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Introduction

The ability of citizens to participate in elections and make considered judgments is crucial for holding elected representatives accountable, but also in terms of forward-looking electoral decisions. Informed voters are central to the workings of democracy, as captured by the emphasis put on “enlightened understanding” by Dahl (1989). Recent research has demonstrated that uninformed voters make different evaluations of candidates and parties, and in the long run make different choices during elections as they have a harder time translating their preferences at the poll (Fowler and Margolis, 2014, Singh and Roy, 2014). This suggests that political knowledge is central to whether or not the outcome of an election reflects the will of the people. To put it bluntly, political knowledge matters for the realization of democracy. If political knowledge is unequally distributed between groups in society, and recent work suggests that there are systematic differences in the distribution of political knowledge (Fowler and Margolis, 2014, p. 109, see also Jennings, 1996, p. 229), this is worrisome. Political knowledge and cognitive capacities are important as a resource that enables political participation in general and matter for the functioning of democracy in several ways (Verba et al., 1995, pp. 304-33, Knight and Johnson, 1997, p. 299).

This article argues that one context where these questions are brought to the fore is the context of violence. Not all groups in society are equally exposed to violence when it does occur, which could result in further unequal distribution of political knowledge if violence is found to impact levels of political knowledge. Homicide rates in Africa are more than double the global average and 36 % of the homicides in the world took place in Africa in 2010 (UNODC, 2011, p. 11), and the highest global rate of major assault is also found in West, Central and Southern Africa even if data is scarce (Harrendorf et al., 2010, p. 22). Particularly relevant to a voter should be violence occurring in relation to elections, or political violence more generally. The

experience of electoral violence is widespread in Africa, and many elections are characterized by harassment, intimidation, destruction of property, assaults, deaths and displacement especially in the period leading up to the election (Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero, 2012, Inokoba and Maliki, 2011, Bratton, 2008, Bekoe, 2012, Höglund, 2009). Based on the African Electoral Violence Dataset (AEVD)¹, electoral violence is a regular occurrence for nearly half the countries included in the dataset, and about 20 percent of the elections resulted in severe levels of violence (Bekoe, 2012, p. 8, Straus and Taylor, 2012, p. 17). Research pertaining to electoral violence has not paid attention to how it impacts the voter and her ability to practice her citizenship, nor consequences in general of electoral violence (see e.g. Dunning, 2011, Bekoe, 2012, Höglund, 2009, Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero, 2012, Guelke, 2001, Hickman, 2009, Fjelde and Höglund, 2014, Collier and Vicente, 2014, Hafner-Burton et al., 2014, Straus and Taylor, 2012, Wilkinson, 2004, note however, one exception Getmansky and Zeitsoff, 2014). This article attempts to rectify this, by examining whether violence can impact levels of political knowledge, in particular through the emotional response induced by political violence.

Recently however, there has been an effort to understand how violence in general influences politics, both at the macro level and the micro level. For instance, some work examine the history of war and its influence on the ensuing party system and electoral performance of former warring parties (see e.g. Ishiyama and Widmeier, 2013, Levitsky and Way, 2012, Ishiyama, 2014, Sindre, 2014). Mironova and Whitt note that “researchers are increasingly examining the impact of violence on micro-level norms and preferences”, but that the impact of violence is mixed so far (2016, p. 2). Within this field, there is great variation in terms of what specific violence is studied, as well as what norms, preferences or micro level behavior is studied. For instance, a recent study finds that mass uprisings or colored revolutions lead to a decrease in

¹ The dataset covers 221 elections from 1990 to 2008 in Sub-Saharan Africa, totaling 221 events.

trust (2016). In a study of Kenya, the authors examined whether violence hardens ethnic identities, but they were unable to demonstrate such effects, even when considering the frequency of the violence, its intensity or the specific group involved in the act (Ishiyama et al., 2016). In contrast, Mironova and Whitt do find that cues related to in- and outgroup matter for how violence shapes social norms (2016). What is clear, is that the political consequences of violence is a new and expanding field of research, and that the consequences thus far are both varied and sometimes surprising.

In the search for the informed and rational voter, many have been concerned with the increased appeal to emotions in politics. Emotion has historically often been portrayed as the opposite of rationality, even its enemy. For a long time the role of emotions in politics was largely ignored in terms of empirical scrutiny. However, recent work has now convincingly shown how emotion and rationality are in fact very complementary, and that emotional responses are central to increased attention and in the end political learning (Marcus et al., 2000, Marcus, 2003, Valentino et al., 2008, Erisen et al., 2014, Marcus and Mackuen, 1993, Redlawsk, 2006, see also Bickford, 2011 for a normative argument about the role of emotions for political judgement). As succinctly put by Valentino et al “experiencing strong emotions is not necessarily at odds with achieving the normative ideals of democratic citizenship” (Valentino et al., 2008, p. 249). This research has demonstrated a strong association between emotions (particularly fear) and political learning, based on both experimental and cross-sectional data. This research is however limited in that it has only been examined in relatively safe contexts (mainly the US), where the object that causes fear is fairly removed (for a notable exception, see Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014).² This spurs the question, what happens in an

² Fear in general has of course been of interest to political science in many ways, and more often than not concern is expressed about the negative consequences of fear, such as the acceptance of inequality (Jost et al., 2003). Fear is often described as the enemy of freedom (Pyszczynski, 2004), as increasing hatred (Heller, 2004), the tendency to limit political rights (Huddy, 2004,

environment where the cause for fear is more proximate and real? Testing the external validity of these claims (moving from experiments to real world experiences), as well as examining the scope of this effect (moving from the US to Sub-Saharan Africa) more thoroughly are the next steps. In sum then, there are good reasons to believe that violent electoral landscapes impacts levels of political knowledge in important ways. Crucially, we do not know whether electoral and political violence spurs vicious circles decreasing political knowledge, producing less accountability, less forward-looking choices, and ultimately deteriorating democracy. Or whether the experience of electoral and political violence has other side effects on the citizenry; improving political knowledge which in the end might improve democracy and counteract the violence.

The research question is therefore: *Does fear of electoral violence impact levels of political knowledge?* In order to answer this question, this article uses Afrobarometer data from 2008/2009. After presenting the research hypotheses in full, the article details the data used and how the central variables are measured and coded. Proceeding to the analysis, this article contributes to an understanding of how the voter responds to violence through focusing on the emotive response to violence. The findings in this article concerning the impact of fear do not support the hypothesis. In fact, fear is statistically associated with a decrease in political knowledge, and the analysis does not yield evidence in support of the proposed mechanisms. However, in contexts of high levels of social conflict, fear increases political knowledge, i.e.

Huddy et al., 2005, Huddy et al., 2007), and anti-immigration sentiments (Branton et al., 2011). Past research has also considered the degree to which politicians use strategies of fear to impact citizens (see e.g. Lupia and Menning, 2009), and scrutinized its relationship with authoritarianism (Feldman and Stenner, 1997). Notably, the role of emotions in politics is continually being addressed more broadly as well (see e.g. Ottati et al., 1992, Summers-Effler, 2002, Mouffe, 2000, Nussio, 2012, Groenendyk and Banks, 2014, Erikson and Stoker, 2011, Rudolph et al., 2000, Söderström, 2015, Costalli and Ruggeri, 2017). Similarly, scholars within international relations are also paying more and more attention to the role of emotions (see e.g. Fierke, 2013, Bleiker and Hutchison, 2014, Ariffin et al., 2016).

the impact is context dependent. This is particularly striking, as previous research has been cautious about predicting the impact of fear in contexts of more serious threats.

Violence and Political Knowledge

The centrality of informed citizens for the functioning of democracy has spurred a lot of research on political knowledge in particular. Research related to political knowledge has for instance been conducted to explain its occurrence (both in relation to individual and structural variables) (see e.g. Grönlund and Milner, 2006, Henderson, 2014, Jerit, 2009); on its distribution with respect to gender differences (Dow, 2009, Dolan, 2011, Pereira et al., 2015); on its impact on political participation and voter turnout in particular (Howe, 2006, Jung et al., 2011); and in relation to ideas about the lack of well-informed citizens (see e.g. Bartels, 1996, Bullock, 2011, Gilens, 2001, Baron, 1994, Norris, 2011, pp. 142-68). Much of this literature, however, takes the division between the rational and irrational for granted, and leave out the role of emotions in shaping cognition and political knowledge.

In research attempting to understand the development of democracy and the nature of elections, there has been an increased focus on electoral violence. This literature has in general been concerned with the causes of electoral violence as well as its scope (see e.g. Dunning, 2011, Bekoe, 2012, Höglund, 2009, Dercon and Gutiérrez-Romero, 2012, Guelke, 2001, Hickman, 2009, Fjelde and Höglund, 2014, Collier and Vicente, 2014, Hafner-Burton et al., 2014, Straus and Taylor, 2012, Wilkinson, 2004). However, in trying to understand the conditions under which citizens today practice their political citizenship, we need to understand what violence does to the voter. Getmansky and Zeitzoff's recent article is an example of work that tries to do that, by focusing on the experience of terrorism or the threat of terrorism. In their work they show how political choices are influenced by the threat of violence, causing voters in Israel to

vote for more right-wing and hardline parties, potentially inducing a vicious circle where conflict dynamics are reproduced (Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014). This article looks at a more limited part of that chain, focusing on the voter's ability to make a reasoned choice rather than the ballot choice itself: the experience of violence and its impact on political knowledge.

Fear and its Cognitive Role

Our cognitive functions and ability to process information are central to our ability to practice our democratic citizenship. The question of what influences our cognitive abilities is a large field. If we execute our democratic citizenship in an environment of violence, what happens then? Based on current research on emotions, I argue that a violent environment trigger emotional responses, which in turn may trigger increased attention and learning.

Marcus, Neuman and Mackuen suggest that certain emotional responses are likely to encourage attention and ability to process information, and have shown that political learning is linked to levels of anxiety (fear), where those voters who feel uneasy about the election, also think more critically of the electoral choices before them (Marcus et al., 2000, Marcus, 2003, Marcus and Mackuen, 1993). Emotional responses are said to stimulate rational thought. Emotions are therefore not seen as an obstacle to reason, but an important element of thoughtful reflection, and indeed "emotion enhances the ability of voters to perform their citizenly duties" (Marcus and Mackuen, 1993, p. 681). The emotional response of fear acts as a cue to trigger attention and reflection. Anxiety, or fear, among citizens leads to an increase in attention, motivation to learn, and a reevaluation of their positions in relation to that which caused the anxiety (Marcus et al., 2000, pp. 3f, 63, Marcus and Mackuen, 1993, p. 681). The importance of anxiety and experiencing threat in politics, on both behavioral choices and opinions is well-established, in particular the role anxiety plays for information seeking and political learning (see e.g. Taber, 2003, p. 461, Hunter et al., 2012, p. 4, Valentino et al., 2011, Valentino et al., 2008, Huddy et al., 2007, Huddy et al., 2005, see also Erisen et al., 2014).

However, there are still questions as to the impact of serious threat (to life and self-identity) and the emotional response related to that (Marcus et al., 2000, p. 95). For instance, Nadeau et al suggest with their work that while permanent threat may induce anxiety it also leads to hopelessness, which undercuts motivations for political learning (1995). This article tries to gauge just how fear in the face of more serious threats impacts the voter, thereby testing the scope of this theory.

Thus, if the violence we experience and see in our community is of a political nature, the fear resulting from such violence may directly impact our attention to the origins of that violence: politics. Given the recent findings concerning the impact of fear or anxiety in politics and on political learning in general, we should expect that fear associated with politics should increase attention to politics and thereby increase levels of political knowledge. The following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Political fear increases people's attention to politics, resulting in higher political knowledge.

We should therefore also observe that the attention to politics should increase as a result of political fear. So interest in politics should increase as should the individual's time devoted to discussing politics. These mechanisms are also tested in the analysis.

Finally, this literature as a whole also motivate a further exploration of whether specific context traits matter for the impact of political fear on political knowledge. Environments that are more volatile may be more likely to give rise to the relation expected between political fear and political knowledge. In a context where electoral and political violence is more common, the experience of political fear is likely to be more credible, i.e. the respondent has good grounds to be afraid and the emotional and cognitive response in such environments may differ from more calm and stable contexts. To some degree, one could think of this as a priming effect, where increased exposure to something makes it easier for memory retrieval and the cognitive

response to an event kicks in faster and more strongly if you have been exposed to it in the past. This is sometimes discussed as the salience and accessibility mechanism behind priming effects (see e.g. Shehata and Falasca, 2014).

Hypothesis 2: High occurrence of political violence is likely to prime individuals and heighten the impact of political fear on political knowledge.

Data and Method

The data used is the Afrobarometer survey, round 4, which covered 20 countries,³ as this round included questions that can be used to measure political knowledge. All surveys were conducted in 2008, except in Zambia and Zimbabwe where they were conducted in 2009. In total, the round includes 27,713 respondents. The analysis uses across-country weights to adjust for the sampling procedures used by the Afrobarometer, and multi-level modelling as the data is hierarchically structured.

Dependent Variable: Political Knowledge

The dependent variable political knowledge is measured using the two political knowledge questions that were asked in round four of the Afrobarometer. The dependent variable political knowledge is measured through the respondent's ability to identify (name) their Member of Parliament and the Minister of Finance correctly. This means that the variable focuses on what is called the *veracious dimension* of political knowledge, i.e. factually correct knowledge, and in particular the type of knowledge that is usually termed "surveillance facts" rather than "text-book facts" or static facts (Jennings, 1996, p. 229, Barabas et al., 2014). Factually correct knowledge can belong to one of four types, defined by their temporal dimension (static or surveillance) and their topical dimension (general or policy-specific) (Barabas et al., 2014, p. 841).

³ Round 4 includes the following countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The surveillance facts tapped in this article relate to the individual's capacity to retain information regarding new events, rather than information concerning the functioning of government as detailed in the constitution for instance (temporally invariant). However, it does not capture what Barabas et al call policy relevant knowledge, but rather general surveillance facts. Policy relevant surveillance knowledge should in general be even harder to obtain than surveillance knowledge about institutions and people (Barabas et al., 2014, p. 841f).

The variable is coded as the percent of questions the respondent answered correctly (*percent correct*). This results in a dependent variable with three possible values, neither correctly identified (0), one correctly identified (50) and two correctly identified individuals (100). Importantly, since the variable does not differentiate between which questions were answered correctly, the distance between knowing nothing to knowing one answer and between knowing one answer and two answers are deemed the same.⁴ A linear regression model is deemed appropriate for the analysis, as this is also simpler to use and interpret (many have made calls for more parsimonious and simple models, see e.g. Schrodtt, 2014, p. 292f, Achen, 2002).⁵ Using the entire sample, as many as 45.17 percent could not identify either individual, and 41.47 percent could identify one, and only 13.36 percent of the sample could correctly identify both.

In order to gauge this variable's validity, it was correlated with a number of items. Firstly, it is positively correlated with education (0.295***) and voting (0.081***), variables typically positively correlated with political knowledge. In addition, *percent correct* was also negatively correlated with an index variable (-0.115***), a variable which measures whether or not the

⁴ The two items were positively correlated, but identifying the Minister of Finance correctly was a harder question (23.15 percent correct) than identifying the Member of Parliament correctly (45.04 percent correct).

⁵ The model estimations are done using the mixed command in Stata. Robustness checks with alternative model specifications (e.g. multilevel ordered logit) were also conducted, but the findings for individual coefficients were equivalent, as well as changes in coefficients when controls or sample specifications are altered.

respondent had heard enough about a number of political actors and institutions to answer a question about trust. The index variable was created through adding up the times the respondent used the response category “Haven’t heard enough to say” when asked to rate their trust for a number of political actors/institutions: president; national assembly, national election commission, elected local council, ruling party, opposition, police and courts of law.⁶ The negative correlation between *percent correct* and *have not heard about* is as expected, as the higher the respondent scored on the not heard about index, the fewer political actors the respondent felt they knew enough about to comment, and this in turn corresponds to rating low on the *percent correct* variable. *Percent correct* is a better measure of political knowledge, but the subjective rating of the respondent whether they know enough about certain actors to comment on them further is an indication of the degree to which the respondent feels familiar and knowledgeable about these actors and institutions (thus to some degree tapping internal efficacy).

The measure used here for political knowledge is limited, and the needs of the voter in order to make an informed choice are much larger than what is captured by general surveillance facts. What kind of knowledge a voter should primarily have is of course a much larger normative and empirical question (see e.g. Dolan, 2011 for a discussion on measures that may lead to a gender bias, and Luskin and Bullock, 2011 for a discussion of how response categories are valued). Yet, name recognition and attention to new events in politics are useful and in no way unimportant facets of the multidimensional concept of political knowledge. A larger problem may be that these questions focus on the more formal aspects of politics, as they pertain to elected representatives rather than local big men which might be even more important local political knowledge in many contexts (see for instance Utas, 2012, Chabal and

⁶ This resulted in a variable ranging from 0 to 8, where 8 indicates that the respondent did not feel they had heard enough about all 8 actors/institutions to rate their trust for them, i.e. low political knowledge. Most people scored 0 (and thus felt as if they knew enough about the actor in question) (80.54 percent), but some did not.

Daloz, 1999). Nonetheless, formal power is not irrelevant in these contexts either, and as one of the questions focus on the Member of Parliament representing their district the data used certainly has a local focus as well.

Fear of political violence and intimidation

The main independent variable is fear of political violence and intimidation. In addition, potential intervening variables are also specified below. *Fear* is measured with the help of the survey item: “During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?” (four possible answer categories: *not at all, a little bit, somewhat, and a lot*, 0-3).

<Table 1 about here.>

The underlying assumption of the fear hypothesis is that it should increase our attention to politics specifically, which in turn leads to higher levels of political knowledge. However, an experimental study focused on immigration noted that while fear may trigger attention and information seeking, it may not lead to better information processing (Gadarian and Albertson, 2014, p. 133). Hence, fear may simply lead to more attention to politics without better knowledge. Or indeed, we see both steps: first increased attention followed by increased knowledge. This is tested using variables measuring *political interest* (How interested would you say you are in public affairs? *Not at all interested, Not very interested, Somewhat interested, and Very interested*, 0-3) as well as tendency to *discuss politics* (When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters: *Never, Occasionally, and Frequently*, 0-2).

In contrast with previous research on the role of emotion for information seeking this article is not based on experimental data. This means of course that endogeneity cannot be avoided; it is possible that strong emotional reactions to politics is the result of a tendency to seek out information about politics, i.e. that the more well informed are more afraid of politics due to

them knowing more about politics. However, experimental data elsewhere has shown that causality runs mainly in the direction discussed in this article and not the other way around. This problem can, however, not be ruled out entirely.

In order to test the priming hypothesis, the fear variable is interacted with two different measures of political violence, as fear may have been primed in such contexts. I suggest that this may be the case in regions with high and common occurrences of political violence. Using the **Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD)** there are two measures of degree of violence and conflict: *deaths* and *events* (Salehyan and Linebarger, 2013, Salehyan et al., 2012). This dataset contains information about protests, riots, strikes and other social disturbances, for 19 of the 20 countries in the Afrobarometer data (Cape Verde not included). The data thus measures political violence more broadly, and is not limited to election violence (for a discussion about these distinctions, see e.g. Höglund, 2009, Ishiyama et al., 2016, p. 305). *Events* records the total number of events ongoing during the year of the survey in each region, whereas *deaths* records the total number of persons killed at such events in each region.

Control Variables

In addition, a number of control variables were added to the model, particularly as several of these variables are likely to influence political knowledge, but also be associated with exposure to violence. Not including these control variables would then bias the coefficient estimates.

Voters who identify with the incumbent party should be less likely to be exposed to fear and intimidation, yet more likely to be knowledgeable about those elected. Therefore, the models also control for if the respondent voted for the incumbent or not with a dummy variable, coded one if the respondent answered that they would vote for the incumbent party, zero otherwise.⁷

⁷ The incumbent party was based on what party was largest in the national assembly or presidential vote in the election prior to the survey using data from the African Elections Database. The following responses are coded as one: Force Cauris pour un Bénin Émergent (FCBE), Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) (Burkina Faso),

Another group that may be targeted or feel more at risk are ethnic minorities. Using the Afrobarometer survey, one question asks whether the respondent feels that their ethnic group (if they have identified with one) is treated unfairly by the government. The variable consists of four categories, from *never*, *sometimes*, *often* and *always*, 0-3.

Countries that have just gone through an election are different in two important ways. Firstly, political discussions and debates are likely to have been more common recently and as a result people may be more likely to know more about politics, but as any new minister or Member of Parliament was recently announced as such, people may not have learned about this. Secondly, the fear of electoral and political violence is reasonably different during different parts of the electoral cycle. Therefore, the analysis identified countries that during the time the survey was collected had gone through an election the year before, i.e. post-election countries. Only Ghana had an election the same year, but several months after the survey was conducted. Nine countries were identified as post-election countries (1 year): Benin, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zambia.

In addition, a number of control variables are used as they are generally recognized as important predictors of political knowledge (Grönlund and Milner, 2006, Henderson, 2014, Jerit, 2009). The respondent's age (continuous scale, in years); level of education (10 categories,

Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde (PAICV), National Democratic Congress (NDC) (Ghana), Orange Democratic Movement Party (ODM) (Kenya), Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), Unity Party (UP) (Liberia), Tiako I Madagasikara/I love Madagascar (TIM), Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) (Malawi), Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali (ADEMA), Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), SWAPO party of Namibia, People's Democratic Party (PDP) (Nigeria), Parti Démocratique Sénégalaise (PDS), African National Congress (ANC) (South Africa), Chama Cha Mapinduzi/Party of the Revolution (CCM) Tanzania, National Resistance Movement (NRM) (Uganda), National Resistance Movement (NRM), Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) (Zambia) and Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF).

from no formal schooling to post-graduate); gender (male = 1); political interest (“How interested would you say you are in public affairs?”, four categories, from *not at all interested* to *very interested*, 0-3); and access to news were therefore included in the model. In order to measure the respondent’s access to news, items indicating access to news through radio is used. Access to news through radio should be the most important, as radio should be the most accessible channel and not dependent on the respondent’s literacy.⁸ The variable is measured on a five category scale (“How often do you get news from the radio?”, from *never, less than once a month, a few times a month, a few times a week, and every day*, 0-4). Poverty or low income should undermine people’s attention to political events and thus result in less political knowledge. Lack of resources is measured through how often the respondent has gone without food and cash income. The survey questions related to these resources were measured as follows: “Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family gone without: a cash income/enough food to eat”. The variables were measured on a five-category scale (*never, just once or twice, several times, many times and always*, 0-4). For more details on the variables used in the analysis, see the Appendix, with descriptive statistics on all variables.

Analysis

The analysis proceeds in several steps; first an examination of the relationship between fear and the dependent variable political knowledge, followed by an examination of the intervening variables (Table 2 and Table 3). In Table 2, the dependent variable is *percent correct* (the results are robust to alternative model specifications).⁹ Model 1 is simply a bivariate model of fear and

⁸ As the survey was conducted through a face-to-face interview, literacy is not a prerequisite for participating in the survey.

⁹ Alternative model specifications such as ordered logit and reducing the model to logit (0 = no answer correct, 1 = identified MP correctly) did not alter the results. As Kenya experienced unusual levels of political violence, all models were also run

political knowledge, whereas Model 2 includes all individual level control variables. The fear variable is reported as significant and negative in both models, if somewhat attenuated when the controls are introduced. The results remain the same when adding other control variables such as other sources of news, urban/rural, and when dropping political interest, ethnic group treated unfairly (the significance level drops to 90%), and voting for incumbent. The next two models add the region level control variables, and again the fear variable is reported as significant and negative.¹⁰ Model 3 uses the number of events of social conflict as a measure of political violence, whereas Model 4 used number of deaths due to social conflict as a measure of political violence. While the fear variable is reported as statistically significant in all of these models, it is consistently reported as negative (the more fearful, the less knowledgeable), i.e. in the opposite direction of what the hypothesis stated (even if the magnitude of the coefficient is not large). Interestingly, the number of events of social conflict has a negative and significant relationship with political knowledge, whereas the number of deaths is positively associated (however when Kenya is dropped as a case the variable *deaths* is reported as negative and significant).

<Table 2 about here>

However, perhaps the impact of fear is primed by the level of violence in a country. The analysis therefore proceeds to testing the idea that in some areas the effect of fear may be dependent on priming, following Hypothesis 2. This is done in Model 5 and 6, where fear is interacted with the two measures of political violence respectively. In both models, the fear

dropping Kenya from the analysis, and the results were robust to this specification (with one exception: number of deaths is reported as negative and significant).

¹⁰ This result is also robust to the inclusion of a country level variable measuring level of democracy (Freedom House).

variable is reported as significant, albeit still negatively associated with political knowledge. The coefficients for events and deaths are also similar to the estimations without the interaction. The interaction itself with events is significant and positive, whereas the interaction with number of deaths is not significant. This means that the overall impact of fear is partially dependent on the level of political violence, in terms of events of social conflict. In fact, in regions with a high frequency of social conflict events the overall impact of fear changes sign. This can be seen in Table 3 below, where the predicted values of percent correct are shown for various levels of fear and events, when the other control variables are set at their means or modal values.

< Table 3 about here >

As we see, the impact changes from being negative to positive. Comparing a region with no events of social conflict with a region with 15 events, model 5 predicts that the impact of fear, as we move from the minimum value of fear (0) to its maximum value (3) changes. In the first case their political knowledge score is likely to be 2.19 percentage points lower, whereas with many events of social conflict, the expected difference is an increase with 5.10 percentage points.

Thus, in countries with a high occurrence of political violence,¹¹ i.e. where fear is more associated with actual risk, there is some indication that the variable has a positive impact on political knowledge. What is clear from this analysis is that the impact of political fear on political knowledge is not necessarily identical across cases, countries, and with respect to the traits of the violence, but can vary, suggesting that further cases studies would be useful.

Considering the proposed mechanism, if we turn to examine potential intervening variables we do not see evidence in support of the hypothesis either (Table 4). The impact of fear is not

¹¹ Measured using number of events of social conflict.

significant for political interest or the tendency to discuss politics (Model 7 and 8). Interacting fear with measures of political violence and social conflict does not change the result.

< Table 4 about here >

In general, political fear is a significant predictor of political knowledge, but in the opposite direction compared to the hypothesis. In contrast with previous work on fear and emotive responses, survey data from Sub-Saharan Africa do not indicate the same cognitive benefits. The larger tendency here is that political violence (number of events) and the fear of political violence reduce political knowledge. The affective intelligence hypothesis does not explain the observed negative relation between fear and political knowledge. This suggests that how political violence and political knowledge are associated need to be studied further, in order to uncover both the underlying mechanisms as well as whether there are specific traits of the violence that matter in one way rather than another. Previous work has explored such aspects as the longevity of the violence, as well as its intensity, origin and target (Ishiyama et al., 2016). The scope of this article does not allow for an investigation of these issues, but these are promising avenues. As some contextual differences also were discovered, it would be appropriate to further scrutinize the relationship between fear of electoral violence with case studies, where the data may also allow the analysis to further unravel the mechanisms at play.

Conclusion

While much research is conducted on the extent and scope of electoral violence and explanations for electoral violence, less work has been conducted on how the individual voter is affected when trying to exercise their democratic citizenship in violent political landscapes. To scrutinize how electoral and political violence impacts the voter, available data from the Afrobarometer was used to test how political knowledge is affected by such experiences. In this

article, the effect on political knowledge resulting from fearing political violence and intimidation has been tested. Fear of political violence was hypothesized to heighten levels of political knowledge following the affective intelligence hypothesis, but the results show that fear actually decreases political knowledge. What mechanisms drive this negative association between fear of violence and political knowledge remains to be determined. Fear of violence thus seems to overall impede the voter in practicing their citizenship; making informed choices at the ballot box are more difficult in the midst of violence. Yet, fear in the context of numerous events of political violence and social conflict increases political knowledge.

This article has contributed to understanding the scope and relevance of the *affective intelligence hypothesis*, particularly through using non-experimental data from Sub-Saharan Africa. And this data suggests that its scope cannot be extended to election and political violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only partially is the hypothesis relevant, namely in areas with a lot of political violence. Here the respondent may experience a priming effect, where the previous experience of violence makes the individual more prone to feel fear as well as that fear having a larger cognitive importance. In such cases, political fear has a positive impact on political knowledge.

One of the main limitations of this article is how variable measures are limited to the format of the survey, particularly in terms of the measure of political knowledge (but also in terms of measuring other emotional responses to violence). As the concept of political knowledge is multidimensional, the trends noted here may play out differently had other dimensions of political knowledge been tested. What kind of political knowledge is most central to the African voter, particularly in contexts of electoral violence, is also an open question. Name recognition of elected representatives is not the only relevant form of knowledge. We need to test these relationships with other forms of measure of political knowledge. Other extensions were also not possible due to data limitations, as differentiating the kind of violence that inspires fear

further (such as its intensity, longevity, targets and origins). In addition, whether actual and direct exposure to political violence has the same impact on political knowledge as the fear of violence has, also requires further scrutiny.

Despite these limitations, this article offers an expansion and deeper understanding of how violence shapes the ability of citizens to make informed choices in politics. Importantly, this article demonstrates that fear of electoral violence spurs vicious circles, where political knowledge decreases, which in turn may produce less accountability, and less forward-looking choices among the electorate. Similarly, the experience of political violence in the region of the respondent is associated with lower levels of political knowledge. Whether or not electoral and political violence (and individual citizens' different experiences and reactions to such violence) overall decreases levels of political knowledge and undermine the political process and decrease the degree to which political choices reflect the will of the people requires more research.

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Tables

Table 1: Distribution of fear political intimidation or violence

	Percent
Not at all	46.34
A little bit	20.55
Somewhat	14.54
A lot	18.57
Total	100.00

*Estimated using sampling weights.
Total number of observations 26,959.

Table 2: Political Knowledge, percent correct (0-100)

	Bivariate		All individual level controls		All individual, region and country level controls (events and deaths respectively)		Interaction with political violence (events and deaths respectively)					
	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>		<i>Model 4</i>		<i>Model 5</i>		<i>Model 6</i>	
<i>Individual level variables</i>												
Fear of intimidation or violence	-0.583**	(0.220)	-0.438*	(0.209)	-0.446*	(0.215)	-0.507*	(0.252)	-0.730**	(0.248)	-0.485**	(0.222)
Food shortage			-0.900***	(0.205)	-0.920***	(0.210)	-0.926***	(0.285)	-0.917***	(0.210)	-0.926***	(0.209)
Lack of cash income			-0.507*	(0.244)	-0.431	(0.253)	-0.404	(0.411)	-0.436	(0.253)	-0.402	(0.252)
Age			0.212***	(0.020)	0.210***	(0.021)	0.210***	(0.028)	0.210***	(0.021)	0.210***	(0.021)
Education			4.693 ***	(0.192)	4.671***	(0.197)	4.627***	(0.411)	4.672***	(0.197)	4.626***	(0.197)
Male			6.557 ***	(0.516)	6.735***	(0.535)	6.756***	(1.086)	6.744***	(0.535)	6.756***	(0.536)
Political Interest			1.967***	(0.254)	1.839***	(0.259)	1.852***	(0.343)	1.843***	(0.259)	1.852***	(0.259)
Access to radio news			2.019***	(0.183)	1.982***	(0.184)	1.969***	(0.260)	1.980***	(0.184)	1.970***	(0.184)
Incumbent voter			-0.328	(0.499)	-0.829	(0.487)	-0.840	(0.846)	-0.807	(0.487)	-0.845	(0.490)
Ethnic group treated unfairly			-0.144	(0.161)	-0.078	(0.190)	-0.123	(0.237)	-0.073	(0.190)	-0.123	(0.189)
Intercept	33.739 ***	(1.165)	0.906	(1.739)	9.257***	(2.030)	8.160***	(4.472)	9.501 ***	(2.025)	8.135***	(1.959)
<i>Cross-level interactions</i>												
Fear * deaths											0.000	(0.001)
Fear * events									0.162*	(0.074)		
<i>Region level variables</i>												
Deaths due to social conflict							0.023***	(0.009)			0.023***	(0.002)
Events of social conflict					-1.585***	(0.455)			-1.793***	(0.473)		
Post-election country					-9.257***	(2.030)	-14.934***	(5.329)	-9.839***	(1.759)	-14.938***	(1.897)
Variance (intercept)	291.856		254.562		205.006		188.965		203.546		189.070	
Variance (residuals)	932.934		819.550		818.403		818.537		818.305		818.519	
N (respondents)	26,911		24,115		22,982		22,982		22,982		22,982	
N (regions)	246		246		241		241		241		241	
AIC	226453.9		199982		189620.5		189605.7		189618.6		189607.4	
Log pseudolikelihood	-113222		-99978.011		-94795.241		-94787.83		-94793.276		-94787.678	
Wald Chi2	7.02		1018.52		1050.38		1322.16		1054.78		1322.89	
Prob > Chi2	0.008		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	

Note: Significance levels: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001. Standard errors within parentheses.

Across country weights are used in all models. There is no data on social conflict (deaths or events) for Cape Verde, hence the total number of observations drop considerably when these variables are used.

Table 3: Predicted values for percent correct, based on Model 5

	Fear = min	Fear = max	Δ percent correct
At no events	40.74	38.55	-2.19
At 5 events	31.79	32.03	+0.24
At 10 events	22.84	25.51	+2.67
At 15 events	13.89	18.99	+5.10
Δ percent correct	-26.85	-19.56	

Note: All other variables set at their mean (food shortage, lack of cash income, age, education, access to radio news, ethnic group treated unfairly) or modal value (male, political interest, incumbent voter, post-election country).

Table 4: Intervening variables for fear

	Political Interest (0-3)		Discuss politics (0-2)	
	Model 7		Model 8	
<i>Individual level variables</i>				
Fear of intimidation or violence	-0.010	(0.010)	0.001	(0.005)
Food shortage	-0.002	(0.009)	0.005	(0.005)
Lack of cash income	0.020*	(0.009)	-0.001	(0.004)
Age	0.006***	(0.001)	-0.000	(0.000)
Education	0.055***	(0.006)	0.045***	(0.004)
Male	0.242***	(0.017)	0.110***	(0.010)
Political Interest			0.298***	(0.009)
Access to radio news	0.102***	(0.008)	0.032***	(0.004)
Incumbent voter	0.155***	(0.019)	0.031**	(0.011)
Ethnic group treated unfairly	-0.009	(0.008)	0.004	(0.004)
Intercept	0.967***	(0.055)	0.051	(0.028)
<i>Region level variables</i>				
Events of social conflict	-0.030***	(0.008)	0.011*	(0.005)
Post-election country	0.123**	(0.040)	0.022	(0.025)
Variance (intercept)	0.072		0.025	
Variance (residuals)	1.059		0.368	
N (respondents)	23,008		22,904	
N (regions)	241		241	
AIC	57804.09		36733.24	
Log pseudolikelihood	-28888.043		-18351.621	
Wald Chi2	902.33		3450.14	
Prob > Chi2	0.0000		0.0000	

Note: Significance levels: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001. Across countryweights are used in all models. Standard errors within parentheses.

Appendix

Table 5: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Mode	Std. Err.	Min	Max	Observations
<i>Individual level variables</i>						
Access to radio news	2.973	4	0.090	0	4	27,669
Age	36.586	30	0.609	18	110	27,380
Discuss politics	0.916	1	0.033	0	2	27,468
Education	3.045	4	0.192	0	9	27,669
Ethnic group treated unfairly	1.090	0	0.208	0	7	25,320
Fear intimidation or violence	1.053	0	0.109	0	3	26,959
Food shortage	1.186	0	0.088	0	4	27,651
Incumbent voter	0.411	0	0.043	0	1	27,713
Lack of cash income	2.080	3	0.126	0	4	27,551
Male	0.497	0	0.002	0	1	27,713
Not heard about political actors index	0.492	0	0.068	0	8	27,713
Political Interest	1.811	3	0.048	0	3	27,439
Percent correctly answered	34.092	0	3.552	0	100	27,663
<i>Region level variables</i>						
Events of social conflict	1.82	0	2.46	0	15	241
Deaths due to social conflict	36.52	0	221.66	0	1572	241
<i>Country level variables</i>						
Events of social conflict	6.47	1	2.02	0	30	19
Deaths due to social conflict	136.78	0	93.91	0	1629	19
Post-election country	0.45	0	0.11	0	1	20