.1 Covariate balance

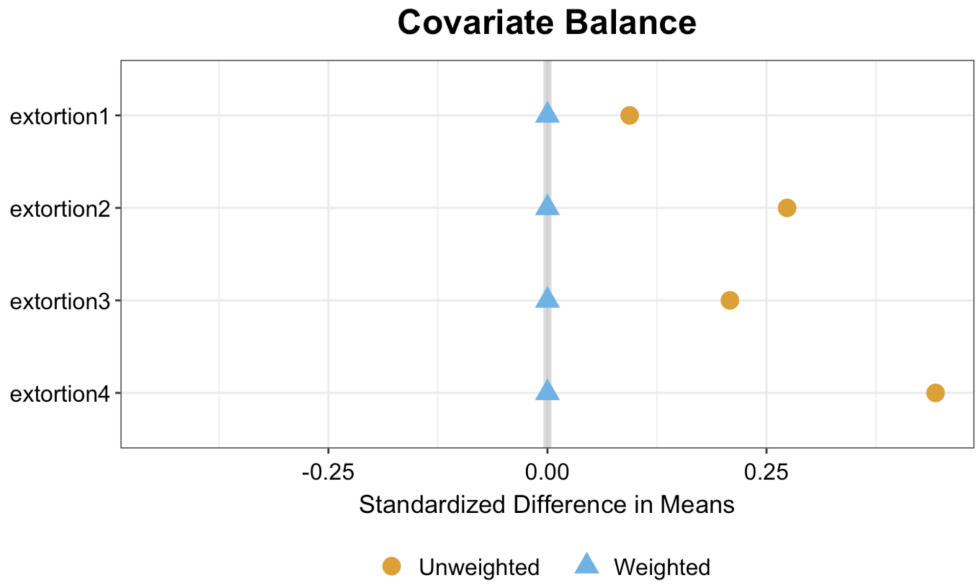

Figure C.1: Extortion balance in pre-periods, before and after mean balancing

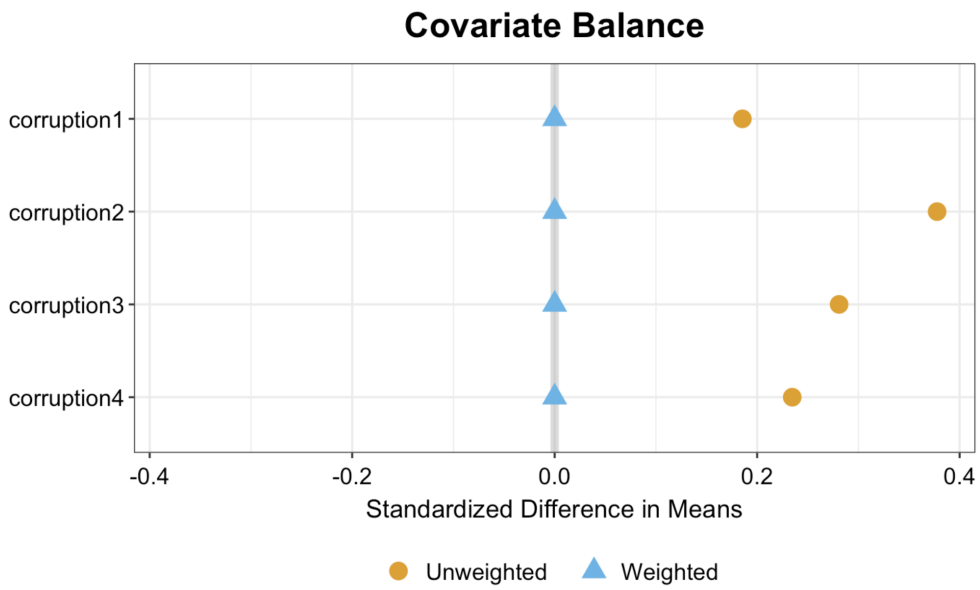

Figure C.2: Corruption balance in pre-periods, before and after mean balancing

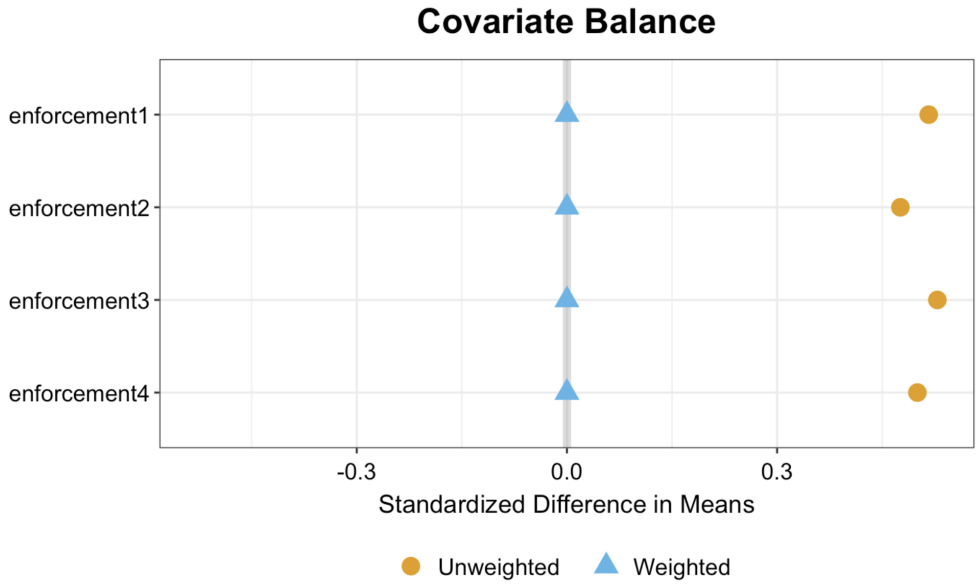

Figure C.3: Enforcement balance in pre-periods, before and after mean balancing

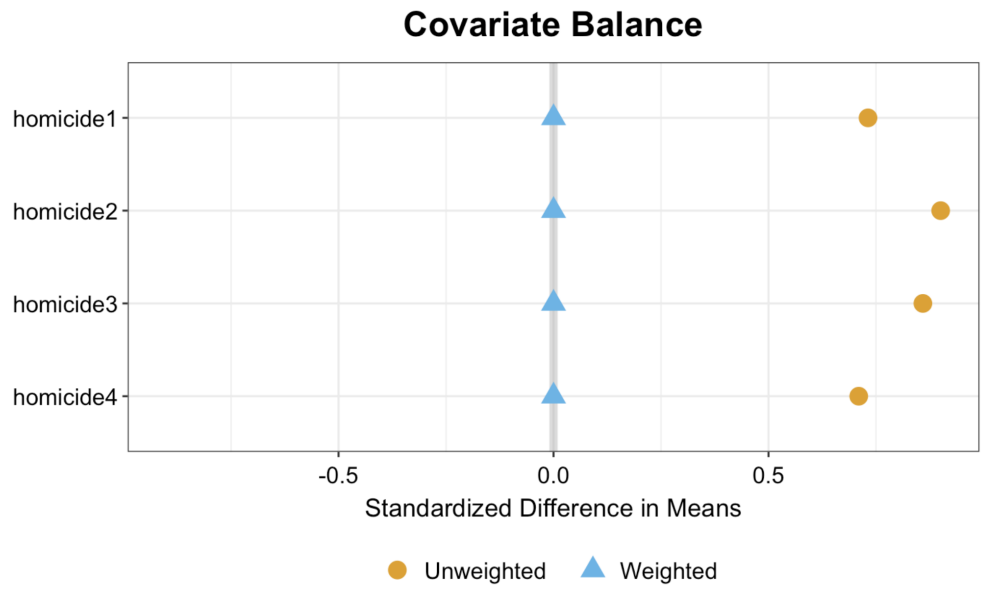

Figure C.4: Homicide balance in pre-periods, before and after mean balancing

C.2 Time series effect plots

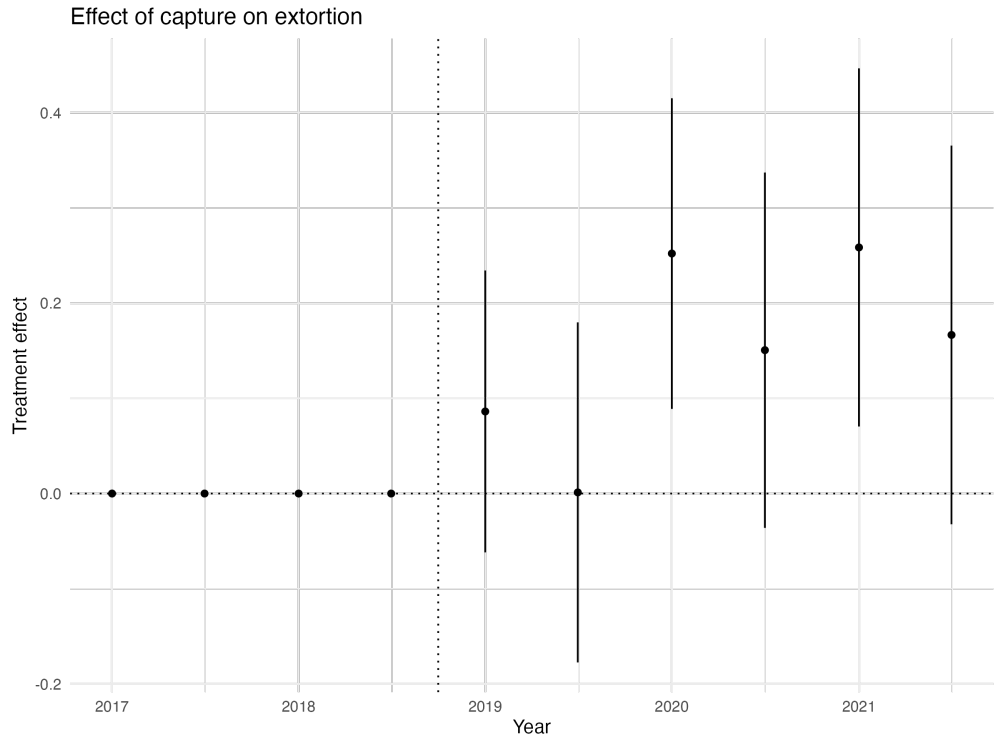

Figure C.5: Effect of capture on extortion

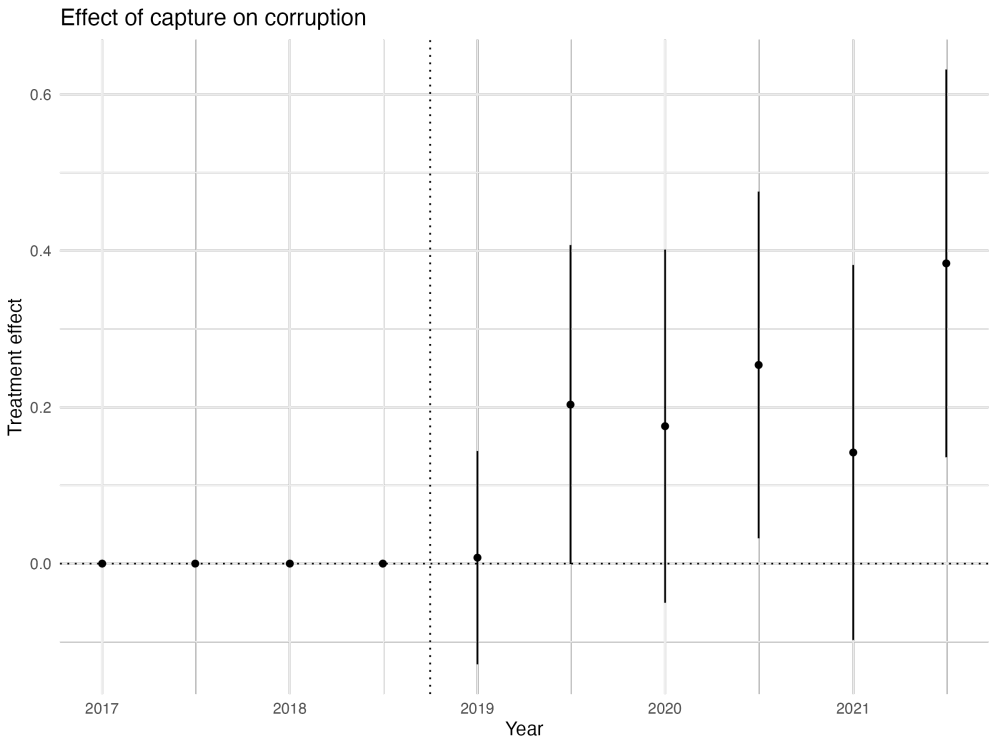

Figure C.6: Effect of capture on corruption

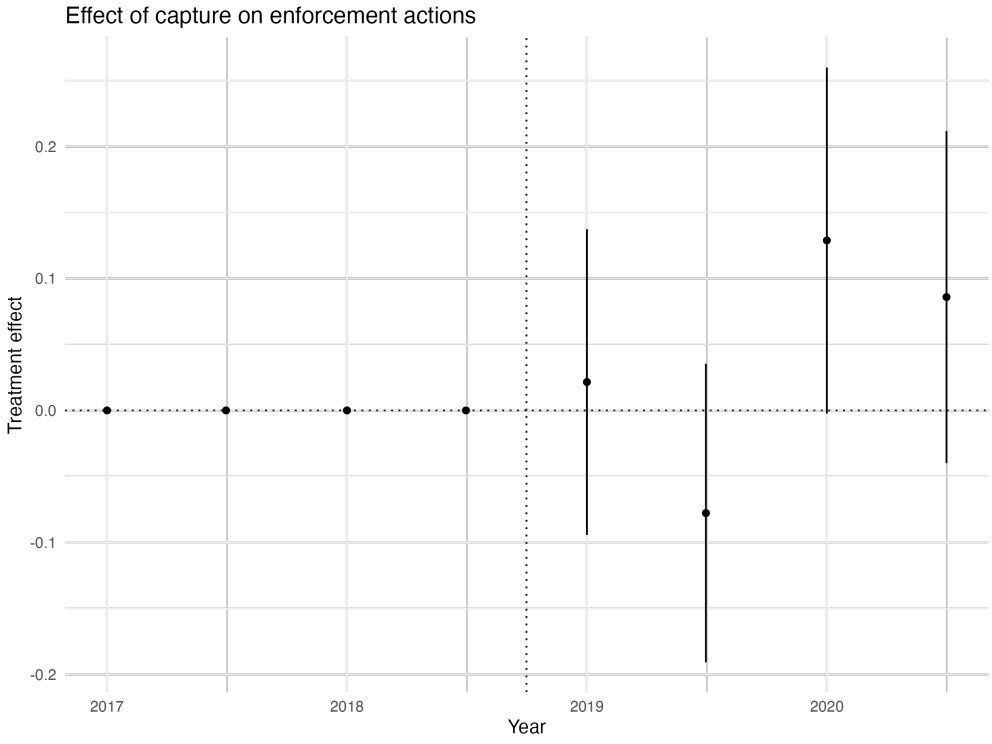

Figure C.7: Effect of capture on enforcement actions

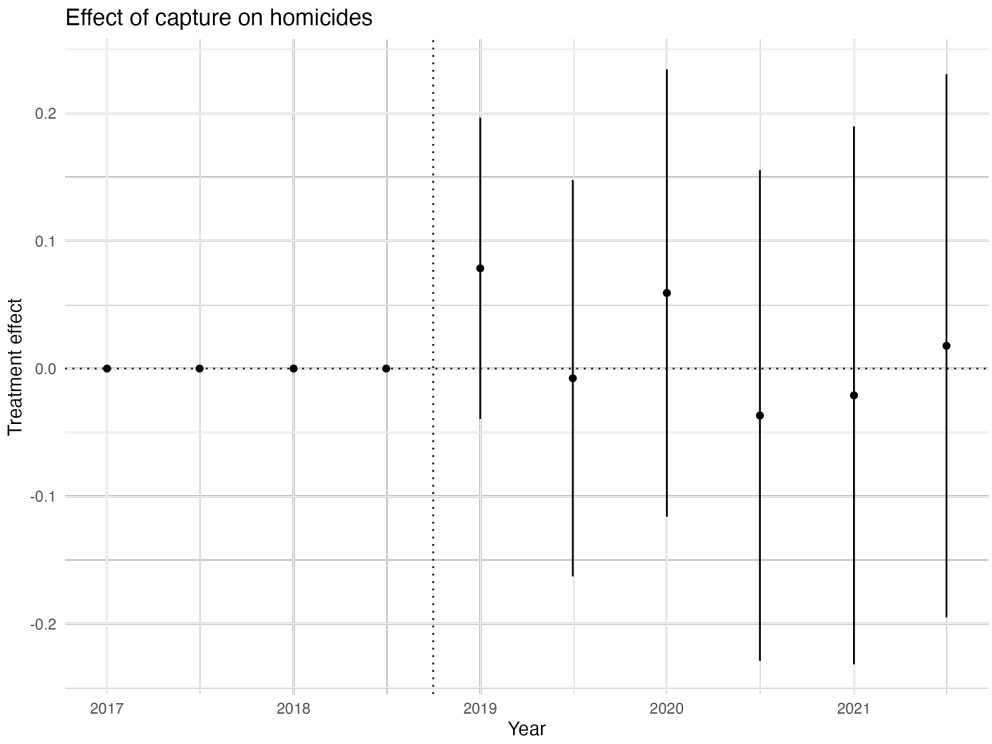

Figure C.8: Effect of capture on homicides

C.3 Robustness

Table C.1: Main models with municipal covariates

	Extortion (A1)	Corruption (A2)	Enforcement (A3)	Homicides (A4)
Capture	0.1092.	0.1516*	-0.0185	0.0258
	(0.0623)	(0.074)	(0.0389)	(0.0595)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Treated municipalities	65	65	65	65
Municipalities	381	381	381	381
Observations	3810	3810	3048	3810

*Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05, .: 0.1. Average Treatment Effects on the Treated (ATT), estimated via trajectory mean balancing with bootstrapped standard errors. Covariates include per-capita counts of police stations and hospitals, road density, and logged population and nighttime luminosity (all time-static).*

Table C.2: Main models using mean-first kernel balancing with municipal covariates

	Extortion (A5)	Corruption (A6)	Enforcement (A7)	Homicides (A8)
Capture	0.1424.	0.2659*	0.0028	0.0928
	(0.0731)	(0.1074)	(0.334)	(0.073)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Treated municipalities	65	65	65	65
Municipalities	381	381	381	381
Observations	3810	3810	3048	3810

*Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05, .: 0.1. Average Treatment Effects on the Treated (ATT), estimated via mean-first trajectory kernel balancing with bootstrapped standard errors. Covariates include per-capita counts of police stations and hospitals, road density, and logged population and nighttime luminosity (all time-static).*

Table C.3: Main models using full state donor pools

	Extortion (A9)	Corruption (A10)	Enforcement (A11)	Homicides (A12)
Capture	0.189**	0.2002**	0.0135	0.0554
	(0.0625)	(0.0767)	(0.0444)	(0.0636)
Covariates	No	No	No	No
Treated municipalities	65	65	65	65
Municipalities	1679	1679	1679	1679
Observations	16790	16790	13432	16790

*Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05, .: 0.1. Average Treatment Effects on the Treated (ATT), estimated via trajectory mean balancing with bootstrapped standard errors. All municipalities in states in which one or more municipalities experienced attempted capture are included in the control group.*

Table C.4: Main models using standard difference-in-difference design

	Extortion (A13)	Corruption (A14)	Enforcement (A15)	Homicides (A16)
Capture	0.1883**	0.1207	-0.0669	-0.1020
	(0.0669)	(0.0843)	(0.0536)	(0.0738)
Covariates	No	No	No	No
Municipality FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Period FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,810	3,810	3,048	3,810
R^2	0.71773	0.63846	0.65530	0.76828
Within R^2	0.00575	0.00127	0.00138	0.00078

*Signif. Codes: **: 0.01, *: 0.05, .: 0.1. Standard errors clustered within municipalities.*