



When rebels lose: The impact of civil war legacies on contemporary electoral outcomes in Peru, 2011–2021

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ABSTRACT

Existing research on the electoral legacies of civil wars lacks a comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which certain expectations are valid. To bridge this gap, I explore the impact of Peru's civil war in the 1980s on contemporary electoral outcomes. Peru represents a case where the rebels were defeated by the Fujimori government, despite being responsible for a larger share of the violence. Using a unique dataset at the district level, I analyze the vote shares for Keiko Fujimori and her three primary left-wing opponents in the first rounds of the last three presidential elections. The findings indicate that Fujimori gains a premium in districts more affected by the conflict, while left-wing candidates experience an electoral disadvantage. A detailed analysis of the 2021 election shows that Pedro Castillo was able to offset this negative impact in poorer districts and those more severely affected by COVID-19.

1. Introduction

The study of conflict legacies on electoral results has significantly expanded in the past decade (Walden and Zhukov 2020). Despite this growth, a concise and comprehensive framework that outlines expected legacies beyond specific narratives remains elusive. This article aims to bridge this gap by proposing a straightforward typology that delineates the potential impacts of civil wars on contemporary electoral outcomes, incorporating both the outcome of the civil war and the patterns of victimization.

My focus is on a combination largely overlooked in existing literature: the electoral legacies in scenarios where the incumbent wins the war, and the rebels are predominantly responsible for the violence. I hypothesize that in such settings, the incumbent's successor parties will likely receive an electoral boost, while parties aligned with the rebels' support base may suffer electoral setbacks.

The Peruvian civil war serves as a prime example of this scenario, where the incumbents emerged victorious, but the rebels, primarily the Shining Path (SP or Sendero), bore the brunt of the blame for victimization patterns. I empirically investigate whether the conflict between SP and the security forces during the 1980s influences two standard features of the electoral landscape in Peru: the strength of right-wing fujimorismo, and the weakness of left-wing parties. On one hand, Alberto Fujimori's successes in defeating SP and navigating the country out of an economic crisis have been credited with establishing a robust electoral base for his daughter, Keiko Fujimori's political movement. Conversely, the Left's inability to distinguish itself from the radical choices offered by Sendero and the failures of centrist governments in

the 1980s have rendered its political successors largely unelectable (Adrianzén 2011; Muñoz 2019a).

This article represents the initial effort to empirically test these arguments. I have constructed an original dataset at the district level, detailing the vote shares of Keiko Fujimori and the leading left-wing candidates (Ollanta Humala, Verónica Mendoza, and Pedro Castillo) in the first round of the 2011, 2016, and 2021 Peruvian presidential elections.

The findings suggest that the prevalent beliefs are partially accurate. Fujimorismo, the political ideology associated with Fujimori, shows a consistent tendency to gain electoral advantage in districts that were significantly impacted by Sendero activities, both in terms of control and higher lethality. This electoral connection remains robust even after accounting for contemporary factors like crime rates, poverty, and COVID-19 deaths, as well as long-term influences such as marginalization. It is also robust to different modeling specifications.

Conversely, left-wing candidates consistently faced electoral disadvantages in districts heavily affected by rebel violence. This outcome is counterintuitive, considering these areas have a history of marginalization and traditionally lean towards left-wing voting. However, these findings are more sensitive to different modeling approaches and seem contingent on various circumstantial factors. This is further explored by examining Pedro Castillo's narrow victory (by 0.26 percent) over Keiko Fujimori in 2021. The analysis investigates how the legacy of the civil war interacts with short-term factors like monetary poverty and COVID-19 deaths in influencing voting patterns. When controlling for other variables, higher levels of poverty and greater exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic appear to have allowed Castillo to partially neutralize the

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adverse effects of the civil war legacy.

These results suggest a legacy of civil war that channels past experiences into current party preferences through a victimization mechanism. This mechanism seems to benefit the political descendants of the winning side, even when they are no longer in power, and negatively impacts the electoral fortunes of parties that ideologically align with the defeated rebels. This phenomenon could be attributed to two notable aspects of Peruvian politics. Firstly, SP focused on enforcing compliance in local communities through coercion rather than delivering positive outcomes that may have mitigated the memories of its violence. Secondly, unlike other conflicts where rebels transitioned into political parties (like in El Salvador and Colombia), SP never had the opportunity to operate legally and advocate for its actions, amplifying its legacy of violence and minimizing the state’s armed actors’ role.

In the remainder of the article, I will discuss how civil war legacies can influence contemporary electoral outcomes in light of existing research. This is followed by contextualizing the Peruvian case with a brief overview of the conflict and the elections in the 2010s. Next, I will describe the data and discuss the statistical results. A concluding section will wrap up the discussion.

2. Making sense of electoral legacies of political violence

The study of how past conflicts influence contemporary politics is a rapidly expanding field. A seminal work in this area is Jason Wittenberg’s “Crucibles of Political Loyalty” (2006), which examines the resurgence of religious identities in post-communist Hungary’s political landscape. Wittenberg attributed the strong correlation between right-wing voting patterns in 1948 and 1989 to the resilience of religious identities, bolstered by the continuous presence of local Christian church charters that resisted communist secularization efforts.

Subsequent research has delved into the endurance of electoral patterns over time and the impact of various “shadows of the past” and “legacies.” This trend has also permeated the subfield of conflict studies, as evidenced by Walden and Zhukov’s 2020 review. Contemporary legacies of past violence have been identified in areas such as economic development (Cassar et al. 2013), ethnic loyalties (Hadzic et al. 2017), state weakness (Schwartz 2023), and political attitudes (Martin et al. 2022), among others.

While the case-study literature on conflict legacies has underscored the role of victimization, it has often failed to theorize about the significance of the outcomes of civil wars. Daly (2019) compellingly argues that civil war successor parties garner electoral benefits not merely due to victimization patterns but also because of their perceived ability to ensure peace and protect citizens from further coercive demands. However, it remains unclear whether this security advantage persists after a country has moved beyond the conflict. Given that the legacies of victimization are still felt decades after the cessation of violence, it seems plausible that the long-term impacts of repressive patterns eclipse the short-term security premium.

Table 1 synthesizes the discussion by examining the relationship between global victimization patterns, outcomes of civil wars, and their subsequent impact on electoral outcomes. It could be argued that victimization dynamics are deeply rooted at the local level and there might pose challenges when attempting to aggregate them to a national

scope. However, I argue that in the aftermath of conflicts, the narrative is often shaped at the national level, primarily by the victors who have access to more substantial resources.

This national-level influence allows the winners to craft and disseminate postwar narratives and memories, thereby significantly shaping the public’s collective understanding of the conflict. Such a process has the potential to create a generalized perception of the conflict’s history and its legacy. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this dominant narrative does not entirely erase the existence of alternative memories and interpretations held by various segments of the population. These alternative recollections can persist alongside the more widely disseminated narratives.

The upper left cell in Table 1 identifies scenarios where rebels win or achieve a negotiated settlement, and the state is responsible for a higher share of violence. I expect the victimization premium to be the strongest in this scenario because rebel governments usually command significant resources to eliminate hostile constituencies. This further reduces the chances for victims of rebel violence to publicly voice their grievances. For instance, many victims of rebel violence in Cuba left for the US in the aftermath of the conflict, keeping their grievances alive but on foreign soil (Masud-Piloto 1996).

The electoral consequences of past violence are well-documented in this case. Ishiyama and Widmeier (2013) find that levels of rebel control in Nepal help explain the electoral results of the Maoists during the postwar Constitutional election. Similarly, Allison (2010) found that the FMLN in El Salvador fared better electorally not only in municipalities under its control during the civil war but also in those that experienced widespread conflict. Because the Salvadoran civil war ended in a stalemate, understanding the role of security provision is also crucial to comprehending postwar electoral dynamics in the country (Daly 2019; Turner 2020).

When the winning side carries out more violence, different victimization dynamics emerge. Firstly, winning governments that produce a greater share of victims initially benefit from security concerns. However, this benefit may depend on the incumbent’s ability to continue threatening hostile constituencies (Walden and Zhukov 2020, 13) and the presence of local networks that keep the memories of repression alive (Villamil 2021).

This pattern was observed in the Spanish Civil War, where initial security concerns favouring the winners were gradually overshadowed by the memory of victimization patterns during the war and the Francoist dictatorship (Balcells 2012; De la Calle, 2015). In the US during Reconstruction, the security premium for Republican candidates in the South ended by 1884, whereas the positive impact of Southern casualties on support for Democratic candidates persisted for decades afterward (Kalmoe 2020). More generally, several studies corroborate the lasting impact of one-sided repression on current individual attitudes against the perpetrators (Lupu and Peisakhin 2017; Rozenas et al., 2017; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019; Wang 2021).

On the other hand, when rebels win despite (or because of) carrying out higher levels of violence, they initially benefit from security concerns and the general weakness of opposition constituencies. But unlike victorious rebels who suffer more victimization, these rebels will only reap the benefits of peace as long as security concerns persist. In other words, voter support for the rebel government is conditional on specific outcomes and the credibility of mobilization vehicles (such as revolutionary parties) as political actors.

The Italian Civil War (1943–45) could be a case in point. It witnessed significant violence from the Nazis and their local allies, but this was somewhat balanced in the year following the war when approximately ten thousand supporters of the former regime were executed. Grandi (2013) discovered that this retaliatory violence was strategically influenced by the political preferences of former combatants. Interestingly, Costalli and Ruggeri (2019) found that, although the direct civil war effects of this conflict vanished quickly, its long-lasting influence was indirectly channelled through the consolidation of postwar party

Table 1
Civil war legacies on electoral outcomes.

		Who carried out more violence	
Who won	Rebels (or tied)	Government Rebels’ inheritors benefitted (Maoists in Nepal)	Rebels (or tied) Short-term premium for rebels (Italy’s partigiani)
	Government	Victims’ inheritors benefitted (Spanish Civil War)	Incumbent’s inheritors benefitted (Peru’s Fujimori)

strongholds in areas where partisans successfully operated.

Table 1 also addresses a scenario less examined in the literature: an incumbent victory when rebels impose a high casualty rate (lower right cell). Political leaders who push the conflict to a military victory may be electorally rewarded by constituencies heavily affected by the fight (Weintraub et al. 2015). On one hand, they can reap the peace dividend. On the other, legacies may persist longer when pro-government victimized populations make up a majority of the toll count. At the same time, losing rebels might struggle to convert their supporters' grievances into electoral visibility. Manning and Smith (2016) observe that 55 percent of rebel groups in their study transformed into political parties after conflicts ended between 1990 and 2009. They further note that armed groups with prewar electoral experience, involvement in less intense conflicts, and some form of negotiated war termination were more likely to successfully transition into political parties.

Consequently, rebel losers who inflicted significant casualties often face difficulties in becoming notable post-war electoral forces, limiting their ability to voice grievances. For example, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, despite controlling large areas of East and North Ceylon for years, were decisively defeated by the army in 2009 (Weiss 2011). Emboldened by the victory, then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa called and won a snap election in 2010. Interestingly, his former military general-turned-electoral rival, Sarath Fonseka, captured the highest plurality of votes in the East and North provinces (Keethapongcalan 2022). Tired of violence, Tamil voters perhaps opted for the candidate associated with bringing the war to an end.

I hypothesize that a legacy of extensive rebel violence will increase the likelihood of support for candidates linked to the government responsible for quelling the rebellion, even if they are no longer incumbents and the security premium has phased out. Conversely, this effect will negatively impact the electoral prospects of parties ideologically aligned with the rebels. This victimization mechanism suggests that citizens with direct or inherited memories of the conflict may favour candidates they associate with ending the conflict, to the detriment of parties representing the constituencies that the rebel group purported to support.

To test these implications, this study examines the impact of the 1980s civil war in Peru, which saw Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian government successfully defeat the Shining Path (SP). Net of other factors, it is expected that the Fujimori movement will perform better electorally in areas more affected by rebel action, while left-wing candidates will underperform in regions heavily impacted by the conflict. Because Shining Path's strategies of territorial control were largely oriented towards securing civilian acquiescence with little attempt to provide any public goods in exchange for support (Degregori 1998; Gorriti 1990; McClintock 1998, Chapter 2), I consider that both its violence and territorial presence contributed to creating grievances within the local population, triggering victimization patterns favouring the ultimate winners of the conflict. In this sense, I hypothesize that:

H1. The greater the level of rebel violence and/or presence during the war, the more support for Keiko Fujimori

H2. The greater the level of rebel violence and/or presence during the war, the less support for left-wing presidential candidates

The subsequent sections will describe the context of the civil war and the collapse of parties in its aftermath.

3. The conflict

The Peruvian Civil War commenced on May 17, 1980, when Sendero cadres destroyed ballot boxes in Chuschi, a small town in the Cangallo province of central Ayacucho. Throughout the preceding decade, Sendero had engaged in militant proselytism among indigenous communities in the Sierra, exploiting longstanding political and economic exclusion as well as the shortcomings of Velasco Alvarado's revolutionary military government (1968–1979). This government had

attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to address grievances through land distribution, labour mobilization, and broader socio-economic reforms (CVR 2003: vol. VIII; Koc-Menard, 2007). The violence initially escalated rapidly in the Andes, with Northern Ayacucho becoming a stronghold for Sendero (Degregori 1986).

Fernando Belaúnde, the last democratically elected president before the 1968 military coup, also triumphed in the 1980 election. Hesitant to empower the army, given the recent history of military rule, he instead relied on the police forces. This decision proved catastrophic, as the ill-equipped and demoralized police were swiftly overrun by Sendero's mobile and more energetic units (Gorriti 1990). These units, known colloquially as the 'wanderers' due to their transient occupation of seized localities, established so-called popular courts to try and usually execute local leaders, the affluent, and alleged informers. Lacking provision of essential public services, Sendero's influence relied on the promise of protection against military retaliation (Gavilán 2015). However, when the army was deployed in 1983, its indiscriminate repression not only undermined state legitimacy but also challenged Sendero's perceived invincibility (McClintock 1998). In response, Sendero inflicted brutal punishments on communities that resisted its rule, exemplified by the Lucanamarca massacre, where guerrillas killed sixty-nine farmers.

Under President Alan García (1985), initial strategies emphasizing poverty alleviation and human rights soon gave way to full military empowerment and the establishment of paramilitary units targeting left-wing civic leaders (Palmer 1995). The formation of self-defence militias in rural areas severely weakened Sendero (Degregori 1998; Starn 1998). Their 'final offensive,' aimed at isolating Lima, coincided with the collapse of the Peruvian economy under García, characterized by spiralling inflation and the disintegration of its formal sector.

In 1990, an engineer named Alberto Fujimori, running on a centre-left populist platform, won the presidency. Confronted with a rampant rebellion and legislative opposition to his policies, Fujimori initiated an autogolpe on April 5, 1992, dissolving Congress and granting the military extensive resources to suppress Sendero with little regard for human rights. The arrest of SP leader Abimael Guzmán in Lima shortly afterward was a critical success for Fujimori, significantly demoralizing Sendero's militants, many of whom subsequently surrendered (Bermúdez 1995). By the end of 1993, Sendero was in terminal decline.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) estimates the war's death toll at approximately 69,000. According to TRC data, around 53 percent of the 11,000 fully documented deaths were caused by Sendero. De la Calle (2017) found that the majority of Sendero's victims were civilians (63 percent), with lower proportions of security forces (19 percent) and government personnel (17 percent) casualties. The central Sierra region, especially Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Apurímac, bore the brunt of the violence, accounting for 48 percent of Sendero-related deaths, along with the perilous Hualaga corridor (40 percent). Metropolitan Lima, although less affected in terms of numbers (2 percent of deaths), also experienced significant trauma due to the conflict.

4. Party politics in Peru

Contemporary Peruvian politics, characterized as a "democracy without parties" (Levitsky 2018) and heavily reliant on clientelist practices (Muñoz 2019b), is marked by two significant features. Firstly, it is shaped by the Fujimorato, an electoral authoritarian regime led by Alberto Fujimori, which lasted a decade and laid the groundwork for the nation's current institutional framework. Upon assuming power, Fujimori shifted to the right, embracing the economic neoliberal agenda initially proposed by his opponent, Mario Vargas Llosa (Stokes 2001). His policies rescued Peru from economic collapse and ushered in a period of robust, sustained growth. His controversial counter-insurgency strategies also led to the swift defeat of Sendero.

This legacy, albeit insufficient to prevent Fujimori's downfall in 2000 and subsequent imprisonment in 2007, ensured the persistence of

his economic policies and political institutions. Except for Kuczynski, all presidents succeeding Fujimori campaigned on platforms advocating greater redistribution and reduced commodity extraction but ultimately adhered to the same neoliberal policies (Dargent and Muñoz 2016). Pedro Castillo's presidency was short-lived, as he was removed from office just over a year into his term.

Adding to this unresponsiveness is the fact that five of the last six elected presidents have faced indictments or accusations of corruption, particularly in relation to dealings with the Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht. This has further eroded public trust in the party system (Carrión and Zárate 2023). Keiko Fujimori, too, has been imprisoned on corruption charges. Despite Alberto Fujimori's notorious human rights abuses and widespread corruption, a significant portion of the electorate remains loyal to Fujimorismo. Keiko Fujimori has reached the runoff in the last three presidential elections (see Table 2). She was not a presidential candidate in 2006, when her father was a fugitive in Chile, though she received the highest number of votes for a Congressional seat. A consistent theme in Keiko's campaigns is the highlighting of her father's success against Sendero and his role in fostering economic growth and stability, while minimizing his record on human rights and corruption (Dargent and Muñoz 2016).

A second defining aspect of Peruvian politics is the decline of the left-wing movement during Fujimori's tenure. The Left, initially slow to organize in the 20th century, gained significant momentum during the military government of the 1970s. The contradictions of this regime facilitated large-scale mobilization by encouraging unionization and activism, yet failing to fulfil the rising demands of citizens. This period of low-cost political participation, combined with an economic crisis, propelled the expansion of left-wing groups. When the military leadership called for an Assembly to write a new democratic constitution, the different left-wing factions secured 30 percent of votes (Huber 1983).

The 1980s marked electoral successes for Izquierda Unida (IU, United Left), such as winning the mayoral office in Lima in 1983, but also sowed the seeds of its eventual downfall. Three main factors undermined IU's growth potential: violence, economic crisis, and internal strife (Adrianzen 2011; Roberts 1998, chapter 8; Stokes 1995). The Left's reluctance to unequivocally condemn Sendero's violence was costly. The economic crises of the late 1980s devastated the unions and cadre-based parties, key mobilizers for the Left. Additionally, ideological rifts within IU, spanning from Maoism to European-style social democracy, led to the fragmentation of the party and the fielding of two presidential candidates in 1990, who together garnered only 13 percent of the vote, less than half of their share five years earlier.

Fujimori attracted numerous IU cadres to his patronage-driven project, winning over a significant portion of the former left-wing supporters (Muñoz 2019a, 218). He also stigmatized the Left as being sympathetic to terrorism and insurgency, a perception that still influences Peruvian politics (Muñoz 2019a, 204).

In 2006, Ollanta Humala, a former military officer turned populist candidate, emerged as a "neovelasquista" figure in local left-wing politics (Cameron 2009). He led the first round of the presidential election with 31 percent of the vote, performing well in areas that had supported Fujimori or left-wing candidates in the 1990 election. However, he underperformed in the Andes, possibly due to his past involvement in

counter-insurgency operations. Humala lost the runoff to former president Alan García but succeeded in the 2011 election, narrowly defeating Keiko Fujimori with the backing of the establishment. Despite initial popularity, his presidency suffered due to his handling of extractive conflicts and an ideological shift to the centre, alienating many of his original left-wing supporters (Avilés and Rosas, 2017).

For the 2016 elections, the Left formed the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) coalition with Verónica Mendoza as its candidate. Mendoza garnered 19 percent of the vote, performing strongly in war-affected regions but falling short of Keiko Fujimori's 40 percent and establishment-candidate Pedro Pablo Kuczynski's 21 percent. Kuczynski narrowly won the presidency in the runoff.

In 2021, amidst a pandemic and institutional crisis, left-wing voters rallied behind Pedro Castillo of the Peru Libre (Free Peru) party. Castillo, a rural teacher, proposed a program similar to Evo Morales's in Bolivia, balancing market support with nationalization of key sectors and social transfers. Surging from below 10 percent in polls to win the first election round with 19 percent, Castillo narrowly defeated Keiko Fujimori in the runoff, with strong support in the Andean regions. However, his presidency was short-lived due to escalating tensions with Congress, leading to his impeachment and removal from office in late 2022 (Dargent and Rousseau 2022; Fowks 2023).

In summary, while Peru's party system may not be the most conducive to perpetuating legacies of conflict, the country displays a persistent electoral trend favouring Fujimori's party and penalizing left-wing factions. The next section will empirically examine whether vote shares of leading candidates in recent presidential elections correlate systematically with the legacies of the internal conflict.

5. Data sources

I exploit an original cross-sectional dataset with all Peruvian districts as units of observation – there are 1835 districts, although some drop out in the analyses below because of missing data. The dependent variables are the vote shares during the first round of presidential elections for Keiko Fujimori and the leading left-wing candidates on the ballot: Ollanta Humala (2011), Verónica Mendoza (2016), and Pedro Castillo (2021). I choose the first round of the presidential election because it offers a more precise representation of hardcore support for the candidates (i.e., sincere voters). The runoff election, in contrast, is affected by strategic considerations and tactical voting (McClintock 2018). All these numbers were collected online from the Peruvian's Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales (ONPE).

I have built three indicators to capture the dynamics of violence during the Peruvian civil war (for descriptive statistics, see Tables 1A and 2A in the Online Appendix). In the aftermath of Alberto Fujimori's demise, the TRC rolled out a large-scale program to locally identify those who had died or disappeared because of the conflict by encouraging their relatives to self-report their traumatic experiences and share information about the victim, the (assumed) perpetrator, and the place and date of death. The TRC's statistical annex documents mostly civilian victims because the armed actors did not participate in the recollection effort. Although some 'combatants' may have been counted in this dataset (self-defence members, for instance), most victims appear to be civilians.

As victimization legacies usually focus on violence against civilians, I calculated the number of civilian victims killed by SP and state armed actors by locality for the duration of the conflict. I created a measure of war fatalities at the district level that subtracts the number of civilian deaths perpetrated by SP from the number of deaths perpetrated by state actors. Positive numbers denote higher rebel violence in the district, whereas negative numbers denote higher state repression in the district. By construction, this indicator assigns the value of 0 equally to peaceful districts as well as to those with two-sided violence. This is necessary to avoid the high correlation between the two measures of violence (p-corr value = 0.76; see Table 3A). Still, the Online Appendix includes models

Table 2
First-round results of the last three presidential elections.

Candidates	2006	2011	2016	2021
Keiko Fujimori	7.4*	23.6	39.9	13.4
Alan García	24.3			
Ollanta Humala	30.6	31.7		
Pedro Pablo Kuczynski			21.1	
Verónica Mendoza			18.7	
Pedro Castillo				18.9

Notes: In bold the winner of the election in the ballotage. * Keiko Fujimori did not run in 2006. The Fujimori's party frontrunner was Marta Chávez.

with the separated measures of violence, and the results do not vary (see [Tables 4A–5A](#)).

The TRC's database collects only a sub-sample of all killings, raising issues about its representativeness. Aware of this, [León \(2012\)](#) decided to dichotomize the presence of violence in a district instead of measuring its intensity. However, it is worth mentioning that his results did not change when a count indicator substituted for the dummy measure of violence in his study of the long-term effects of violence on human capital. I replicate León's approach by running models with dummy indicators of violence (see [Tables 6A–7A](#) in the Online Appendix).

Regarding rebel presence, I built two proxies based on the capacity of Sendero to boycott the municipal elections ([De la Calle, 2017](#); [McClin-tock 1998](#)). As voting is compulsory in Peru, both the state and the rebels had a propensity to show their strength by forcing people to either vote or boycott the election. I distinguish three areas: those under safe state control (no disruptions during election day), those under contested authority (the election is held but more than 50 percent of spoiled ballots), and those under rebel control (the election is not held or less than 50 percent turnout).

I carried over the observations under election years and calculated the proportion of years a district remained under rebel control or as a contested district. I do not weigh the indicators by a time-decaying function because the highest capacity of Sendero's electoral boycott occurred in the 1989 election, when 24.6 percent of the districts fell under the rebel control category, and an additional 14.5 percent under the contested one. In turn, there is no problem of multicollinearity if both victimization and control measures are entered into the models, as their correlation is relatively low (p -corr value = 0.05 with full control; and p -corr value = 0.03 with contested control).

I also included a battery of variables looking at prewar determinants. The most relevant indicator is the share of Spanish speakers in the district as of the 1981 Census. Although the match is not perfect, Spanish speaking closely approximates the presence and capacity of the state locally, as learning Spanish was for a long time the main elites' assimilationist dream ([Cotler 2013](#); see also [Paredes 2011](#) for a similar application to the 2011 election). Low numbers of Spanish speakers can therefore be considered a reasonable fit for historical marginalization and the concomitant weakness of state institutions, both of which create a breeding ground for political and economic exclusion and therefore a larger propensity to support the insurgency and vote for left-wing options.

Additionally, I consider two factors that may have had an impact on the development of the civil war in Peru. First, I included a measure of how much land was locally redistributed during the revolutionary government (data comes from [Guardado 2018](#)). The expectation is that districts with more redistribution may have produced more land-holders willing to endorse less radical policies.

Second, I identified with a dummy whether the district has the official recognition of a peasant community (data comes from the Instituto del Bien Común and can be downloaded from its website). In the 1920 Constitution, "indigenous communities" were acknowledged, and their fundamental rights protected. The main protection was related to land sales: legally recognized communities increased the cost of selling lands belonging to the public. The revolutionary government decided in 1970 to substitute "peasant communities" for "indigenous communities." Despite the bureaucratic juggernaut brought by the military government, there does not seem to be clear biases in the recognition of peasant communities ([Robles 2002](#)). This indicator captures some sort of indigenous institutions plus a sense of successful mobilization, which could help organize a left-wing constituency.

A final prewar variable of interest is the support for left-wing options before the start of the conflict. Given that the modern left-wing movement took off during the 1970s, the best empirical strategy would be to control for the 1978 Constitutional assembly election. There are two issues with this data. First, results are only available by province, not district. Although the number of provinces is large enough for a

quantitative analysis, the dynamics of violence were very localized, so a province-level aggregation would average local patterns into units that were largely irrelevant for the mechanisms explored in this article. Second, the available data reports electoral results over votes cast, instead of eligible voters. This difference matters because the main centre-right party did not participate in the election, which may have inflated left-wing results in provinces where the right was strong. In any case, I replicated the results with provincial data (see [Tables 9A–10A](#) in the Online Appendix).

The approach I follow is to use data about the electoral resilience of Izquierda Unida during the 1980s. I collected the results for the mayoral elections held in 1980, 1983, 1986, and 1989. To address endogeneity issues (less electoral support for IU in districts where rebels were more successful in boycotting the election), my IU dummy indicator scored 1 if the mayoral race was won by an IU candidate during any of the 1980s local contests, which decreases the chances of missing real positive cases.

As one could argue that contemporary fujimorismo is simply stronger where Alberto Fujimori did better in 1990, I collected electoral data on the 1990 first-round presidential election to investigate if civil war legacies are endogenous to the previous structure of Fujimori's support. Unfortunately, missing data is of concern here, as the election could not be run properly in many districts under rebel threat.

I also gathered data on three contemporary factors. I created two indicators for contemporary local poverty and crime from data gathered by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Información (INEI). The poverty rate was computed following the procedure developed by INEI for the Mapa de la Pobreza (Poverty Map) in 2013 and 2018. In turn, the per capita homicide rate was calculated from the 2016 Registro Nacional de Delitos y Faltas (National Registry of Crimes). The last indicator points to the COVID-19 pandemic. I downloaded data on the district-level per capita rate of COVID-related deaths from the website of the Government of Peru as of April 11, 2021, first-round Election Day (www.datosabiertos.gob.pe/dataset/fallecidos-hospitalizados-y-vacunados-por-covid-19). All these factors (poverty, crime, COVID-19) are context-specific variables that may have downplayed the electoral weight of more long-term factors, such as victimization legacies.

Finally, I collected demographic data (population size in 2015, from INEI), as well as geographic data (district size, distance to provincial capital, and capital cities) from georeferenced district-level maps.

6. Results

[Table 3](#) presents the results for the main political candidates from both the left and the right since 2011, using OLS models with robust standard errors and including regional dummies for five large areas: Lima and Callao, the Coast, Amazonas, northern Andes, and southern Andes. This set of models incorporates only prewar and war indicators, along with demographic and geographic characteristics.

The results show that left-wing candidates are more successful in prewar highly marginalized districts and are slightly associated with the existence of peasant communities. They tend to garner more votes in the baseline category (the southern Andes), whereas Fujimori performs better in Lima and the coastal departments ([Fig. 1A](#) in the Online Appendix includes the marginal effects of all these variables).

Even after controlling for long-term prewar factors and regional dummies, the results demonstrate a strong link between my two main civil war indicators and contemporary electoral patterns. [Fig. 1](#) provides a comparative analysis of the marginal effects of the three key independent variables on the voting patterns for each candidate.

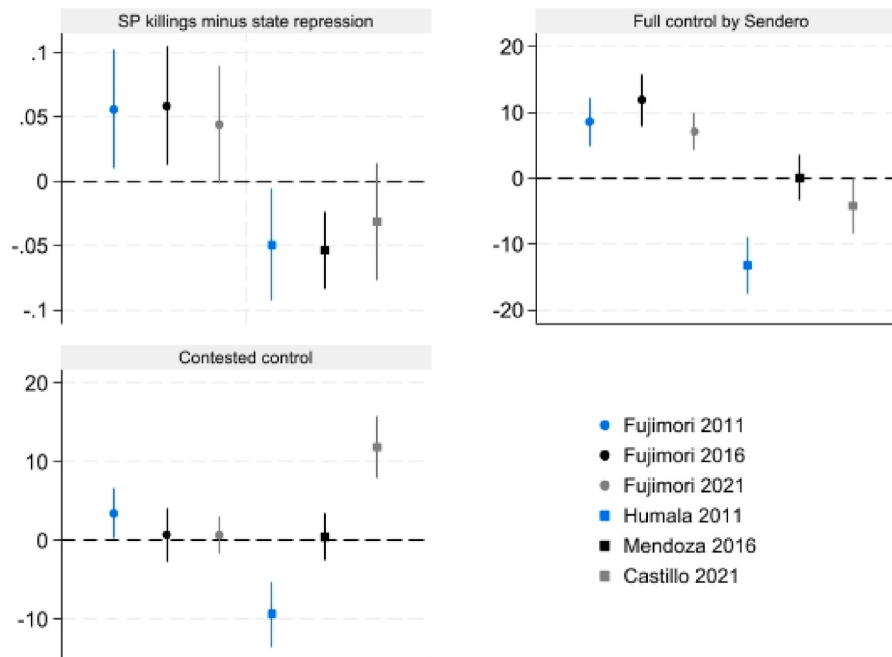
First, a higher number of deaths attributed to Sendero, in comparison to those by security forces, correlates with increased support for Fujimori across the board and generally less support for left-wing candidates. Second, districts with a more pronounced presence of Sendero also tend to show greater electoral support for Fujimori on average, while having a negative impact on left-wing candidates. Interestingly,

Table 3

Regression models of voting for Keiko Fujimori and the leading left-wing candidate, 2011–2021.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Fujimori 2011	Fujimori 2016	Fujimori 2021	Humala 2011	Mendoza 2016	Castillo 2021
Difference in killings (SP minus state repression)	0.06* (2.38)	0.06* (2.50)	0.04+ (1.90)	−0.05* (−2.22)	−0.05** (−3.55)	−0.03 (−1.34)
Full control	8.57** (4.55)	11.92** (5.96)	7.13** (5.16)	−13.23** (−6.08)	0.08 (0.04)	−4.17* (−1.98)
Contested control	3.41* (2.09)	0.76 (0.43)	0.68 (0.58)	−9.33** (−4.47)	0.44 (0.29)	11.88** (5.84)
Peasant community	0.65 (0.96)	0.32 (0.43)	1.30* (2.35)	−0.46 (−0.58)	0.67 (1.26)	2.84** (3.00)
Population (ln)	−0.98** (−4.31)	−1.03** (−4.08)	−0.66** (−3.36)	−0.54+ (−1.88)	−1.13** (−5.64)	−0.25 (−0.82)
Spanish speakers	0.13** (11.14)	0.14** (10.99)	0.10** (10.63)	−0.13** (−8.21)	−0.14** (−13.86)	−0.19** (−12.74)
Land reform	4.07** (3.25)	6.74** (4.77)	3.92** (3.66)	−0.30 (−0.17)	−2.24+ (−1.72)	−9.49** (−4.86)
Provincial capitals	−2.11* (−2.04)	−0.79 (−0.69)	−2.67** (−3.07)	−8.21** (−6.97)	−2.22* (−2.39)	−6.99** (−5.35)
Distance to capital	0.012 (0.62)	0.05** (2.72)	0.03+ (1.72)	−0.05** (−3.08)	−0.07** (−3.86)	−0.06** (−3.81)
Size of district	0.43* (2.07)	0.14 (0.60)	0.52** (2.95)	1.97** (8.66)	0.47** (2.66)	1.49** (5.95)
Lima	9.14** (6.97)	14.06** (10.26)	11.98** (10.01)	−15.12** (−9.87)	−12.32** (−11.29)	−18.05** (−12.43)
Coast	−0.39 (−0.42)	5.89** (5.53)	5.20** (7.16)	−13.75** (−10.34)	−9.83** (−10.45)	−7.80** (−6.47)
Amazonas	−0.25 (−0.17)	1.70 (1.10)	3.15** (2.72)	−18.49** (−10.16)	−12.58** (−10.46)	−18.49** (−10.43)
North Andes	−0.54 (−0.53)	−0.37 (−0.32)	1.36+ (1.71)	−10.79** (−8.24)	−10.36** (−10.23)	−0.48 (−0.36)
Constant	17.14** (7.18)	24.77** (9.30)	4.91* (2.41)	50.89** (16.72)	47.81** (22.10)	44.88** (13.59)
R2	0.26	0.34	0.35	0.40	0.57	0.51
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	1586	1586	1586	1586	1586	1586

t statistics in parentheses; +p < 0.1, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

**Fig. 1.** Marginal effects over vote shares in the first round of the presidential election for Keiko Fujimori and the leading left-wing candidate, 2011–2021.

the impact of rebel control is stronger than the difference in killings between the two main armed actors. Given the data concerns about the underreporting of victims in the TRC database, the substantive impact of

rebel control dynamics on electoral results underpins our theoretical expectation. Finally, districts that spent more time under contested control display a less consistent pattern, which might suggest a more

forceful military effort to maintain state control in these areas.

To deepen the analysis, I calculated the predicted vote share for Fujimori and her left-wing rivals depending on the impact of Sendero presence in the northern and southern Andes – a region encompassing the epicenters of the rebellion: Apurímac, Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Cusco, Huancavelica, Huánuco, Junín, Pasco, Puno, and San Martín. Fig. 2 illustrates a clear trend of increasing support for Fujimori across all three elections as the presence of rebels intensifies. On average, Fujimori gained an additional five percentage points in vote share when moving from a context of no rebel presence to one of high rebel control, holding other factors constant. Despite a decline in her vote shares in the southern Andes from 2016 to 2021, Fujimori's electoral performance still seems to benefit from the legacies of wartime dynamics.

Interestingly, the left-wing candidates, particularly Humala, experienced a noticeable electoral penalty in areas with stronger rebel control, as detailed in Fig. 2A of the Online Appendix. This finding underscores the complex relationship between the historical presence of insurgency and current political preferences.

I conducted six additional analyses to verify the robustness of the findings — all reported in the Online Appendix. To begin with, Tables 4A–7A explore different ways to measure rebel violence. The results with dummy indicators are less stable and have trouble capturing the logic of the argument, which intrinsically emphasizes how larger rebel violence should prompt more support for Fujimorismo. In any case, the indicator for full rebel control never loses statistical significance.

Secondly, Table 8A introduces further controls, encompassing both contemporary (such as poverty, crime, and COVID-19 deaths) and wartime factors (IU voting patterns during the 1980s). Notably, the core results — the positive impact of rebel victimization and control on Fujimori's vote shares and the corresponding negative effect on left-wing candidates — are reinforced when accounting for historical left-wing voting (IU) during the 1980s.

An interesting aspect of these additional analyses is Pedro Castillo's performance. The data suggests that Castillo was more successful in garnering votes in poorer districts compared to previous left-wing candidates. Furthermore, he also showed stronger electoral support in districts with higher crime rates.

In the third analysis, I utilized the 1978 electoral results for the

Constitutional Assembly as a measure of prewar support for left-wing parties. Given that this data is at the provincial level, I aggregated contemporary electoral results and the most relevant independent variables at the provincial level, weighted by population. The findings, as seen in Table 9A, reaffirm that Keiko Fujimori benefits from a legacy of victimization. The negative impact of violence on contemporary left-wing candidates appears weaker. However, when focusing exclusively on the Andean provinces, the results align closely with those previously reported (Table 10A).

Fourthly, to counter the argument that contemporary Fujimorismo depends more on the electoral coalition built by its founder in 1990 than on the civil-war legacy, I analysed the correlation between Alberto Fujimori's 1990 vote share and his daughter's support in the 2010s. As demonstrated in Table 11A, while there is a positive correlation, the impact of Sendero's violence remains significant, indicating that civil-war dynamics continue to influence voting patterns.

The fifth robustness test employed a nearest-neighbour matching (NNM) strategy to address potential endogeneity in wartime dynamics relative to prewar electoral competition. Given the geographical clustering of violent dynamics, I used the Mahalanobis distance to calculate the electoral effects of rebel violence, adjusting for prewar levels of marginalization. NNM models typically use dichotomous treatments (Stuart 2010); hence, I created a dummy variable to indicate whether SP killed more people in a district than state armed actors. The results (Table 12A) are generally well balanced (apart from the region of Lima) and show that Keiko Fujimori's benefit from victimization is particularly pronounced in the Andean districts, whereas the effects on left-wing candidates are less consistent.

Additionally, I applied a dose-response model, which allows for the use of continuous treatments (Cerulli 2015). Due to issues with model convergence, the treatment variable was the number of deaths caused by SP in each district, and I controlled for the level of state repression, regional dummies, and the proportion of Spanish speakers. The dose-response functions of SP's violence for different presidential candidates, detailed in Figs. 3A–8A in the Online Appendix, further validate the hypothesis that the impact of these factors is more pronounced for Fujimori than for left-wing candidates.

Finally, even if one were to accept the existence of systematic legacies of the Peruvian civil war affecting contemporary electoral patterns,

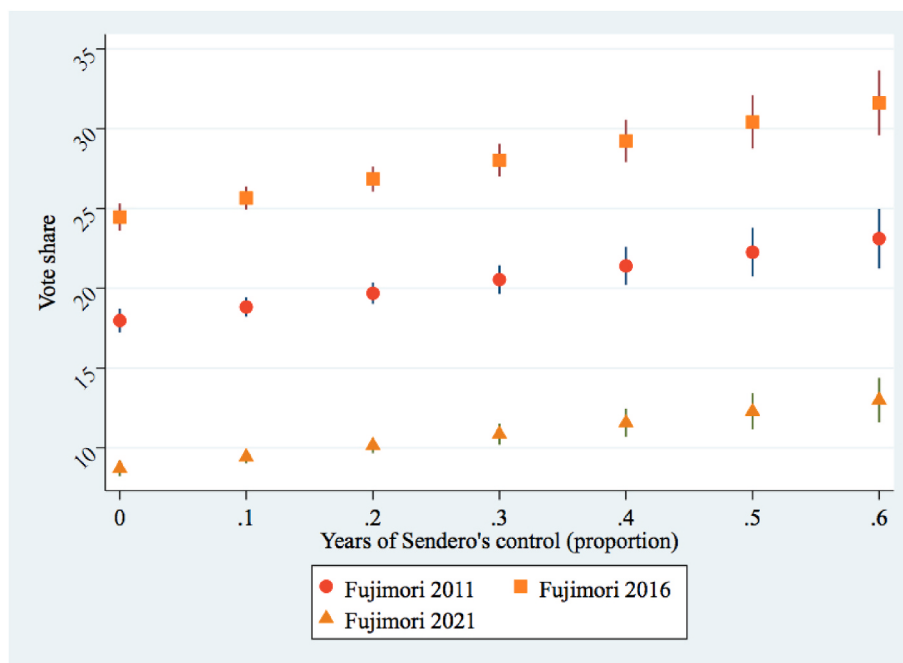


Fig. 2. The impact of Sendero's control over Keiko Fujimori's vote share in the Andean departments (first-round elections, 2011–2021).

it remains debatable through which mechanisms this legacy operates. Several authors have claimed that Alberto Fujimori strategically invested during the 1990s in towns heavily affected by the war (Soifer and Vieira, 2019; Kreiman 2021). The successful provision of public goods in war-torn districts may have cemented a loyal constituency willing to endorse the Fujimori candidacies due to his economic performance. Alternatively, one could argue that victimization patterns typically persist longer than clientelistic networks, especially when the political benefactor no longer holds positions of power (Hicken 2011).

It is difficult to adjudicate this debate without survey data that asks voters about their motivations for supporting postwar leaders. Nevertheless, I can perform a mediation analysis (Imai et al. 2011) to estimate whether the legacies of the civil war operate through the provision of public goods carried out during Fujimori's administrations. I use the increase in the percentage of district residents with access to electricity from 1993 to 2007 as a measure of the provision of (clientelistic) public goods (data from Kreiman 2021). Tables 13A–15A report the Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME) of civil war dynamics on support for Fujimori through the growth in electricity access. Regardless of the election year and the treatment, the ACMEs are negligible. These results do not automatically validate the victimization causal path but are consistent with it.

7. Civil war legacies versus short-term contemporary factors

Thus far, we have observed that civil war dynamics exert a significant influence on electoral outcomes over time. Now, I aim to delve deeper into the most recent electoral cycle to determine whether these civil war legacies were influenced or moderated by key structural factors that were prominent during the campaign. Specifically, I focus on two critical issues: structural poverty and the pandemic.

Firstly, I examine the interplay between rebel control, levels of poverty (as of 2018), and their combined impact on the voting results for Keiko Fujimori and Pedro Castillo in the 2021 first-round election. I use the share of district-level citizens experiencing so-called “monetary poverty” in 2018 as computed by the INEI. Secondly, I explore the shorter-term impact of COVID-19 deaths in Peru, particularly when intersecting with the presence of rebels during the civil war. Thus, I want to investigate whether poverty and the pandemic have altered the relationship between conflict legacies and left-wing voting patterns. My focus is primarily on the Andean regions (North and South) for two reasons: Castillo solidified his lead in these areas, and they were also the most affected by the war, as previously mentioned. For a more comprehensive overview, Table 16A in the Online Appendix presents the full results for all districts.

It has been noted that Fujimori benefited from the legacy of civil war violence. Concurrently, levels of monetary poverty have been identified as a strong predictor of left-wing voting. Table 4 illustrates that the interaction of these factors has divergent effects for each candidate: it is negative for Castillo and positive for Fujimori, indicating mitigating influences across the ideological spectrum.

To visualize these interactions, I used contour plots (with darker shades indicating better results for the candidates). These plots are recommended to visualize interactions between continuous variables as well as non-linearities in the data. Fig. 3 reveals that Keiko Fujimori achieved her strongest support in Andean districts characterized by significant Sendero presence and high levels of poverty. On the other side of the spectrum, districts with a large share of citizens in need tended to vote less for Fujimori, especially in areas with less intense rebel control. In this sense, it seems that Fujimori was able to attract poor voters specially in districts heavily affected by the conflict.

For Castillo, the interaction term reinforces the positive association between rebel control, poverty, and his electoral support, as detailed in Fig. 9A in the Online Appendix.

Models 3 and 4 in Table 4 explore the pandemic's mediating role between the legacies of the civil war and the electoral outcomes in 2021.

Table 4

Regression models of voting for Keiko Fujimori and Pedro Castillo with interactions, only Andean regions.

	Citizens in poverty in 2018		COVID 19 death rate	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Fujimori 2021	Castillo 2021	Fujimori 2021	Castillo 2021
Difference in killings	0.05* (2.00)	−0.05+ (−1.85)	0.05* (2.09)	−0.06* (−2.18)
Spanish speakers	0.12** (17.26)	−0.19** (−14.92)	0.12** (16.09)	−0.17** (−11.56)
Share of citizens in poverty in 2018	−0.14** (−9.09)	0.63** (16.25)		
Covid deaths			0.01** (3.86)	−0.05** (−7.68)
Full control	−0.83 (−0.21)	31.04** (4.13)	6.61** (4.17)	−4.51 (−1.24)
Poverty*control	0.17+ (1.86)	−0.69** (−4.10)		
Covid*control			−0.01 (−0.51)	0.06** (2.75)
Contested control	4.06** (3.84)	6.16** (2.87)	3.12** (2.91)	9.83** (4.43)
Peasant community	1.71** (2.61)	1.22 (0.96)	1.47* (2.11)	2.28 (1.50)
Population (ln)	−1.21** (−5.29)	2.09** (4.28)	−1.38** (−5.65)	2.86** (4.75)
Land reform	0.58 (0.50)	−1.70 (−0.73)	1.51 (1.31)	−5.65* (−2.31)
Provincial capitals	−3.83** (−3.81)	1.96 (0.93)	−3.67** (−3.53)	2.20 (0.91)
Distance to capital	0.02 (0.79)	−0.06 (−1.39)	0.00 (0.03)	0.00 (0.11)
District size	0.84** (3.92)	−0.57 (−1.30)	0.77** (3.50)	−0.33 (−0.67)
Constant	12.87** (5.82)	11.52** (2.68)	8.70** (3.83)	31.22** (5.89)
R2	0.45	0.54	0.41	0.41
p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	809	809	809	809

t statistics in parentheses; + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

The findings show that Castillo's performance was weaker in Andean districts with minimal rebel presence and high COVID-19-related death rates. However, in districts where Sendero had a significant presence, higher rates of COVID-19 fatalities paradoxically translated into increased electoral support for Castillo (see Fig. 4). In contrast, the interaction term for Fujimori is not statistically significant, indicating that the combined effects of COVID-19 and civil war legacies did not significantly alter her voting patterns.

Unlike his predecessors Humala and Mendoza, Castillo successfully capitalized on the historical narrative of marginalization in the Andean region, offsetting the adverse effects of war on left-wing voting. The observation that high COVID-19 fatality rates mitigated the negative impact of civil war dynamics on Castillo's vote share suggests that the interpretation of conflict legacies needs to be read through current events. The election of a left-wing candidate like Castillo, with strong ideological commitments, could potentially diminish the influence of the conflict legacy in Peru. His short tenure, on the other hand, may support its resilience.

8. Conclusions

The existing literature on the effects of past violence on contemporary outcomes presents a fragmented view regarding the persistence of legacies. In this article, I propose a typology to understand the impact of civil wars on electoral results, focusing on a specific yet underexplored scenario: the victory of incumbent successor parties in contexts where rebels were responsible for a large share of violence. I argue that these

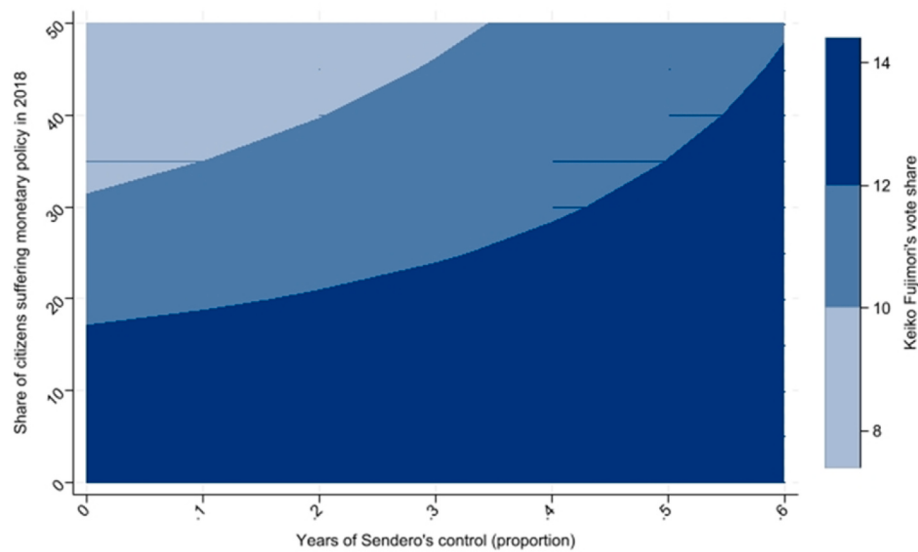


Fig. 3. Contour plot including the interaction term of monetary poverty in 2018 and full control for Keiko's vote share, Andean districts.

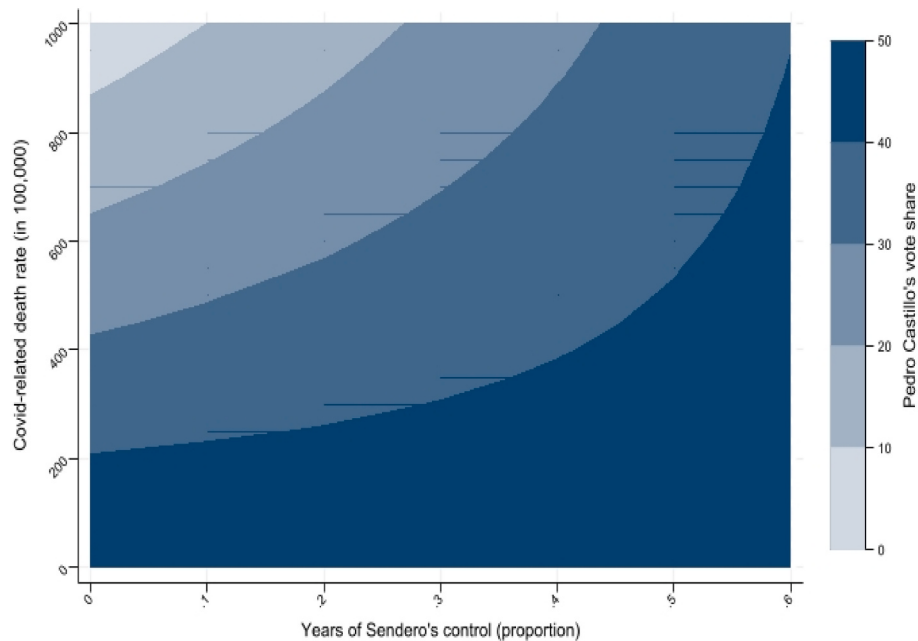


Fig. 4. Contour plot including the interaction term of COVID-19 deaths per capita and full control for Castillo's vote share, Andean districts.

successor parties benefit electorally from civil war legacies due to patterns of victimization. Conversely, parties ideologically aligned with the rebels suffer from the stigma of this association, especially if the rebels failed to offset their violence with the provision of public goods.

This theoretical framework is tested using electoral data from Peru, a country characterized by a fragile party system. This weakness stems partly from its institutional structure, featuring an atomized Congress and a non-reelectable presidency, and is further exacerbated by the enduring influence of Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian rule, as perpetuated by his daughter's political movement.

The findings reveal two key insights. Firstly, civil-war victimization influences electoral outcomes, with districts more heavily affected by Sendero's violence than state repression showing a tendency to favour Fujimori over left-wing candidates. However, this legacy seems to be waning, a trend also observed in other conflicts in the region (Gillooly 2022) and perhaps related to the decreasing political clout of the age

cohorts with direct experience of the conflict (Maldonado et al. 2019). In the 2021 election, Pedro Castillo successfully lessened the left-wing electoral penalty in poorer districts and those heavily impacted by the pandemic. The pattern of protests following Castillo's removal from office closely mirrors these electoral dynamics.

As Peruvian politics remains in a state of flux following Alberto Fujimori's release from prison and the ongoing deliberations in Congress about a snap election, Keiko Fujimori may well capitalize on this opportunity for a final bid to reinstate her family's political influence. This scenario is not unique and aligns with a broader global trend where political dynasties, anchored in civil war legacies, gain prominence.

For instance, in Cambodia, Hun Manet's ascent to power, riding on the coattails of his father Hun Sen, is tied to Sen's popularity stemming from his role in defeating the Khmer Rouge and stabilizing Cambodia, despite his authoritarian tendencies (Loughlin 2023). Similarly, in the Philippines, the recent electoral victory of Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

resurrected a dynasty that was overthrown in 1986. After assuming office, Marcos Jr. defended the human rights violations during his father's regime, citing the necessity of such measures to combat the Communist and southern Separatist insurgencies (Dulay et al., 2023). In Angola, following the death of long-term president Jose Eduardo dos Santos, his highly influential children faced removal from public positions and criminal charges. However, it's conceivable that they could leverage their father's legacy as the leader who ended a protracted war to carve out successful electoral careers in the future.

In a world where democratic checks and balances are increasingly under threat and public confidence in democratic systems is diminishing (V-Dem Institute 2023), the rise of political dynasties linked to civil war legacies poses a significant concern. Their growing appeal could signal troubling times ahead for democratic governance.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Luis De la Calle: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

Data will be available on my website

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2024.102827>.

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