Dominance and Dissent:
Party Influence and Social Unrest in South Africa[*]

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This version: January 30, 2024

Abstract

Social unrest and weak electoral competition are common in many developing countries, but how dominant parties respond to discontent is not well understood. This paper examines how electing dominant party representatives affects social unrest in South Africa. The African National Congress (ANC) has held a hegemonic position in South African politics since the end of apartheid but has faced frequent criticism for poor service delivery and allegations of corruption and government malpractice. Using georeferenced data on riots and protests and a regression discontinuity design, I show that areas controlled by the ANC have significantly lower levels of violent social unrest compared to opposition-controlled areas with similar characteristics. Furthermore, by combining multiple data sources, this paper offers insights into how stronger accountability measures and public policy interact in shaping social unrest in a dominant party setting.

Keywords: Accountability; African National Congress; Social Unrest; South Africa
JEL Classification: D72; D74; O1

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1 Introduction

Social unrest and civil conflict are pervasive issues in many countries and are particularly prevalent in young democracies. Apart from societal destruction and loss of lives, incidents of unrest and civil conflict are associated with higher levels of corruption (Mauro, 1995), lower quality of government (La Porta et al., 1999), and poverty (Easterly and Levine, 1997). At the same time, many developing countries are ruled by *dominant parties* – political parties that maintain substantial electoral support for a sustained amount of time. In Sub-Saharan Africa, dominant parties rule in a majority of countries (see, e.g., Bogaards, 2004; Lindberg and Jones, 2010), but the extent to which government officials representing these parties respond to electoral incentives and address salient voter discontent is an important question that remains unclear.

In this paper, I study whether electing dominant party representatives affects the likelihood of riot and protest outbreaks in South Africa, which has been informally dubbed "the protest capital of the world."[1] Since 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) has held a hegemonic position in South African politics. While the end of apartheid led to the liberation of black Africans, established universal voting rights, and reduced inequalities, the party has been criticized for poor service delivery, corruption, and malfeasance. Economic inequality is among the highest in the world, and the public debate in South Africa suggests that many citizens are not content with the government's provision of public services and economic opportunities. This attitude has frequently been manifested through widespread unrest that often has had violent outcomes.

The municipal governments are primarily responsible for the provision of basic service delivery, and the ANC regularly receives the majority of the votes in local elections. This raises an important question: Why are social unrest levels so high but not reflected in more fragmented election outcomes? And do local ANC leaders respond to voter discontent and influence social unrest levels? A better understanding of how ruling parties manage discontent in the presence of weak electoral competition and how this shapes local policy is important for addressing societal division and raising people's standard of living. To shed light on these questions, I use georeferenced data on approximately 14,000 riot and protest events from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) dataset (Raleigh et al., 2010) in the post-apartheid period (1997–2021) combined with data on the outcomes of the local elections held in 2000, 2006, 2011, and 2016 across approximately 4,000 wards.

Specifically, I focus on the role of ward councilors – local government representatives elected every five years in a single-member, first-past-the-post system by the residents in each respective ward. In addition to serving on the municipal council, ward councilors are

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[1]See, for instance, Odendaal (2016) and Bianco (2020). Between 2000 and 2020, South Africa experienced more than 5,000 riots, corresponding to almost 25% of the total number of recorded riots in Africa during the same period.

responsible for communicating municipal policy to citizens and being their voice in matters of public interest. At the start of their term, councilors form committees consisting of community members and stakeholders to involve citizens in community concerns and the locality's development. Thus, ward councilors of different political parties can theoretically affect local levels of social unrest by influencing the provision of government services or by communicating the ward's prospects for raising the welfare of its citizens.

To analyze the effect of electing ANC councilors on social unrest, I spatially link riot and protest incidents to the electoral wards. However, an empirical challenge arises since confounding factors at the ward level might influence ward residents' propensity to publicly voice discontent and, simultaneously, the election outcome of the ward. I use a close-election regression discontinuity (RD) design to overcome this challenge. Specifically, I compare social unrest incidents for wards in which the ANC just barely won the election to unrest incidents for wards in which the ANC just barely lost the election. Since wards just below the victory threshold serve as a valid counterfactual to wards just above the victory threshold, the RD design identifies the causal effect of local-level ANC representation on social unrest.

I find that the prevalence of social unrest is significantly lower in wards controlled by the ANC. This effect is almost entirely driven by riots – the more violent measure of social unrest – and not by protests. Wards represented by ANC councilors are estimated to be 7 percentage points less likely to experience a riot than non-ANC wards. Relative to the average probability of a riot occurring in the control group (approximately 12%), riots are 60% less likely to occur in ANC-controlled wards. In addition, I find that (i) the effects are particularly strong for riots related to poor service delivery, (ii) the riots are significantly less likely to turn violent, as measured by police involvement and death incidents, in areas controlled by the ANC, and (iii) the effects are not instantaneous, but rather accumulate by the number of years the councilor stays in power.[2]

Although the results show that the ANC causes lower social unrest at the local level, this does not necessarily mean that the national effect of the ANC on social unrest is negative. The results may also reflect a strategic displacement of violent unrest to non-ANC-controlled wards. For instance, one possible mechanism is that the ANC penalizes wards controlled by representatives from the opposition to harm their future reelection prospects (Brollo and Nannicini, 2012). Another possible mechanism is that opposition ward councilors are less interested in defending poor service delivery in ANC-controlled municipalities. To conceptualize this interpretation, I argue that two types of mechanisms can theoretically rationalize the results: (i) centralized responses (e.g., that different types of directives or benefits flow between the upper levels of government and the local

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[2]I interpret the estimated treatment effects as a combination of a pure *party effect* – ANC representation – and an *alignment effect* occurring since the ANC leads the national government and most provincial governments throughout the sample period. However, it is not possible to empirically distinguish these two effects with the available data.

governments) and (ii) localized responses (e.g., that ANC ward councilors do a better job of managing discontent among its residents).

I then combine data from multiple sources and higher levels of governance to empirically assess the mechanisms. The analysis shows that the lower incidence of riots is driven by a combination of centralized and localized factors. Specifically, I find that the effect is more pronounced in municipalities where the ANC holds a plurality or majority of the council seats – and thus has a strong influence over the municipal budget – and in municipalities where there are fewer irregularities in municipal spending, which is a proxy for better management practices and lower corruption. Using five waves of survey data from the Afrobarometer, I also find suggestive evidence that ward residents are generally more appreciative of their councilors in ANC-controlled wards than in non-ANC-controlled wards. Citizens perceive that local-level ANC representatives do a better job than opposition party representatives in performing their duties and listening to people's needs.[3] Finally, I study the role of a Community Work Programme (CWP) launched by the South African government in 2008 and show that the effects of party representation on social unrest are markedly weaker in areas where the program is active. Thus, the program counteracts idle individuals' propensity to riot in areas controlled by the opposition.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that dominant parties indeed respond to electoral incentives and may use their power to lower social unrest at the local level under a set of accountability conditions.[4] [5] The question of to what extent these outbursts of social unrest are displaced or dissipated requires more data and marks a limitation of this study.

This paper primarily contributes to the literature on the relationship between political outcomes and social unrest. Most previous studies have focused on the opposite relationship, i.e., whether riots and protests lead to political change. For instance, it has been shown that violence in the Ugandan Civil War led to increased political participation in the form of voting and community leadership (Blattman, 2009); that the 1830 Swing Riots in England increased votes for pro-electoral reform politicians (Aidt and Franck, 2015); that Hindu-Muslim riots led to increased electoral support for the Hindi nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (Iyer and Shrivastava, 2018); that terrorist attacks in Israel led to increased support for right-wing parties (Berrebi and Klor, 2008); and that the size of protests predicts electoral outcomes (Madestam et al., 2013).

Less attention has been paid to whether the partisan identity of local leaders affects the likelihood of riot and protest outbreaks. In this aspect, this paper most closely relates to Nellis et al. (2016), who find that the election of Hindu nationalist politicians increases

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[3]These findings are consistent with prior evidence that alignment increases support for incumbent parties (Bracco et al., 2015).

[4]However, it should be noted that the estimation strategy allows me to draw conclusions only from the most competitive elections where the electoral dynamics may be different from cases where the ANC won or lost by a large margin.

[5]This is consistent with the findings in Wegner (2018), which show that the ANC is more likely to renominate higher-status councilors in municipalities subject to higher electoral competition.

ethnic violence among the Hindu and Muslim populations, to Eslava (2020), who finds that female mayors in Colombia reduce civil violence, and to Romarri (2020), who finds that the election of far-right mayors in Italy increases hate crimes.[6] While these studies show that elected politicians' identity is related to social unrest, my paper makes a novel contribution to the literature by studying an arguably more general reason for why people protest and riot. Many unrest incidents worldwide stem from a general discontent with the government's ability to take effective policy measures to raise people's standard of living or deal with injustices.[7] In addition, the richness of the data used in this paper makes it possible to study how political accountability and public policy interact in shaping social unrest, thus filling an important gap in the literature.[8]

The paper also relates to the literature on the political economy of South Africa. For instance, Amodio and Chiovelli (2018) study ethnic diversity within the disenfranchised majority and find that it is strongly related to incidences of violence during South Africa's democratization period after apartheid. Larreguy and de Kadt (2018) study the role of local traditional leaders in explaining ANC vote shares. Lewis (2020) focuses on party-led protests among the oppositional parties and shows that they strategically target municipal strongholds to gain votes at the expense of the ANC. de Kadt and Sands (2021) show that local segregation leads to racial voting. Most closely related to this paper, Poulsen (2015a) analyzes the impact of the ANC at the municipal level and finds that ANC control leads to reduced access to piped water and electricity and that more municipal money is spent on salaries for elected councilors and municipal employees.

Last, the paper contributes to the broader literature on the effects of political parties on economic and social outcomes (e.g., Pettersson-Lidbom, 2008; Ferreira and Gyourko, 2009; Meyersson, 2014), the literature on the effects of political alignment (e.g., Persico et al., 2011; Brollo and Nannicini, 2012; Bracco et al., 2015; Asher and Novosad, 2017), and the literature on the causes and consequences of civil conflict (e.g., Miguel et al., 2004; Blattman and Miguel, 2010; Berman and Couttenier, 2015).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of the local electoral system and the role of ward councilors, as well as the institutional details of protests and riots in South Africa. Section 3 describes the data and sample construction. Section 4 describes the empirical strategy and the identifying assumptions. Section 5 presents the main results of the paper. Section 6 discusses the mechanisms, and Section 7 shows the results from various robustness checks. Section 8 provides a discussion of the

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[6]See also Jha (2014), who studies the impact of political competition on ethnic riots in India.

[7]Interest in such questions has increased in recent years, not least since the Arab Spring in 2011 or the 2021 protests in Russia where oppositional forces raised their voice against government corruption and malpractice.

[8]This paper also contributes to the literature on the determinants of social unrest. For instance, the literature has focused on the role of economic growth (Bohlken and Sergenti, 2010); land reforms (Roy, 2012); economic reforms (Chossudovsky, 1997); individual incentives to engage in riots (DiPasquale and Glaeser, 1998); and food prices (Bellemare, 2014).

findings and concludes the paper.

2 Background

2.1 Elections, Local Government, and Ward Councilors

After apartheid, South Africa instituted three levels of government: the national, provincial, and municipal (local) levels. This paper focuses on the local level since municipal councils are responsible for local service delivery, and most prior evidence indicates that the inadequate provision of such services is the most important reason for the high levels of social unrest. Municipal councils are contested in open elections every five years. Municipalities are divided into electoral wards, of which there are roughly 4,000 in each election term (with an average of 17 wards per municipality).[9] As a general rule, half of the municipal council seats are determined by proportional representation (PR), where people vote for a party, whereas the other half is filled through the election of ward councilors that follows the first-past-the-post system (see Appendix Figure A1 for an example).[10] Each municipality is led by a mayor who is typically appointed by the party that holds the majority of the council seats. The municipal councils' primary responsibility is to pass an annual budget that mandates how to finance public services. Councils are responsible for delivering essential services to residents, such as water and electricity, sewage and sanitation management, refuse removal, firefighting services, roads, infrastructure, and transportation.

This paper focuses on the role of ward councilors. Ward councilors are members of municipal councils and are responsible for promoting participatory democracy at the local level (Smith, 2008). While the municipal councils primarily control the budget, councils can delegate any municipal duty to ward councilors who are held accountable by residents in their respective ward. According to the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), a ward councilor is "directly elected to represent and serve the people in a specific ward and is the chairperson of the ward committee" (SALGA, 2006). Furthermore, councilors are instructed to be close to the community, to keep their community residents

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[9]In the most recent census (2011), the average number of residents per ward was approximately 12,000 people.

[10]Eight metropolitan municipalities are located in the largest cities in South Africa. They have more than 500,000 voters and coordinate service delivery to the whole area. In these municipalities, half of the seats are filled through PR, and the other half are filled through the wards. Geographical areas outside the metropolitan municipalities are made up of local municipalities, of which there are approximately 230 depending on the election term. Additionally, for these municipalities, half of the council seats are allocated through the PR system, and the other half are allocated through the ward system. Local municipalities that fall within the same district are called district municipalities. While metropolitan municipalities have discretion over service delivery for the entire metropolitan area, local municipalities share this responsibility with the district municipalities. For further details, see https://www.etu.org.za/toolbox/docs/localgov/webundrstdlocgov.html.

informed about council decisions, to give feedback on community questions and concerns regarding the council, to promote public involvement, to be open and transparent in their activities, and to adhere to the code of conduct. Thus, ward councilors act as frontline government representatives in charge of understanding the area's issues and monitoring development processes and service delivery.

2.2 Social Unrest in South Africa

In recent years, there have been several reports of violent protests and riots in South Africa. For instance, Saba and Van der Merwe (2013) note that over 3,000 service delivery protests occurred between 2008 and 2013. While the end of apartheid led to the liberation of black Africans, the creation of a democratic constitution, and free elections, GDP growth rates have remained relatively low (Zuern, 2013). Aggregate incomes have risen over time, but the trend is highly skewed toward the rich and, in particular, toward the white population.

The British colonial era during the 19th and 20th centuries resettled racial groups in response to disease epidemics in overcrowded neighborhoods (Findley and Ogbu, 2011). Eventually, this segregation was formalized by the Natives Land Act of 1913, which prescribed that 90% of South African land should be reserved for a tiny minority of the white population. The act has had ramifications for South Africa in modern times. For instance, Allan and Heese (2013) found that most protests occur in informal settlements in the largest metropolitan municipalities. At the same time, these geographical areas experience high population growth rates, which are predominantly driven by increased migration to cities (Molefe and Overton-de Klerk, 2019). Migrants typically experience a lack of access to economic opportunities, housing, and services. As Allan and Heese (2013) write: "The rapid growth of informal settlements as well as metros' unwillingness to accept them as a permanent reality in their midst has meant a slow response to the service delivery needs of communities in these areas." As a result, residents are frustrated by the lack of visible progress.

The causes of social unrest in South Africa are generally attributed to the inadequate provision of basic services. In particular, protests are seen as a result of discontent among the public about access to water, electricity, economic development, housing, and infrastructure. However, a competing narrative concerns the (lack of) communication between ward councilors and the people. For instance, Molefe and Overton-de Klerk (2019) conducted an interview study in which they surveyed residents in Sebokeng, a township particularly prone to violent service delivery protests. Their findings indicate that ward councilors are perceived as not visible enough to community members. Residents feel unheard, forgotten, and disengaged in the development of their community due to ward councilors' lack of communication, resulting in rumors of favoritism and corruption that

may exacerbate social unrest.

2.3   South African Politics

Since 1994, the ANC has led the national government and has continuously pledged to raise growth rates and reduce inequality. While the ANC's rise to power occurred through substantial popular support, its complete dominance has raised the question of whether the political landscape is too concentrated around a few political parties and sheds doubt on the ANC's willingness to adopt opposing political views (Herbst, 2005).

Atkinson (2007) argues that much of citizens' discontent is centered around the ANC. For instance, she notes that ANC representatives who perform poorly in office may be redeployed to other government positions due to the party's broad control over various government levels. In addition, almost half of ANC branches are seasonal, meaning that councils do not meet regularly, and there is a tendency for ANC councilors to move to middle-class suburbs rather than live in the poverty-stricken areas they represent (Atkinson, 2007). Despite the problems surrounding the ANC, the party regularly receives overwhelming support in local elections. This support is partly due to a genuine appreciation of the party's performance and partly because dissatisfied voters do not see a legitimate alternative among the existing opposition parties (Mattes and Piombo, 2001).

The main opposition party is the centrist Democratic Alliance (DA). The DA received 22% of the votes in 2000, 14.8% in 2006, 24% in 2011, and 25% in 2016. In recent years, the DA has criticized the ruling ANC for its approach to governance. The former party leader, Helen Zille, argued that the DA is an alternative to the ANC's "closed, crony society for some" which formed the party's platform in the 2009 general election. On the other hand, the ANC has often based its criticism of the DA on racial stereotypes.[11] The tension between black Africans and the white population from the apartheid system frequently affects the competition between the DA and the ANC by concealing the differences between the two political platforms. While the DA typically contests local office across the entire country, its largest support is found in the Western Cape and, particularly, in Cape Town.

The third-largest party is the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The IFP received 9.1% of the votes in 2000, 8.1% in 2006, 5.2% in 2006, and 4.7% in 2016. The IFP's primary source of support is found in the former homeland areas (*Bantustans*) in KwaZulu-Natal. Their political agenda has often been described as populist, Zulu-nationalistic, and anti-communist. The relationship between the ANC and the IFP is tense, and their salient differences even resulted in outright conflict during the apartheid period. This tension stems from the later years of apartheid in which the two parties had conflicting views on

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[11]For instance, former president Jacob Zuma mentioned the DA's "white character" in the run-up to the 2009 general election to cast doubt on the DA's proclaimed openness to all citizens.

how to bring down the white-led regime. Today, the tension between the ANC and the IFP remains and primarily stems from the IFP's agenda of preventing a one-party state.[12]

3 Data

3.1 Riot and Protest Data

I use riot and protest data from the ACLED database (Raleigh et al., 2010).[13] The database contains georeferenced information on a range of violent incidents across the African continent. ACLED assembles conflict events from various news articles, reports, local media, humanitarian agencies, and civilians and covers the period 1997–2021.

The unit of observation in ACLED is an event. Events are classified as battles, violence against civilians, protests, riots, explosions, or strategic developments (e.g., recruitment, looting, and arrests).[14] I use riots and protests as the primary measures of social unrest.[15] For each event, I observe its geographical coordinates, its severity (measured as deaths), and the groups of actors who participated in the event.[16] To operationalize these data to my setting, I calculate the total number of riots and protests for each ward and election term. In addition, I use information about the types of events to investigate heterogeneous responses.

Figure 1 shows the total number of riots and protests between 2000 and 2020. In the years following the end of apartheid, the total number of events is low. This is likely not because of few actual incidences but because reporting was not as complete (Poulsen,

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[12]The DA and the IFP represent approximately 62% and 31%, respectively, of the non-ANC controlled wards. The remaining non-ANC wards are controlled by smaller parties, such as the National Freedom Party, African Christian Democratic Party, Pan Africanist Congress, the United Democratic Movement, and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Since 2013, the EFF has received much popular support and even overtook the IFP's place as the third-largest party in local elections. The party's rising popularity is noteworthy in the context of my study since it was founded by the expelled former president of the ANC Youth League – Julius Malema – and his allies. The EFF has been described as a populist anti-establishment party, and its supporters have been responsible for an increasing number of politically motivated protests and riots. For example, EFF supporters clashed with the police in an attempt to storm the Gauteng legislature and threw rocks during a speech by President Zuma in Sharpville (ACLED, 2014). However, it should be noted that the rise of the EFF cannot be the sole driver of my results since the party only became active in the last election term of my analysis period (2016).

[13]See, for example, Besley and Reynal-Querol (2014), Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016), Harari and La Ferrara (2018), and Axbard et al. (2021) for other recent contributions using the ACLED database.

[14]Each event is further divided into different subtypes of events. For instance, riots are divided into mob violence and violent demonstrations, and protests are divided into peaceful protests, protests with interventions, and protests involving excessive force against protesters.

[15]A riot is defined as a violent event where demonstrators or mobs engage in disruptive acts, such as destroying property or throwing rocks. Rioters may target other individuals, property, businesses, other rioting groups, or armed actors. Contrary to armed groups, however, rioters do not use sophisticated weapons. Rioters may begin as peaceful protesters or intend to engage in violence from the beginning of their actions. On the other hand, a protest is defined as a public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, even though violence may be used against them.

[16]ACLED does not report the number of people who participated in the event.

2015b). Between 2000 and 2006, there were, on average, 20 riots and 50 protests per year. After 2006, these figures sharply increase and trend upward to approximately 300 riots and 500 protests per year. At the same time, the number of events with deadly outcomes is much lower for both riots and protests. Taken at face value, these time series suggest that there has been an increasing trend in the number of events since 2006 and that there is much temporal variation in the incidence of social unrest.
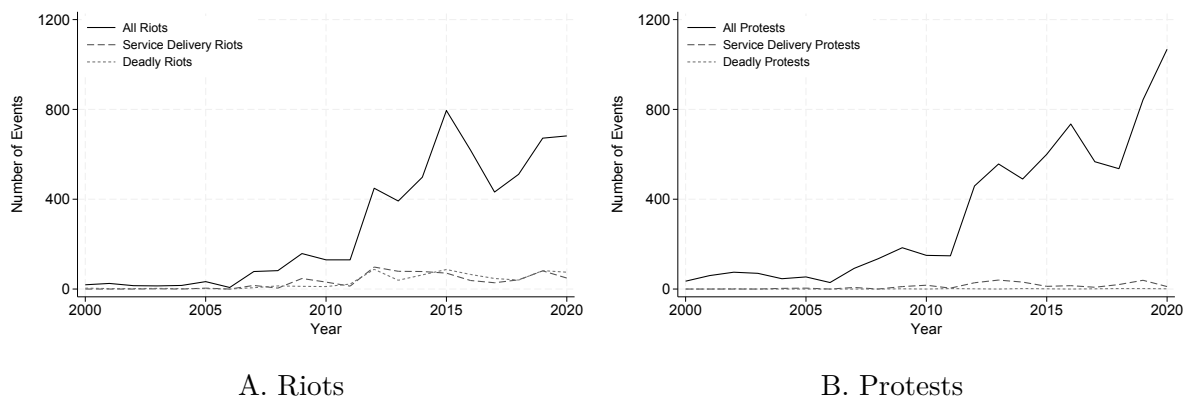

A. Riots

B. Protests

Figure 1. Riots and Protests by Year

Notes: This figure shows the yearly number of riots and protests in South Africa between 2000 and 2020. The solid lines indicate all events, the dashed lines indicate events associated with discontent with welfare services, and the short-dashed lines indicate events with at least one death incident.

To put these figures into perspective, there were a total of 25,252 riots and 51,701 protest incidents (as recorded by the ACLED) across the entire African continent between 2000 and 2020. During the same period, South Africa experienced a total of 5,757 riots and 6,933 protests. Thus, the country's share of total riots and protests in Africa amounts to approximately 23% and 13%, respectively.

Appendix Figure A2 further shows the distribution of events across South Africa's nine provinces and illustrates that the events are geographically heterogeneous. Specifically, Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Western Cape account for approximately 84% of all events.

3.2 Electoral Data

Electoral wards in South Africa are contested every five years.[17] As described in Section 2, local elections are determined by a hybrid representation system in which seats in a municipal council are filled through a first-past-the-post (ward) system and a proportional representation (PR) system. This study focuses exclusively on council seats determined by the first-past-the-post system.

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[17]It should be noted that while individual councilors contest the wards, the political system in South Africa is primarily party-centric: people vote for parties rather than individuals on the ballots (Piper, 2012).

To investigate the relationship between ANC representation and social unrest, I use election statistics from four post-apartheid local elections (2000, 2006, 2011, and 2016) from the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC). These data include electoral outcomes at the voting district level, which are subsets of wards. I extract information about voter turnout, vote eligibility, and the number of votes cast for each party at the voting district level. I aggregate the voting outcomes to the ward level and rank parties based on their vote shares.[18] Since the election of ward councilors follows the first-past-the-post system, this ranking gives the winning party in each ward and its vote share relative to opposing parties. For each ward, I keep the two top-ranking candidates (the winner and the runner-up) to construct the running variable in the RD analysis: the vote share difference between the ANC and the opponent party. It should be noted that this approach implies that the analysis sample is restricted to wards in which the ANC chose to stand for election.[19]

Not only does the ANC regularly run in the majority of wards – the party also tends to receive overwhelming voter support. Figure 2 shows that ANC's vote shares at the ward level are highly skewed, with much of the density falling above 60% of the votes. While this is not a problem for the empirical strategy – which focuses on marginal victories and losses – it illustrates the sheer dominance held by the party in local elections.
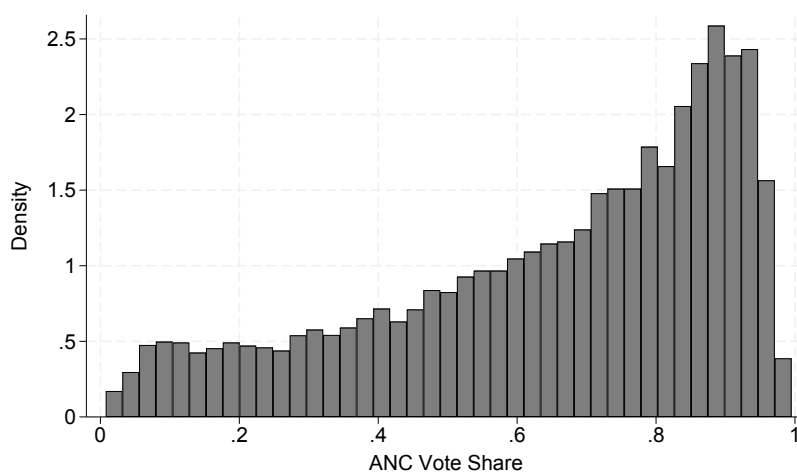

Figure 2. Ward-level ANC Vote Shares

Notes: This figure shows the distribution of the ANC's vote share at the ward level across all elections in the sample (2000, 2006, 2011, and 2016).

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[18]In 61 cases (18 in 2000, 15 in 2006, 19 in 2011, and 9 in 2016), I am unable to determine the ranking since the reported vote shares are identical between candidates. This is likely due to misreporting in the data. However, the inclusion of these observations does not change the result.

[19]This sample restriction does not impose any substantial selection issues given the ANC's dominant position. In 2000, the ANC contested 3,721 out of 3,754 wards; in 2006, the ANC contested 3,882 out of 3,895 wards; in 2011, the ANC contested 4,269 out of 4,277 wards; and in 2016, the ANC contested 4,373 out of 4,392 wards.

3.3 Sample Construction and Descriptive Statistics

To match riots and protests with the electoral outcomes, I use the coordinates from the ACLED events and spatially map the events to ward boundaries. Ward boundary coordinates for each election are retrieved from the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB). Appendix Figure A3 shows the spatial distribution of social unrest events across wards using the 2011 boundaries. Riots and protests are distributed across the country – but there are clusters of events around larger cities such as Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Pretoria. There is also much overlap in the spatial distribution of the two types of unrest events.

Appendix Table B1 reports descriptive statistics for the analysis sample, which consists of 15,548 ward-term observations.[20] Panel A reports key statistics for the unrest incident variables. First, the unconditional probability of observing at least one riot or protest in a given ward and election term is about 11%. Second, conditional on observing an event, the average number of riots and protests is between 4 and 6. In most wards, no event occurred within the entire sample period (2000–2021). Additionally, the number of deadly outcomes for riots is, on average, much larger than for protests, and the frequency of service delivery riots is larger than service delivery protests.[21]

Panel B reports summary statistics for key electoral variables. As suggested by the previous discussion, the average likelihood that an ANC councilor wins a ward is almost 80% across the sample period. This finding is further reflected by the fact that the average of the ANC's margin of victory – the running variable in the RD analysis – is almost 0.40 (the range of this variable is between -1 and 1). The average number of total votes cast for parties in ward elections is approximately 2,900, but the smallest value is only 55. Ward election turnout averages to approximately 53%. Approximately 12% of the wards are represented by an incumbent candidate.

Panel C reports summary statistics for the geographical variables used in the analysis. Approximately 19.5% of the sample belongs to the eastern province KwaZulu-Natal (the highest share of wards), whereas approximately 5% of the sample belongs to the Northern Cape (the lowest share of wards).

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[20]Wards are redrawn every election to account for changes in the electorate. Thus, the dataset is a repeated cross-section of wards across election terms. There does not exist any publicly available crosswalk to map ward delimitation over time. However, since the identifying variation comes from comparing wards where the ANC barely won to wards where the ANC barely lost, the analysis does not require a consistent mapping of wards across time.

[21]Service delivery riots and protests are constructed using the free text provided by the ACLED about each event. Specifically, these are riots and protests that explicitly mention service delivery as a reason for the event.

4 Empirical Strategy

4.1 Estimation Framework

This paper's main objective is to quantify the impact of ANC ward representation on riot and protest outbreaks. One methodological challenge is that the election outcomes are not random. For instance, there might be unobserved characteristics of ANC councilors that can affect both the electoral outcome and the prevalence of social unrest. Moreover, observed and unobserved local factors may simultaneously affect voters' preferences and outbreaks of unrest. Such confounding factors make it difficult to establish a causal relationship between ANC power and social unrest.

To handle these concerns, I utilize the fact that political power at the ward level is determined by the first-past-the-post system and leverage a regression discontinuity design (Imbens and Lemieux, 2008; Lee, 2008; Lee and Lemieux, 2010). The RD design is an advantageous approach for studying the effects of election results on a range of different outcomes (Eggers et al., 2015). The intuition is that in close electoral races – where a party wins or loses by a narrow margin – the election outcome is as good as randomly assigned. The identifying assumption hinges on that political candidates cannot completely control their vote shares and thus take the election outcome as given. In the context of this study, the running variable for each ward w in municipality m in province p in election term t is the vote share difference between the ANC candidate and the opposing party candidate:

$$margin_{wmpt}^{ANC} = \frac{v_{wmpt}^{ANC} - v_{wmpt}^{opponent}}{v_{wmpt}^{total}}. \tag{1}$$

v_{wmpt}^{ANC} denotes the number of votes the ANC receives, $v_{wmpt}^{opponent}$ denotes the number of votes a non-ANC party receives (among the two top-ranking parties in each ward), and v_{wmpt}^{total} denotes the total number of valid votes cast in the ward. Thus, $margin_{wmpt}^{ANC}$ is positive in wards where the ANC won and negative in wards where the ANC lost. The electoral formula implies that ANC victories are a deterministic function of the running variable. Therefore, treatment is defined as a dummy variable indicating whether the ANC controls ward w at time t: $controlled_{wmpt}^{ANC} = \mathbb{1}[margin_{wmpt}^{ANC} > 0]$. I follow the recommendation by Gelman and Imbens (2019) and estimate local linear regressions within a narrow bandwidth ($\pm\varepsilon$) around the threshold[22]

$$\begin{aligned} y_{wmpt} = &\beta_0 + \beta_1 controlled_{wmpt}^{ANC} + \beta_2 margin_{wmpt}^{ANC} + \beta_3 controlled_{wmpt}^{ANC} \times margin_{wmpt}^{ANC} \\ &+ \gamma_{pt} + \theta \mathbf{X}_{wmpt} + \epsilon_{wmpt} \quad \forall margin_{wmpt}^{ANC} \in (-\varepsilon, +\varepsilon). \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

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[22]The choice of bandwidth reflects a trade-off between bias and efficiency. In the main specification, I restrict the analysis to the optimal bandwidth as proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). In Section 7, I show that the main estimates are stable for a range of alternative bandwidths.

The outcome variable, y_{wmpt}, is a measure of ward-level riots and protests. In the main specification, I define y_{wmpt} as an indicator for whether at least one event occurred in ward w and election term t. However, the results from instead defining y_{wmpt} as the total number of events, which are similar in terms of sign and statistical significance, are also provided. The specification includes the running variable and its interaction with the treatment indicator to allow for a differential relationship among winning and losing ANC candidates across the threshold.

The parameter of interest is β_1, capturing the average treatment effect of ANC representation on social unrest as the running variable approaches the threshold:

$$\beta_1 = \lim_{h \to 0^+} \mathbb{E}[y_{wmpt}|margin_{wmpt}^{ANC} = h] - \lim_{h \to 0^-} \mathbb{E}[y_{wmpt}|margin_{wmpt}^{ANC} = h], \tag{3}$$

where h denotes the values of the running variable. Since the outcomes are term-level aggregates, β_1 measures the local average difference in the number of riot and protest events between the treatment and control wards over an election term. γ_{pt} is a province-term fixed effect to partial out differential trends in social unrest across provinces, and $\mathbf{X}_{wmpt}$ denotes a vector of control variables to account for baseline differences across wards.[23] The fixed effects and control variables are not required for identifying β_1 but may improve the estimates' precision by absorbing residual variation in the outcome variable. Last, ϵ_{wmpt} is the error term. Since local policy is determined at the municipal level (the administrative level above the wards), I cluster the standard errors by municipalities.

4.2   Identifying Assumptions

The RD design provides the average treatment effect of narrow ANC victories conditional on fulfilling two main assumptions. First, it is required that ANC candidates cannot perfectly control the running variable. A violation of this assumption raises the suspicion that ANC candidates can manipulate the election outcome, which effectively would imply that ANC victories in close elections are not random. Appendix Figure A4A shows histograms of the margin of victory, indicating that sorting around the threshold does not appear to be a concern. To test for such manipulation more formally, I apply the standard RD density checks proposed by McCrary (2008). This exercise tests for a discontinuity in the running variable's density on either side of the threshold.[24] The results are shown in Appendix Figure A4B. Reassuringly, I find no evidence of bunching of observations around the threshold. The test for a discontinuity in the density at the threshold yields a p-value of 0.226, which implies that it is not possible to reject the hypothesis that the density

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[23]The control variables are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, the number of spoilt votes, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs) (using data from the harmonized DMSP-OLS/VIIRS database (Li et al., 2020)), and a lag of the dependent variable.

[24]For instance, an excessive mass of observations just above the threshold would be consistent with manipulated election results.

is continuous at the threshold. To further validate this assumption, I also implement a data-driven manipulation test based on the results from Cattaneo et al. (2018), which avoids prebinning the data and improves the power properties of the density test. This test yields a *p*-value of 0.707, corroborating the assumption that sorting is not a concern.

Second, confounding factors are assumed to vary smoothly across the threshold. This assumption effectively means that wards just above the threshold (*treated wards*) and wards just below the threshold (*control wards*) are comparable on observable and unobservable characteristics. For instance, one concern may be that treated wards experienced changes in riots and protests before the election of an ANC councilor. The continuity assumption cannot be formally tested since the counterfactual outcome is unobservable, but it is possible to validate the assumption's plausibility by investigating discontinuities in predetermined factors.

Table 1 shows the results of this test. The table shows averages of the covariates and the number of observations across treatment and control wards as well as the results from estimating Equation (2) using these baseline variables as outcomes.[25] I find no statistically significant discontinuity in any baseline covariate. In particular, the fact that there is an effect on y_{wmpt} but not on y_{wmpt-1} is strong evidence in support of the validity of the RD design since there is serial correlation in the outcome variable (Lee and Lemieux, 2010).[26] In Appendix Figures A5 and A6, I graphically replicate these results and show that there is no visual discontinuity in any of these variables at the threshold. The absence of a discontinuity in the baseline characteristics at the relevant threshold across all these tests lends credibility to the identification assumption that ANC victories in close elections are as good as randomly assigned.

External Validity   The RD design estimates an average treatment effect that is representative of approximately 11% (1,702) of the wards that experience close elections. However, it should be noted that close elections are not a permanent feature of wards. Out of all wards that experience a close election in one election cycle, only 13% do so in the subsequent election. This finding suggests that the effect of ward-level ANC representation is not some time-invariant characteristic of the wards that indeed experience a close election. Moreover, close elections are distributed across the country (see Appendix Figure A7). While the figure indicates some geographical clustering of the election outcomes, the same wards rarely remain close over time. These results provide some generalizability to the main effects, but it should be stressed that the findings presented in the paper are primarily representative of wards that indeed experience close elections. Thus, any extrapolation beyond this sample should be interpreted with caution.

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[25]To be consistent with the main specification, these regressions are restricted to cases in which $|margin_{wmpt}^{ANC}| < 0.147$ (the optimal bandwidth in the main specification).

[26]The serial correlation in the riot and protest probability between two election terms is approximately 0.3 and is highly significant.

Table 1. Test for Discontinuities in Baseline Characteristics

	ANC Victory (*Treated*)		ANC Defeat (*Control*)		Continuity Test	
	Mean	Obs.	Mean	Obs.	RD Estimate	*p*-value
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Pr(Any Unrest) (t-1)	0.048	922	0.044	780	−0.007	0.695
Pr(Any Riot) (t-1)	0.029	922	0.029	780	−0.015	0.311
Pr(Any Protest) (t-1)	0.028	922	0.024	780	−0.007	0.667
Incumbent	0.078	922	0.127	780	−0.025	0.410
Log Electorate	8.327	922	8.394	780	−0.040	0.727
No. of Parties	6.157	922	6.385	780	−0.211	0.781
Turnout	0.551	922	0.554	780	−0.014	0.258
Spoilt Votes	48.268	922	48.303	780	−5.507	0.472
Log Ward Area	4.058	922	4.072	780	0.088	0.744
Log Nightlights (t-1)	5.928	922	6.144	780	0.036	0.852
Eastern Cape	0.131	922	0.087	780	0.041	0.349
Free State	0.056	922	0.036	780	0.008	0.744
Gauteng	0.073	922	0.096	780	−0.006	0.896
KwaZulu-Natal	0.333	922	0.377	780	−0.012	0.894
Limpopo	0.073	922	0.050	780	−0.009	0.783
Mpumlanga	0.040	922	0.041	780	0.004	0.868
North West	0.057	922	0.051	780	0.001	0.985
Northen Cape	0.093	922	0.071	780	−0.014	0.680
Western Cape	0.143	922	0.191	780	−0.013	0.845

Notes: This table shows descriptive statistics for wards that are not represented by an ANC ward councilor (columns (1)–(2)) and wards that are represented by an ANC councilor (columns (3)–(4)) in close elections, $|margin_{wmpt}^{ANC}| < 0.147$. Columns (5) and (6) report estimated discontinuities and *p*-values corresponding to the coefficient on $controlled_{wmpt}^{ANC}$ using the row variable as the outcome.

5   Main Results

I begin by graphically showing the relationship between social unrest and ANC representation, as is standard in RD designs (Calonico et al., 2014). Figure 3 pools all ward-term observations and plots estimated local linear regressions equivalent to Equation (2). Panel A reveals a sizeable negative jump in the probability of at least one riot or protest event around the threshold. This result implies that the probability of unrest is lower in wards where the ANC narrowly won than in wards where the ANC narrowly lost. Panels B and C suggest that this effect is almost entirely driven by riots, as the jump for protests is not as pronounced and less precisely estimated than that for riots.

To more formally gauge the magnitude and statistical significance of these effects, Table 2 shows the estimated coefficients with and without the inclusion of controls and fixed effects. Columns (1) and (2) focus on the probability of any riot. The coefficient estimate (without any controls or fixed effects) suggests that a riot or protest event is 8 percentage points less likely to occur in wards where the ANC narrowly won than in wards where the ANC narrowly lost (significant at the 1% level). This estimate changes only slightly by including controls and province-by-term fixed effects (column (2)). Columns
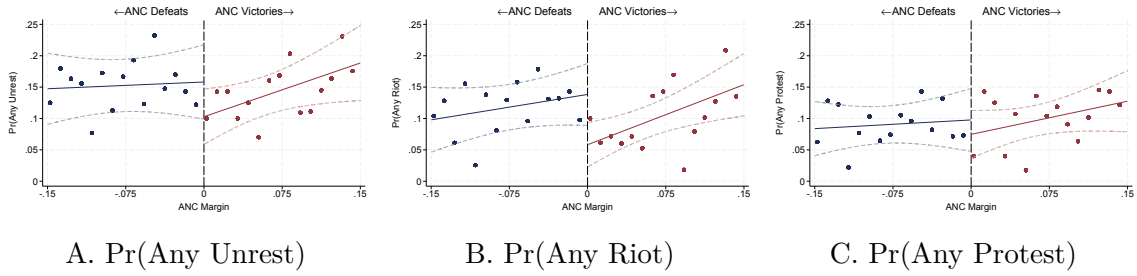
A. Pr(Any Unrest)   B. Pr(Any Riot)   C. Pr(Any Protest)

Figure 3. RD Graphs – ANC Control and Social Unrest

Notes: This figure shows the main results graphically. The vertical axis measures the probability of any unrest event (panel A), the probability of any riot (panel B), and the probability of any protest (panel C). The horizontal axis measures the running variable: ANC candidates' margin of victory. Markers represent binned averages of the running variable. Solid lines are fitted values from local linear regressions estimated separately on each side of the threshold. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. The standard errors are clustered by municipality.

(3)–(4) confirm the results of the RD graphs: the lower unrest probability is almost completely driven by riots and not protests. Thus, there is no discernible difference between ANC-controlled and non-ANC-controlled wards in terms of protest outbreaks, but the unrest events are significantly less likely to turn violent in ANC-controlled wards, suggesting that ANC control is negatively associated only with the most violent unrest incidents. Moreover, the effects on riots are large in magnitude given the mean riot probability in the control group (0.119).

Table 2. Effect of ANC Control on Riots and Protests

	Pr(Any Riot)		Pr(Any Protest)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	−0.079***	−0.076***	−0.019	−0.013
	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.031)	(0.028)
Control Group Mean	0.119	0.119	0.091	0.091
Observations	1,702	1,702	1,702	1,702
R^2	0.005	0.234	0.001	0.184
Bandwidth	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2). The outcome variable in columns (1)–(2) is a dummy variable equal to 1 if at least one riot occurred in ward w and election term t, and the outcome variable in columns (3)–(4) is a dummy variable equal to 1 if at least one protest occurred in ward w and election term t. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. Discontinuities are estimated using local linear regressions and the optimal bandwidth proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

5.1 Riot Types

The richness of the data further allows me to analyze the characteristics of the riots, which is helpful in understanding their underlying causes. To this end, I use the fact that the ACLED categorizes riots into two subcomponents: mob violence and violent demonstrations. For instance, finding an effect on mob violence but not on violent demonstrations could suggest that riots are initiated by organized mobs rather than "ordinary people." Second, the ACLED provides brief text details about each event. Previous literature suggests that riots in South Africa primarily occur because of discontent with service delivery, which is the responsibility of local governments. Thus, based on the free texts, I construct a measure of *service delivery riots* – riots explicitly initiated due to poor service delivery.

Table 3 reports the results from estimating equations similar to Equation (2) but where I replace the dummy for any riot with (i) dummy variables for the ACLED's categorization of riot components: mob violence riots and violent demonstration riots, and (ii) a dummy variable for whether the riot was deemed associated with service delivery by the reporting source. First, columns (1)–(4) indicate a slightly larger effect on mob violence than on violent demonstrations, but the estimates are not significantly different from each other. Second, columns (5)–(6) show that service delivery riots are approximately 5 percentage points less likely to occur in ANC-controlled wards. Relative to the average riot probability in the control group across these measures, the effects are largest in magnitude for service delivery riots.

Table 3. ANC Control and Riot Types

	Pr(Mob Violence)		Pr(Violent Demonstr.)		Pr(Service Delivery Riot)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ANC Controlled	−0.054***	−0.054***	−0.042	−0.038	−0.049**	−0.049**
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.022)
Control Group Mean	0.047	0.047	0.103	0.103	0.041	0.041
Observations	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505
R^2	0.005	0.162	0.001	0.229	0.005	0.081
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) for the riot components and types as defined in the text. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. Discontinuities are estimated using local linear regressions and the optimal bandwidth proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

5.2 Riot Severity

I next analyze the severity of riots to gauge whether the riot outbreaks also have less violent outcomes in ANC-controlled wards. I construct two measures of particularly violent events: (i) riots with police involvement and (ii) riots with deadly outcomes (i.e., where there was at least one death incidence). These measures are constructed using the details provided by ACLED on the total number of fatalities and whether the South African Police Force is counted as an actor in the riot. While the table shows that the effects are negative for both measures, they are more pronounced for riots with police involvement than for deadly riots. Appendix Figure A8 shows the corresponding RD graphs for these results.

Table 4. ANC Control and Riot Severity

	Pr(Police Riot)		Pr(Deadly Riot)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	−0.057**	−0.055**	−0.026*	−0.027**
	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Control Group Mean	0.061	0.061	0.028	0.028
Observations	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505
R^2	0.004	0.173	0.003	0.156
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) for the riot components and types as defined in the text. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. Discontinuities are estimated using local linear regressions and the optimal bandwidth proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p <$ 0.01, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

5.3 Timing of the Effects

Last, I examine whether the effect of electing ANC councilors varies over the election term. This is to check if the reduced riot probability is instantaneous or takes time to materialize. The result is presented graphically in Figure 4. First, the figure visually confirms that there are no significant effects *before* the election of an ANC councilor, i.e., where we would not expect an effect. Second, the figure shows that, during the election term, the effect is not instantaneous. Rather, it appears to accumulate over time. This suggests that riots begin to increase in opposition-controlled areas only a few years after the election and supports the interpretation that riots are not due to the ward councilor's party per se but rather due to the performance of the councilor over the cycle.

Together, the RD results suggest that the likelihood of violent unrest is lower in wards where the ANC barely won than in wards where it barely lost. There is no
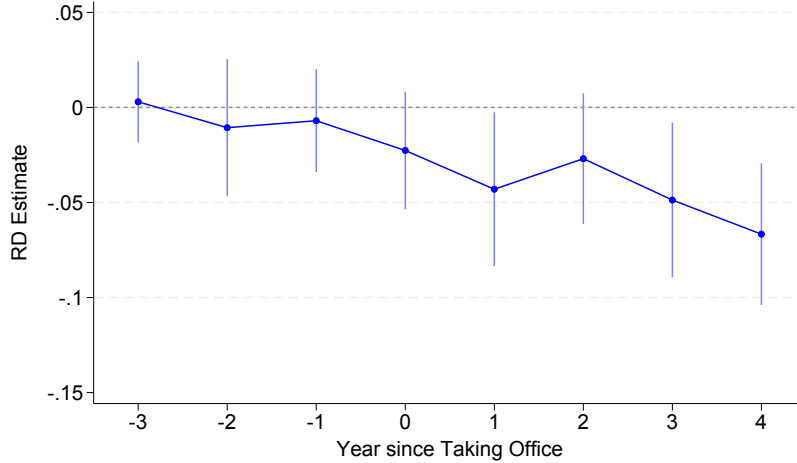
Figure 4. Effect of ANC Control on the Riot Probability by Year in Power

Notes: This figure shows RD estimates of electing an ANC councilor on the riot probability by years in an election term. Negative values on the horizontal axis denote years before the election and positive values denote years during the election term. Each marker represents an RD estimate from a separate regression. 95% confidence intervals are used for inference. Standard errors are clustered by municipality.

difference in terms of protests but a discontinuous negative jump in the likelihood of riots. Put differently; riots are more likely to occur in wards that elect a non-ANC representative. I interpret the estimated treatment effect as a combination of ANC partisanship and alignment since the ANC controls the national government and most provincial governments throughout the sample period. Since riots drive the results, the following analyses primarily focus on the riot outcomes.[27]

6 Mechanisms

This section investigates why there are fewer riots in ANC-controlled wards. Guided by the main results and previous literature, the first hypothesis is that different types of centralized responses drive the lower number of riots (e.g., ANC-controlled wards have fewer riots because they perform better due to receiving centralized benefits or directives from the upper levels of government (Brollo and Nannicini, 2012; Zuern, 2013)). The second hypothesis is that riots are lower due to more local factors (e.g., that the individual ANC ward councilors do a better job at communicating with citizens about development initiatives and managing discontent (Paradza et al., 2010; Molefe and Overton-de Klerk, 2019)).

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[27]The focus on riot outcomes also means that the optimal bandwidth slightly changes from 0.147 to 0.132. However, all results are robust to using the optimal bandwidth of 0.147.

6.1 ANC Council Power

The main results and preexisting qualitative evidence suggest that much of the social unrest in South Africa stems from people's discontent with service delivery. Thus, one potential driver of the results is the extent to which councilors can provide such services. As discussed in Section 2.1, the municipal councils – where ward councilors hold their political appointment – are the primary authority responsible for providing basic services to the municipality's citizens. The ability to streamline service delivery to wards by influencing the budget depends on how politically dominant the parties are within the council. For instance, whether the results differ in municipalities where the ANC has a relatively high share of the seats compared to municipalities where it has a relatively low share of the seats may indicate that the effects are manifested through the councilors' ability to provide government resources.[28]

To study the role of council power, I split the sample into three parts: one in which wards belong to a municipality where the ANC has a minority of the council seats, one in which the ANC has a plurality of the council seats (i.e., where the ANC's municipal seat share is higher than any other party, but below 50%), and one in which the ANC has a majority of the seats (municipal seat share above 50%).[29]
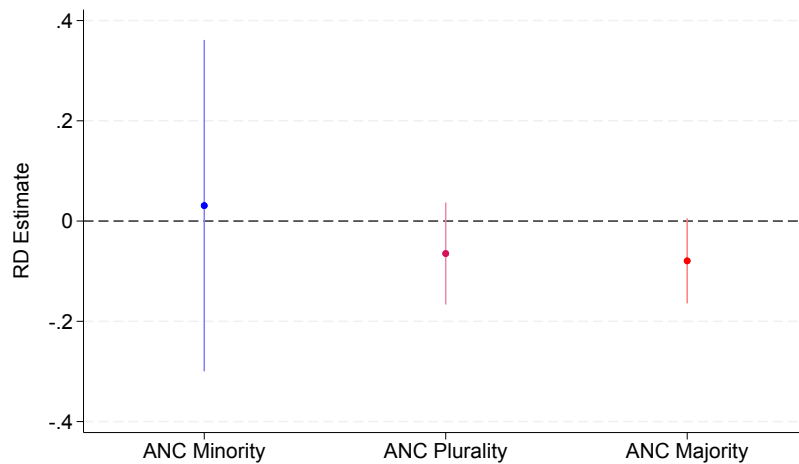

Figure 5. ANC Municipal Council Power and Riots

Notes: This figure shows RD estimates of electing an ANC councilor on the riot probability by municipal council seat shares. Each marker represents an RD estimate from a separate regression. Regressions control for baseline covariates and fixed effects. 95% confidence intervals are used for inference. Standard errors are clustered by municipality.

In Figure 5, I show the results from estimating Equation (2) for each subsample of municipal seat shares. The figure illustrates that narrow ANC victories in ANC-minority

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[28]To the best of my knowledge, data on ward-level service delivery expenditures do not exist. Hence, council power is a reduced-form approach to quantify this mechanism.

[29]However, these results should be interpreted with caution since they rely on samples selected on a potential outcome (i.e., council seat shares partially depend on ward-level election outcomes).

municipalities do not result in a negative effect on the riot probability, although the estimate is noisy due to the low number of observations. For ANC plurality and majority councils, however, where the mayoral post is likely held by an ANC representative, the effects are negative and similar to that of the main estimate. This indicates that the effect of ANC representation on riot outbreaks primarily occurs in municipalities where the ANC is either partly or fully in control of the municipal budget.

6.2   Management of Municipal Resources

Anecdotal evidence suggests that corruption and government malpractice are important drivers of people's propensity to riot and protest in South Africa. In particular, wasted government resources due to poor financial management is raised as a key cause of social unrest. Overall, the financial state of South Africa's municipalities is poor. For instance, only 38 of 257 municipalities (15%) received a clean audit score from the Auditor General in 2021.

To gauge the role of management of municipal resources in explaining the main result, I scraped data from the National Treasury of South Africa. These data contain various municipal finance statistics, such as balance sheets, public spending, and revenue. Notably, the Auditor General conducts yearly audits of the municipalities' finances. A key outcome of the audits is the extent to which municipalities engage in wasteful and unauthorized spending – two measures that proxy for mismanagement of government finances and corruption. These data exist for 2012–2019. To mitigate potential endogeneity concerns as much as possible, I use information from the earliest year possible (2012).[30] Based on the Auditor General's assessment, I split the sample into above/below median wasteful spending (measuring careless handling of municipal funds) and above/below median unauthorized spending (measuring any municipal spending that was not budgeted for or that is unrelated to the municipality's function). In this exercise, I restrict the analysis to the sample of municipalities where the ANC holds at least a plurality of council seats (85% of the observations).

Table 5 reports the estimated impacts of ANC control on riots by splitting the sample into above- and below-median levels of poor municipal finance management in 2012. Panel A uses the full sample of observations. The first column for each category reports the estimate for the above-median spending group, and the second column for each category reports the estimate for the below-median spending group. For wasteful spending, I find that the effect is much larger for the below-median spending group. For unauthorized spending, the coefficients are similar in magnitude and not significantly different from each other. In an attempt to alleviate potential endogeneity in budget irregularities, panel B

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[30]Due to municipal splits and amalgamations over time, this analysis is based on the 234 municipalities that were active in 2012.

Table 5. ANC Control, Riots, and Audits of Municipal Finances

	Dependent Variable: Pr(Any Riot)			
	Wasteful Spending		Unauthorized Spending	
	Above Median	Below Median	Above Median	Below Median
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A. Full Sample				
ANC Controlled	−0.012	−0.119**	−0.062	−0.067
	(0.049)	(0.046)	(0.060)	(0.040)
p-val: β_1(Above) = β_1(Below)	0.109	0.109	0.951	0.951
Control Group Mean	0.150	0.121	0.152	0.124
Observations	542	525	502	565
R^2	0.001	0.013	0.008	0.003
Panel B. 2016 Election Term				
ANC Controlled	−0.050	−0.283***	−0.130	−0.141
	(0.111)	(0.102)	(0.134)	(0.100)
p-val: β_1(Above) = β_1(Below)	0.115	0.115	0.049	0.049
Control Group Mean	0.232	0.246	0.241	0.237
Observations	158	140	141	157
R^2	0.018	0.038	0.032	0.016
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control on the riot probability using Equation (2) for municipalities with varying quality of municipal finance management. The outcome variable is a dummy variable equal to 1 if at least one riot occurred in ward w and election term t. Wasteful and unauthorized spending are categories from the Auditor General's report on municipal finances. Above and below median values are calculated at the municipal level (234 municipalities) using the reported values from 2012. Panel A reports estimates for the full sample. Panel B restricts the analysis to the 2016 election term. Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

reports the estimates for a sample of municipalities that is restricted to the 2016 election term and did not experience any change in municipal majority status across elections. While the number of observations is lower, the estimated differences between above- and below-median spending are more pronounced, as the coefficient of ANC victory in the below-median wasteful spending group is much larger than that in the above-median group. Taken together, these results suggest that the main effects are partly mediated through better handling of public funds.

6.3 Citizens' Perceptions

This section investigates the role of citizen's perceptions. Citizens may perceive that individual ANC ward councilors better communicate with residents or exert more effort in office, which could independently affect levels of social unrest. To empirically test this, I use georeferenced survey data from the Afrobarometer (BenYishay et al., 2017) on citizens' perceptions of ward councilors and their office. The Afrobarometer collects data on public attitudes toward democracy and the effectiveness of government in Africa.

For South Africa, there are specific questions related to the performance of elected ward councilors, which allow me to explore differences in survey responses by ANC control.

Specifically, I use data from five survey waves conducted by the Afrobarometer at various years after the end of apartheid and match respondents to electoral wards using the same procedure as for the ACLED data.[31] The compiled dataset contains 10,881 respondents across all survey waves, which are spatially matched with 1,467 wards (25% of the wards in the main sample). I make use of four questions from the Afrobarometer on citizens' perceptions of municipal councils, the ruling party, and the performance of ward councilors.

I first provide descriptive evidence. Appendix Figure A9 shows bar graphs of the share of respondents who agreed with the statements by ANC ward control. Panel A reports the survey responses to the question about trust in the municipal council. Across both the treatment and control wards, approximately 40% of respondents say they trust the council somewhat or a lot. For this question, the only distinct difference between ANC- and non-ANC-controlled wards is in the category of trusting the council a lot, for which the share of respondents in ANC-controlled wards is three percentage points more likely to agree with the statement. Panel B shows that about half of respondents trust the ruling party, and there are distinctively positive responses in wards controlled by the ANC relative to wards controlled by the opposition. Turning to the performance of individual councilors, panel C shows that the overall share of people raising approval of councilors' performance is around 40% and slightly higher in ANC-controlled wards than in non-ANC-controlled wards. Finally, panel D shows responses to the extent to which people perceive that councilors listen to them. I find that people in ANC-controlled wards are more positive across the board. Fewer people believe that their councilor never listens, and more people believe that their councilor listens sometimes, often, and always compared to non-ANC-controlled wards.

While these descriptive patterns support that citizens in ANC-controlled wards are more optimistic about their respective ward councilors, it does not account for the endogenous election of ANC councilors. To address this concern, I reestimate Equation (2) using the Afrobarometer survey responses as outcome variables. However, it should be noted that this analysis is underpowered ex-ante. Since only 25% of the wards from the full sample can be matched to survey responses in the Afrobarometer survey, the number of effective observations used in the close-election RD analysis is very low.[32] To mitigate

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[31]Waves 2 and 3 (survey years 2002 and 2006, respectively) are matched to the 2000 election term since they were completed before the 2006 elections, wave 4 (survey year 2008) is matched to the 2006 election term, and waves 5 and 6 (survey years 2011 and 2015, respectively) are matched to the 2011 election term. Unfortunately, no observations fall within the 2016 election term since there is no available survey wave after 2015.

[32]For comparability reasons, I restrict the analysis to the optimal bandwidth in the main analysis. This approach gives approximately 1,100 respondents who are spatially matched to 226 ward-by-survey-year observations, of which 120 wards are represented by an ANC councilor and 106 wards are represented by

the loss of power, I recode the survey responses to dummy variables equal to 1 for positive responses and categorical variables that include all responses in steps. In addition, the RD regressions include survey year fixed effects and control variables at the ward level.[33]

The results are presented in Figure 6. Compared to the descriptive analysis, the pattern is similar, but the coefficients are larger in magnitude. The most distinct difference between the treatment and control wards is found in the categories of councilor approval and listening rates, for which respondents in ANC-controlled wards are generally more likely to give a positive response. In summary, the RD estimates do not refute the descriptive results. A major difference is that the analysis relies on a much smaller sample of respondents, which may explain the larger and noisier coefficients. The results collectively suggest that ANC councilors perform better, at least according to citizens' perceptions.
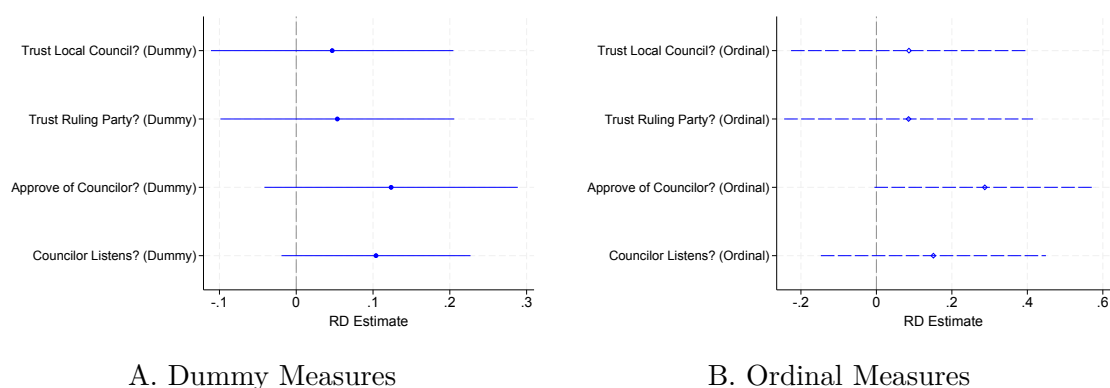

A. Dummy Measures   B. Ordinal Measures

Figure 6. RD Estimates – ANC Control and Afrobarometer Survey Response

Notes: This figure shows RD estimates of ANC control by estimating Equation (2) using the survey responses to statements about the municipal council and ward councilors from the Afrobarometer survey as outcomes. The questions are described in detail in Section 6.3. Regressions control for average respondent age, share of female respondents, share of black African respondents, share of white African respondents, and survey year fixed effects. 95% confidence intervals are used for inference. Standard errors are clustered by municipalities.

6.4   Party-Instigated Riots

While the previous results suggest that the effects of ANC control on riots are particularly pronounced in places with better-functioning local governments, they do not rule out the possibility that parties themselves instigate riots.[34] For instance, Appendix Figure A10 shows that the effects are stronger in wards where the ANC was the incumbent party, leaving the possibility that incumbent ANC councilors who lost the election may use their position to mobilize the local community against the newly elected opposition councilor to hamper their future reelection prospects.

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a non-ANC councilor.

[33]These controls are average age of respondents, share of females, share of black respondents, and share of white respondents.

[34]See, for instance, Dawson (2014).

To speak to this possibility, I use ACLED's classification of events and estimate the effect of narrow ANC victories on riots where the ANC is listed as an actor or associated actor. If the ANC were using its dominant position to mobilize local communities in areas that elect an opposition councilor, we would expect to see a systematic involvement of the party in these events. However, I find little evidence of riots being systematically instigated by the ANC. First, there are generally few events where the ANC is listed as an active or associated actor. Second, in Appendix Table B4, I find small and statistically significant RD estimates on (i) the probability that the ANC, (ii) the ANC Youth League, or (iii) any of the ANC, DA, or IFP were involved in the riots. In summary, while anecdotal evidence exists of riots being instigated by the ANC and its associates, there is no evidence that these events are key drivers of my results.

6.5   Community Work Program

As a final analysis, I investigate the role of public policy. In 2008, the Department of Cooperative Governance at the Ministry of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in South Africa launched an employment safety net program (CWP). The program's aim was to increase employment by targeting unemployed and underemployed individuals and providing two days of guaranteed work per week with a stipend paying higher than the minimum wage. The first CWP sites were rolled out in 2008, and the program was limited in its geographic coverage due to supply-side constraints (DoCG, 2009). At the end of the first roll-out period, the program covered 154 distinct sites (140 municipalities), each with a minimum of 1,000 participants. By 2013, the CWP had more than 200,000 participants in total (DoCG, 2013).

The type of work within CWPs includes community work, such as looking after children, assisting school personnel, repairing roads, participating in recreational activities and sports, taking care of the kids of working parents, and helping local police improve safety. Thus, based on the nature of the program, the hypothesis is that if CWP sites are active in a municipality, there may be weaker incentives for idle individuals to engage in rioting – potentially counteracting the effect of being represented by an opposition ward councilor with limited ability to provide economic opportunities to his/her citizens.

To empirically assess the role of the community work program, I construct an indicator variable for whether at least one CWP site existed in a municipality during the first roll-out period and fully interact this indicator with Equation (2). Since the program was rolled out between 2008 and 2011, I restrict the analysis to the 2011 and 2016 election terms.

The results are presented in Table 6. First, columns (1) and (2) show that, on average, the program appears to have reduced riots, as indicated by the negative coefficient on CWP, presumably via improved economic opportunity. Second, the interaction effect between

Table 6. ANC Control, Riots, and Access to CWP

	Pr(Any Riot), 2011–2016 Terms		Pr(Any Riot), 2016 Term	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	-0.242^{***}	-0.271^{***}	-0.290^{***}	-0.279^{***}
	(0.059)	(0.061)	(0.089)	(0.094)
CWP	-0.152^{*}	-0.130^{*}	-0.250^{**}	-0.189^{*}
	(0.080)	(0.067)	(0.113)	(0.100)
ANC Controlled $\times$ CWP	0.212^{**}	0.254^{***}	0.336^{***}	0.285^{**}
	(0.093)	(0.093)	(0.127)	(0.131)
Control Group Mean	0.188	0.188	0.190	0.190
Observations	837	837	441	441
R^2	0.015	0.250	0.020	0.295
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control on the riot probability using Equation (2) for municipalities with and without active CWP sites. CWP is a dummy variable indicating whether at least one CWP site was active in municipality m during 2008–2011. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

ANC control and access to CWP is positive. This result suggests that in areas with better access to employment opportunities, the effect of opposition candidate representation on riots is substantially weakened. Since some of the CWPs were rolled out in 2011, I also restrict the estimation to the 2016 term only (columns (3)–(4)), which shows similar results.[35]

These findings are further reflected graphically in Figure 7. The left part of the figure shows a negative discontinuity for wards under ANC control located in municipalities without access to a CWP, whereas the right part of the figure shows that this discontinuity almost vanishes in areas with access to a CWP.

7 Robustness Checks

As shown in Section 4.2, the two most important sources of bias in the RD design can effectively be ruled out. The McCrary (2008) and Cattaneo et al. (2018) density tests both support that ANC candidates cannot manipulate the running variable around the threshold. In addition, I find no observable differences between treated and control wards in terms of the baseline ward characteristics. In this section, I perform additional robustness checks to investigate the sensitivity of the main results.

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[35]In Appendix Table B3, I estimate the effect of close ANC victories on nightlight density – a proxy for economic development. I find no statistically significant effect on either the density of nightlights (measured as the sum of nightlight pixels divided by ward area) or the growth in nightlight density. This suggests that the violent unrest is not necessarily lower due to ANC wards being wealthier.
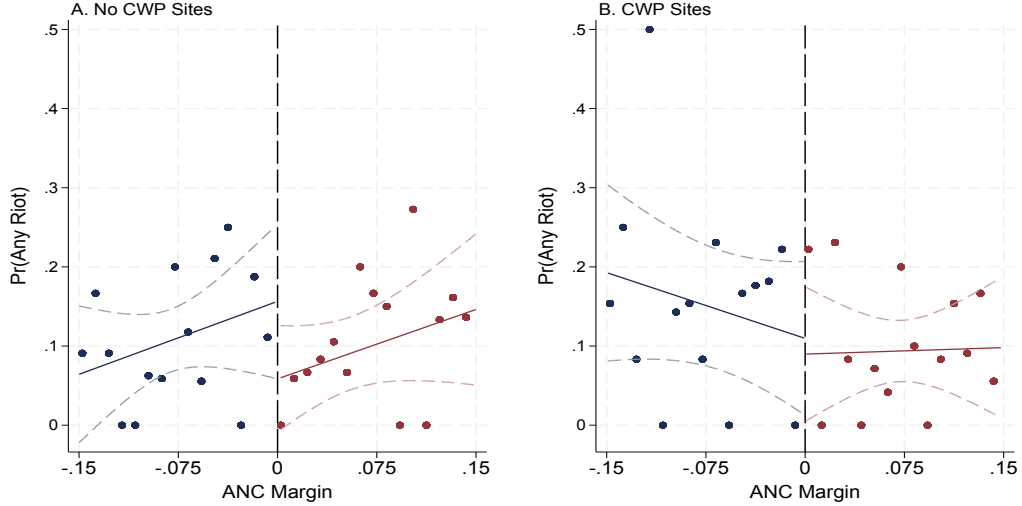
Figure 7. Effect of the ANC on Riots by CWP Availability

Notes: This figure shows the effect of ANC control in municipalities with and without active CWP sites in 2008–2011. The vertical axis measures the probability of any riot. The horizontal axis measures the running variable: ANC candidates' margin of victory. Markers represent binned averages of the running variable. Solid lines are fitted values from local linear regressions estimated separately on each side of the threshold. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered by municipality.

Intensive Margin Effects   As discussed in Section 4, the outcome variable can be measured both at the extensive margin (using an indicator for any riot) or at the intensive margin (using the number of riots). Appendix Table B6 provides the intensive margin results. Columns (1) and (2) report the estimates when the raw number of riots is used as the outcome variable. In columns (3) and (4), I use the inverse hyperbolic sine (asinh) transformation for the number of riot events.[36] The estimates are negative and statistically significant across specifications, which means that the main results are not dependent on using a dummy for riots as the main outcome variable. The table also shows the intensive margin effects for protests which largely confirm the main results; while there is a negative and significant effect on the levels of protest, the effect becomes more imprecise when accounting for outliers by using the asinh function.

Alternative Bandwidths   A potential concern is that the choice of the estimation bandwidth drives the main impact. Expanding or narrowing the bandwidth changes the analysis sample and can shed light on whether a small set of wards drives the results. However, Appendix Figure A11 reveals that the results are not unique for the optimal bandwidth. The estimated coefficients are slightly sensitive to very narrow bandwidths (at which there are few observations) but remain virtually unchanged for bandwidths between 7 and 20%.

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[36]The variable transformation is $asinh(y) = \ln(y + \sqrt{1 + y^2})$ which closely mimics the natural logarithmic function but has the advantage of being well-defined at 0.

Alternative Control Function   In Appendix Tables B7–B8, I further show that the choice of polynomial does not drive the effects. I utilize an alternative specification that augments Equation (2) with a quadratic and cubic polynomial in the running variable and in the interaction between the running variable and the treatment indicator. I restrict the analysis to the optimal bandwidth as proposed by Calonico et al. (2014) for each polynomial specification. The results are very similar to the main estimates and show that a particular functional form does not drive the results. Finally, to graphically present these results, Appendix Figure A12 shows the cubic specifications plotted separately on each side of the threshold and visually confirms the above findings.[37]

Placebo Thresholds   A standard check for the validity of the RD design is to investigate the presence of discontinuities at false threshold values. The main effect may be based on a spurious relationship if a discontinuity is found at a different threshold from 0% (the true election threshold). To investigate this possibility, I reestimate the main equation for a set of placebo threshold values. The results are shown in Appendix Figure A13, which reveals that there are no observed discontinuities in the number of riots at these placebo thresholds. The only negative and statistically significant effect is found at the 0% threshold. This finding reassures that the baseline estimate captures the impact of electing ANC councilors as a result of winning the ward.

Alternative Level of Clustering   Figure A3 shows that riots and protests are spatially correlated, which raises a concern of whether clustering at the municipal level is sufficient to account for correlated errors across geographical areas. In Appendix Table B10, I reestimate Equation (2) and instead cluster the standard errors at the district municipality level (i.e., the administrative level above the local municipalities), of which there are approximately 53. The table shows that the estimated standard errors are only marginally larger, suggesting that clustering at the local municipal level is sufficient to account for the spatial correlation in unrest events.

Geographic Outliers   A final worry is that a particular geographical area might be driving the results. For instance, the main opposition party during the analysis period, the DA, is particularly competitive against the ANC in metropolitan areas. Since these areas are also overrepresented in terms of ACLED events (see Figure A3), a concern is that some competitive wards in larger cities might drive the results. To address this concern, I study how the main result is affected as larger metropolitan areas are excluded from the main analysis. In Appendix Figure A14, I estimate Equation (2) excluding one large metropolitan municipality at a time. The figure reveals no evidence of any metropolitan municipality individually driving the results since the coefficient is virtually unchanged regardless of which metropolitan municipality is excluded. An exploration of the data reveals that this finding is not surprising since wards in metropolitan municipalities are

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[37]Table B9 further shows that the main estimate is robust to alternative choices of kernel weights.

not more likely to be included in the set of close elections.

8   Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Social unrest is pervasive in many developing countries and oftentimes occurs due to people's discontent with how the government deals with injustices and provides essential services. I focus on South Africa and study how dominant party representation affects social unrest. Since the end of apartheid, the ANC party has held a hegemonic position in South African politics by regularly receiving the majority of votes across all government levels. Simultaneously, the lack of political competition has raised concerns about the extent to which the party is willing to combat societal issues such as economic inequality and improve service delivery. Much of the previous qualitative evidence suggests that the party's complete dominance has rendered local ANC representatives susceptible to corruption allegations and government malfeasance, which have erupted in substantial social unrest across the country.

The results presented in this paper provide new evidence of the impact of electing dominant party representatives on social unrest. I find that the number of violent unrest incidents is markedly lower in wards where the ANC just barely won the election compared to wards where the ANC just barely lost. Standard RD validation exercises and a battery of additional sensitivity checks corroborate that the results have a causal interpretation.

The use of several sources of data allows me to investigate the underlying mechanisms in depth. The effect is stronger in municipalities where the council is led by the ANC – a proxy for streamlined service delivery and municipal policy to mitigate social unrest – and in municipalities with fewer irregularities in municipal spending. Using data from five survey waves of the Afrobarometer project, I find suggestive evidence that, across four distinct questions about the performance of local councilors and their office, respondents in ANC-controlled wards are more pleased with their councilor's performance. In addition, I find that a community work program launched by the South African government in 2008 effectively weakened the effect of the ANC compared to opposition representation on riot outbreaks. In sum, the mechanism analyses provide suggestive evidence supporting that stronger accountability measures and better economic opportunity are important mediators of the main effects.

While the results show that the likelihood of violent unrest is lower in wards represented by the ANC, they cannot rule out the possibility that the party itself may strategically suppress or incite violent social unrest. For instance, one possible explanation consistent with the findings is that the municipal government, or other higher levels of government under ANC control, penalizes wards controlled by representatives from the opposition in an attempt to harm their future reelection prospects.[38] If poor service delivery is indeed

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[38]See, for instance, Brollo and Nannicini (2012) who show that the federal government in Brazil provides

the main reason for unrest incidents, it is possible that riots are more likely to occur in non-ANC-controlled wards because the ANC allocates fewer resources to those wards. This could partly explain why the results are more pronounced in municipalities with stronger ANC control.

To explicitly test for strategic allocation of resources, however, one would require data on ward-level public service expenditures. To the best of my knowledge, such data are not publicly available. As such, it is possible only to gauge suggestive evidence of this mechanism within the framework of this paper. Thus, further research is needed to better understand how government resources are allocated within municipalities and their relationship to service provision and social unrest.

The paper contributes to the literature on the political determinants of social unrest. While previous studies have documented the effect of legislators' partisan identity on conflicts among different ethnic groups, my findings speak to a more general context in which riots and protests arise due to public discontent with local officials' ability to raise people's living standards.

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Appendix for *Dominance and Dissent: Party Influence and Social Unrest in South Africa*
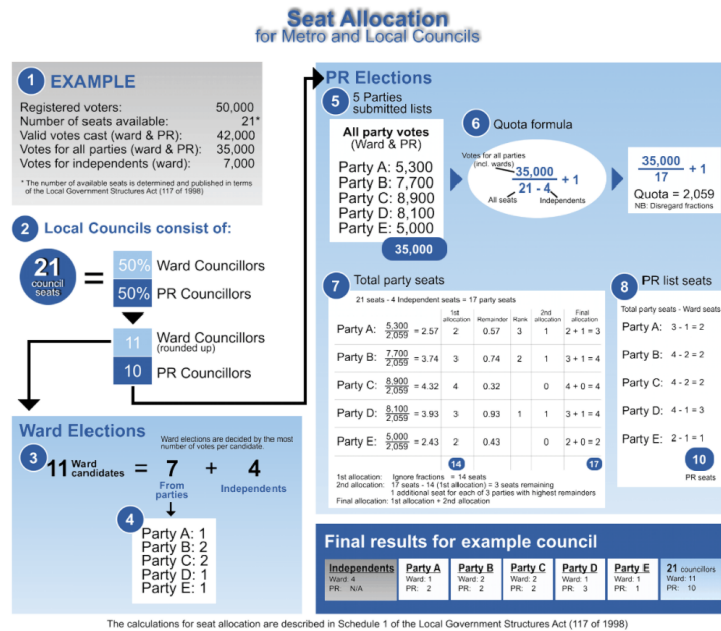
A Additional Figures

Figure A1. Local Elections Seat Share Formula

Notes: This figure shows an example of how seats are determined in metropolitan and local municipal councils.
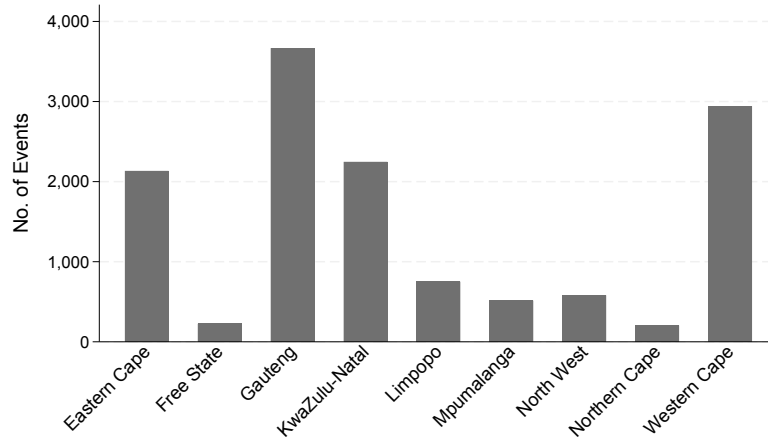*Source:* Electoral Commission of South Africa.

Figure A2. Riots and Protests by Province

Notes: This figure shows the distribution of riot and protest events by province between 2000 and 2020.

A. Riot Locations

B. Protest Locations

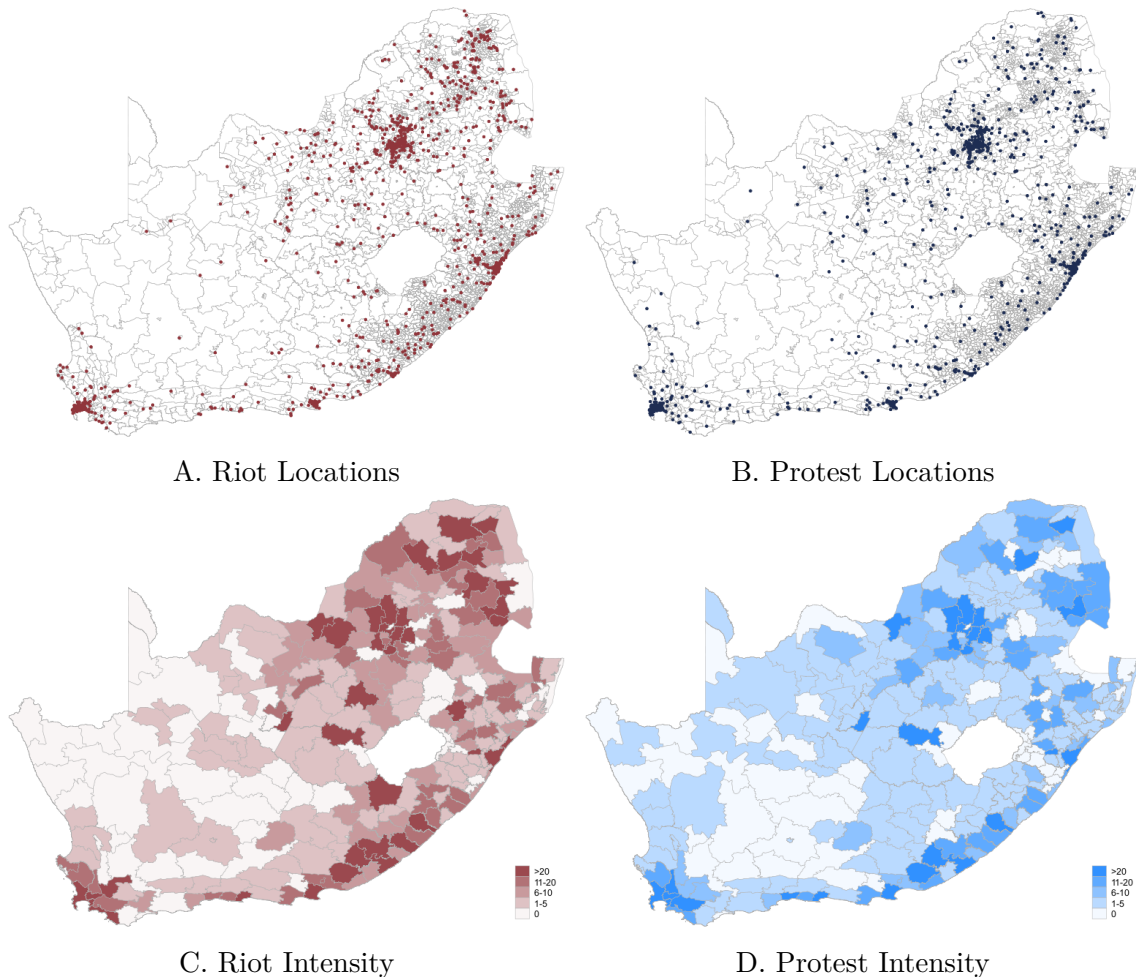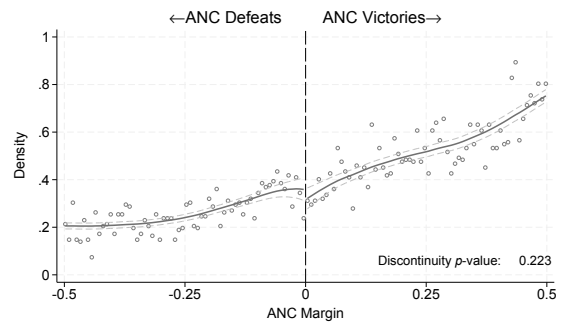C. Riot Intensity

D. Protest Intensity

Figure A3. Spatial Distributions of Riots and Protests

Notes: This figure shows the spatial distribution of riots and protests during 2000–2020 overlaid onto the 2011 ward boundaries (panels A and B), where each marker represents an unrest incident. Panels C and D show event frequencies overlaid onto 2011 municipal boundaries.
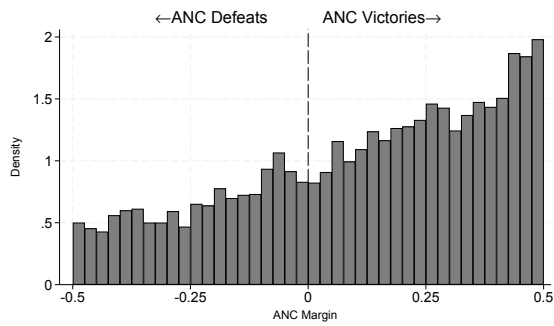
A. Density of the Running Variable   B. McCrary (2008) Density Test

Figure A4. Density and Test for Manipulation of the Running Variable

Notes: This figure shows density estimates of the ANC margin of victory around the threshold. Panel A shows histograms of the running variable, and panel (b) shows the result of the McCrary (2008) density test. The *p*-value for the test of continuous density at the threshold in panel B is 0.226.
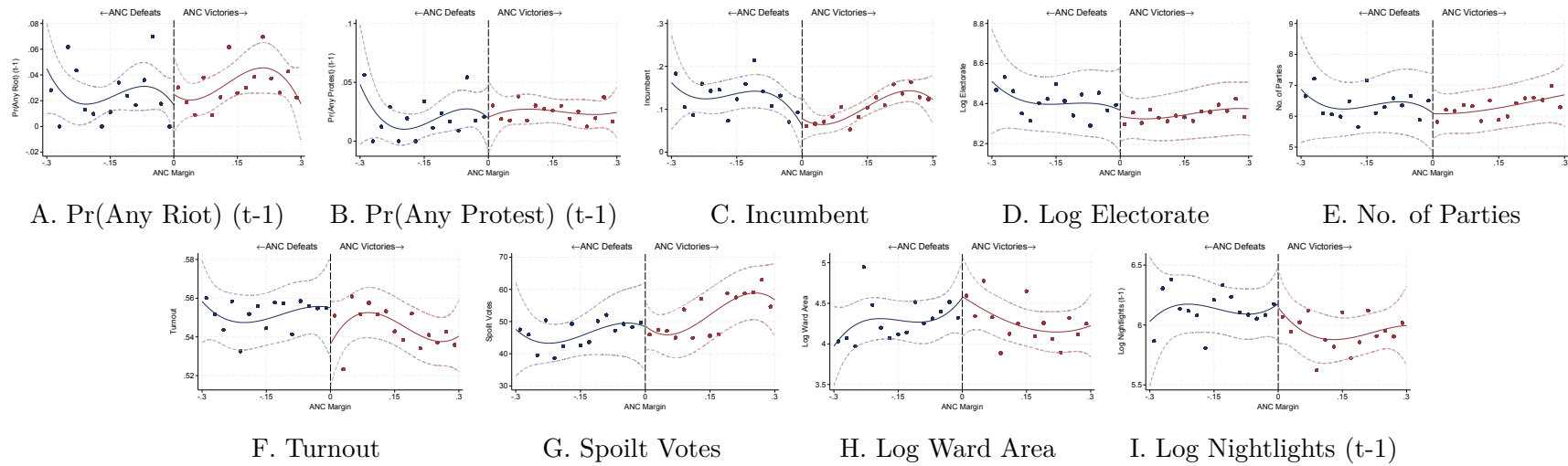
A. Pr(Any Riot) (t-1) B. Pr(Any Protest) (t-1) C. Incumbent D. Log Electorate E. No. of Parties

F. Turnout G. Spoilt Votes H. Log Ward Area I. Log Nightlights (t-1)

Figure A5. Continuity Tests for Predetermined Outcome Variables and Covariates

Notes: This figure shows the continuity test graphically. The vertical axis across panels measures the different pre-determined outcome variables. The horizontal axis measures the running variable: ANC candidates' margin of victory. Markers represent binned averages of the running variable. Solid lines are fitted values from a regression of the outcome on a third-order polynomial fit of the running variable estimated separately on each side of the threshold. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered by municipalities.
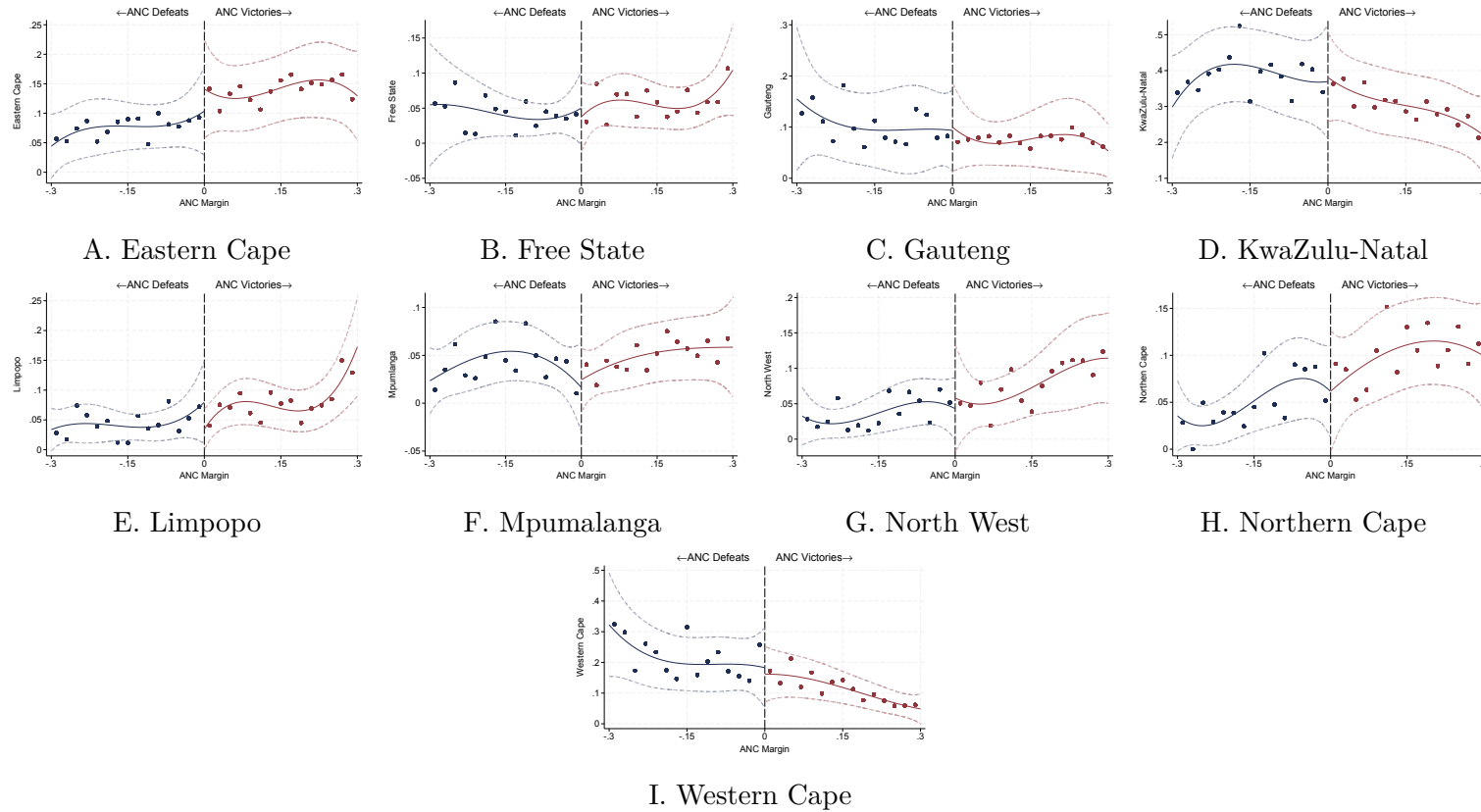
Figure A6. Continuity Tests for Province Indicators

Notes: This figure shows the continuity test graphically. The vertical axis across panels measures indicator variables for the nine provinces in South Africa. The horizontal axis measures the running variable: the ANC candidates' margin of victory. Markers represent binned averages of the running variable. Solid lines are fitted values from a regression of the outcome on a third-order polynomial fit of the running variable estimated separately on each side of the threshold. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered by municipalities.
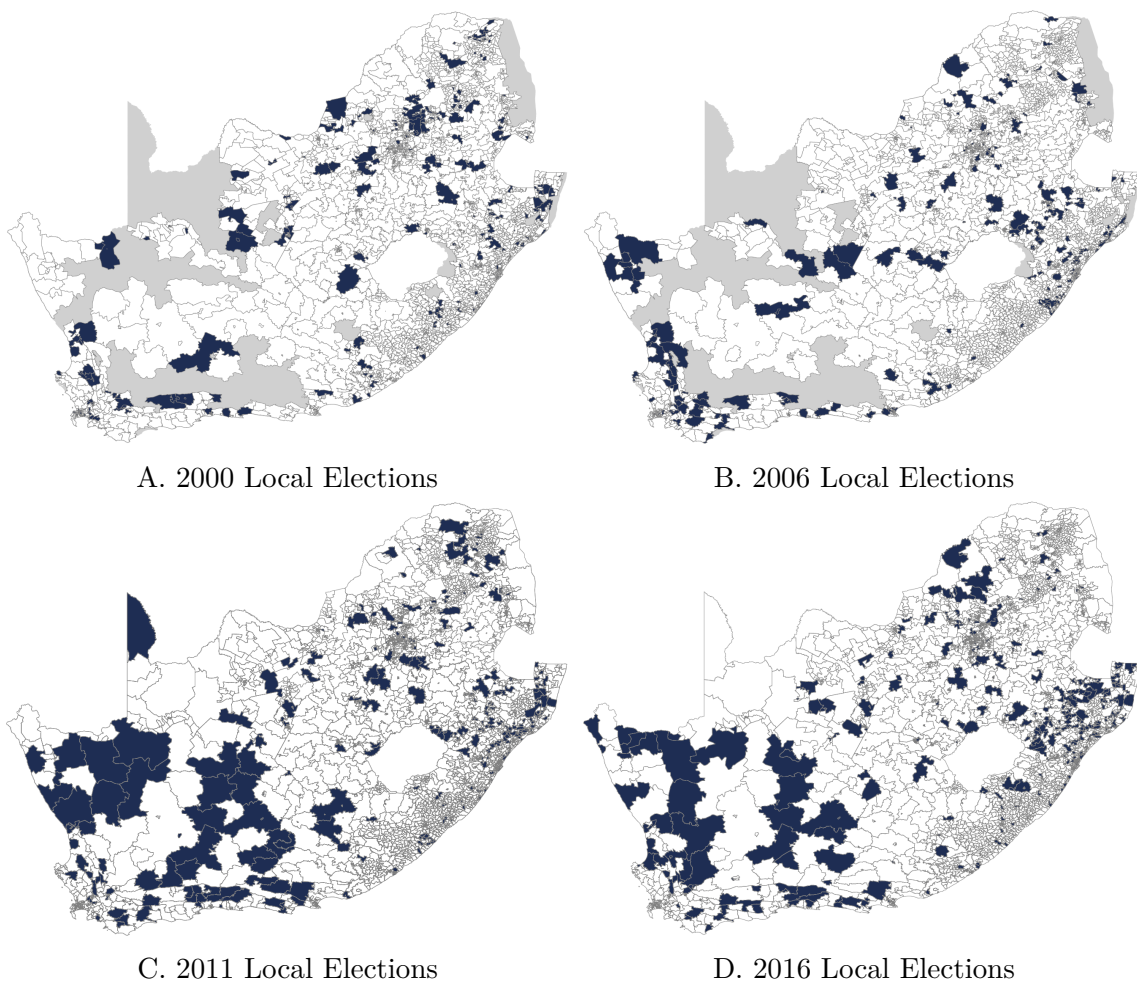
A. 2000 Local Elections   B. 2006 Local Elections

C. 2011 Local Elections   D. 2016 Local Elections

Figure A7. Ward Boundaries and Spatial Distributions of Close Elections

Notes: This figure shows the spatial distribution of close elections across the four election terms used in the analysis. The blue-marked areas represent wards in which the election was close ($|margin^{ANC}_{wmpt}| < 0.147$). In the 2000 and 2006 elections, the gray-shaded areas are not used in the analysis since they are categorized as district management areas (sparsely populated conservation areas) for which no wards were delimited.
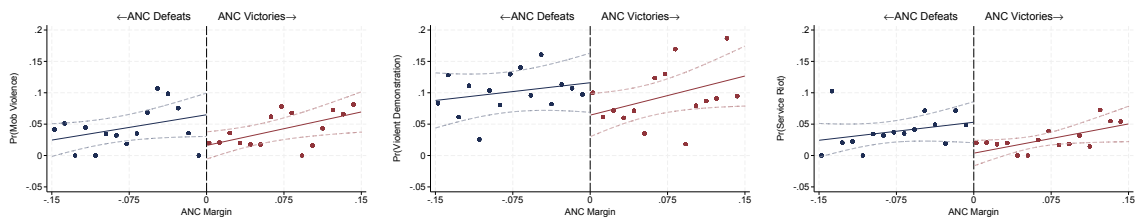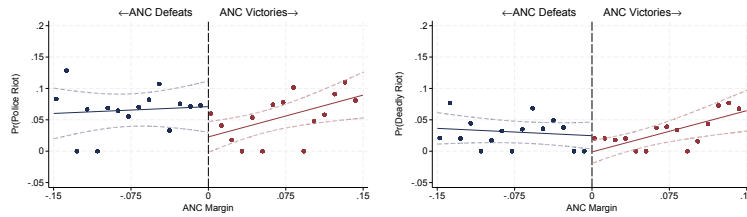
Figure A8. RD Graphs – Effect of the ANC on Riot Categories

Notes: This figure shows the main results graphically. The vertical axis measures the probability of mob violence (panel A), violent demonstrations (panel B), service delivery riots (panel C), riots that involved the police force (panel D), and deadly riots (panel E). The horizontal axis measures the running variable: ANC candidates' margin of victory. Markers represent binned averages of the running variable. Solid lines are fitted values from local linear regressions estimated separately on each side of the threshold. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered by municipality.
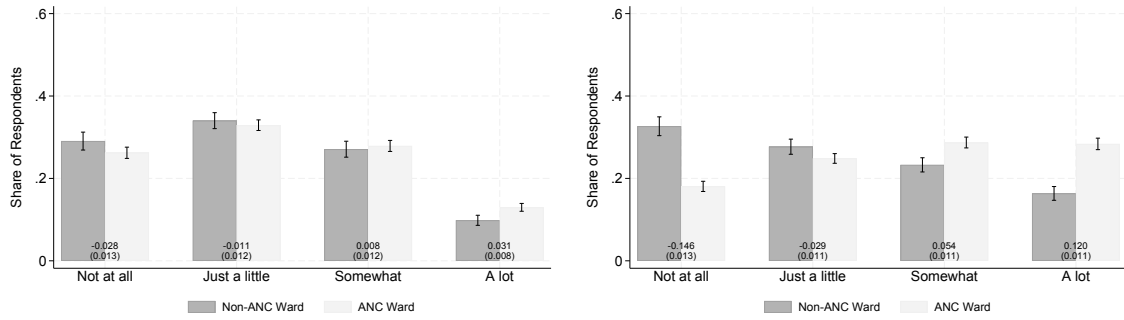
A. Trust Local Council?   B. Trust Ruling Party?
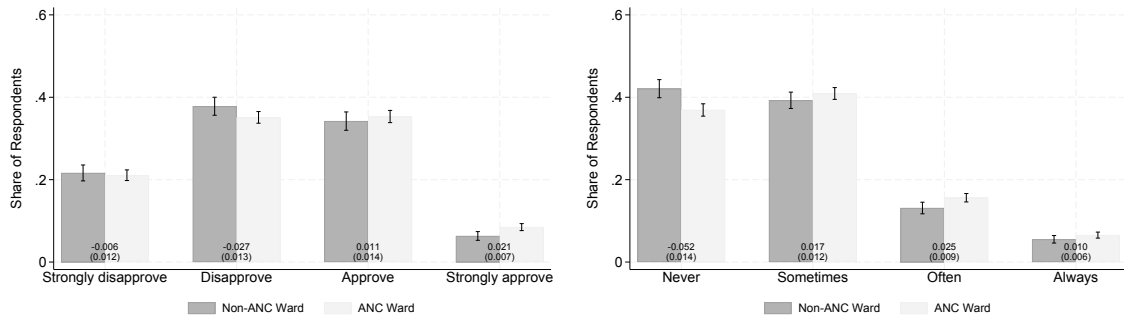
C. Approve of Councilor?   D. Councilor Listens?

Figure A9. Afrobarometer Survey Responses by ANC Control

Notes: This figure shows survey responses from the Afrobarometer by ANC control. The question in panel A is: "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your Local Government Council?". The question in panel B is: "How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Ruling Party?". The question in panel C is: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Your Elected Local Government Councilor?". The question in panel D is: "How much of the time do you think the following try their best to listen to what people like you have to say: Elected Local Government Councilors?". The mean difference between non-ANC-controlled and ANC-controlled wards is reported with standard errors in parentheses. Confidence intervals are robust to heteroskedasticity.
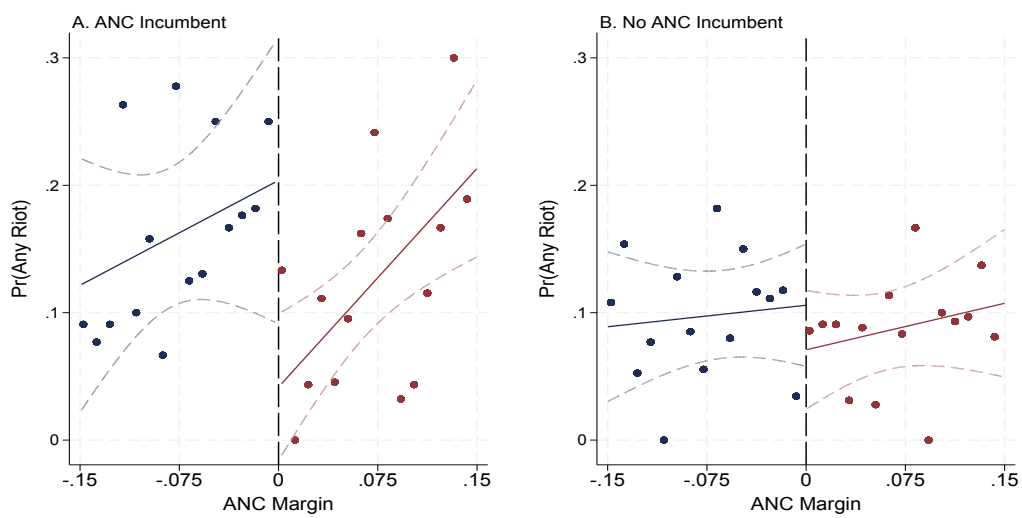
Figure A10. Effect of the ANC on Riots by ANC Incumbency Status

Notes: This figure shows the effect of ANC control by ANC incumbency status. The vertical axis measures the probability of any riot. The horizontal axis measures the running variable: ANC candidates' margin of victory. Markers represent binned averages of the running variable. Solid lines are fitted values from local linear regressions estimated separately on each side of the threshold. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered by municipality.

A. Pr(Any Riot)   B. Pr(Any Protest)   C. Pr(Mob Violence)

D. Pr(Violent Demonst.)   E. Pr(Service Riot)   F. Pr(Police Riot)

G. Pr(Deadly Riot)

Figure A11. Sensitivity to Choice of Bandwidth

Notes: This figure shows estimated RD effects on the different measures of social unrest using alternative estimation bandwidths. The vertical axis measures the RD estimate, and the horizontal axis measures the bandwidth. The dashed vertical line indicates the Calonico et al. (2014) optimal bandwidth. The solid line shows the estimated coefficient values in steps of 0.005, and dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered by municipality.
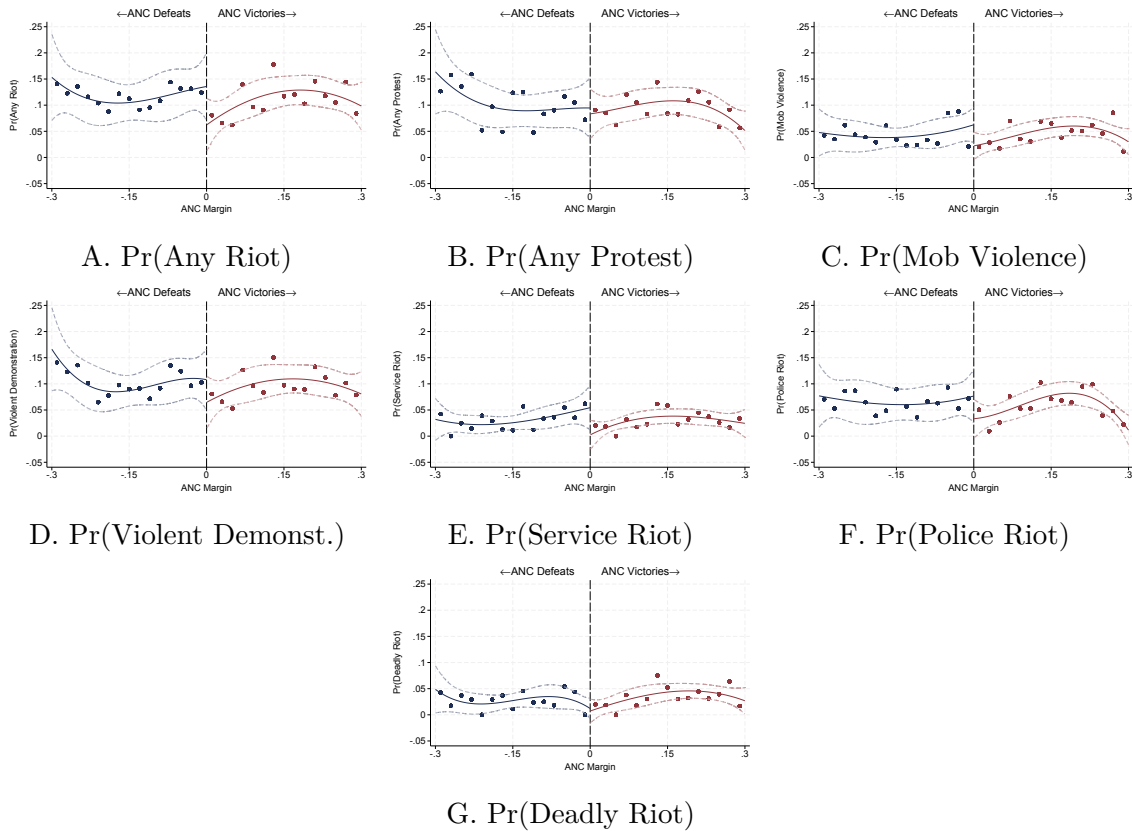
Figure A12. RD Graphs – Higher Order Polynomials

Notes: This figure shows the main results using a cubic specification. The vertical axis measures the probability of unrest events indicated by the panels. The horizontal axis measures the running variable: ANC candidates' margin of victory. Negative values indicate ANC defeats and positive values indicate ANC victories. The markers represent binned averages of the running variable. Solid lines are fitted values from a regression of the outcome on a spline third-order polynomial fit of the running variable estimated separately on each side of the threshold. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Standard errors are clustered by municipalities.
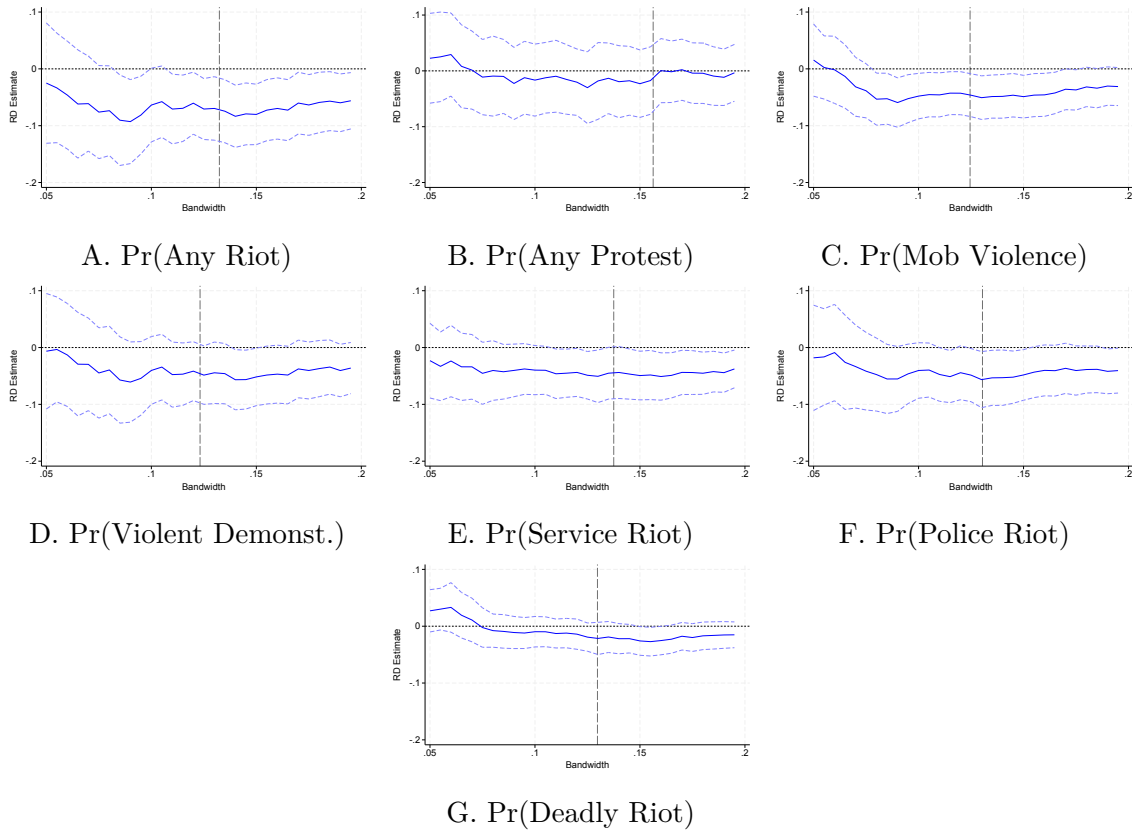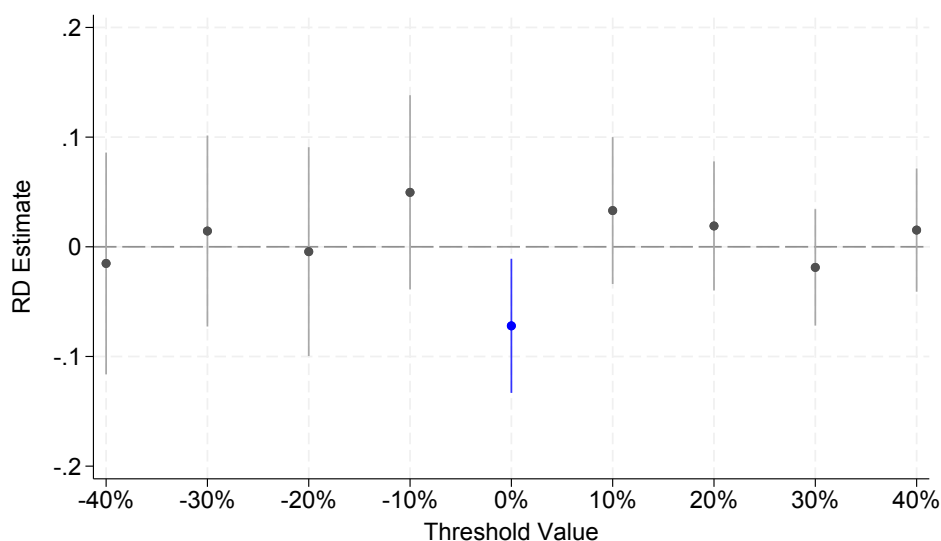
Figure A13. Placebo Threshold Values

Notes: This figure shows RD estimates of the effect of crossing the threshold on the riot probability for different placebo values ($\neq 0\%$) of the ANC's margin of victory. The dependent variable is the probability of any riot. Each point on the vertical axis represents an RD estimate with 95% confidence intervals. The horizontal axis represents placebo threshold values ranging from -40% to 40% in steps of 10%. The estimation bandwidth is the same as in the main regression (0.128 on either side of the threshold). Standard errors are clustered by municipality.
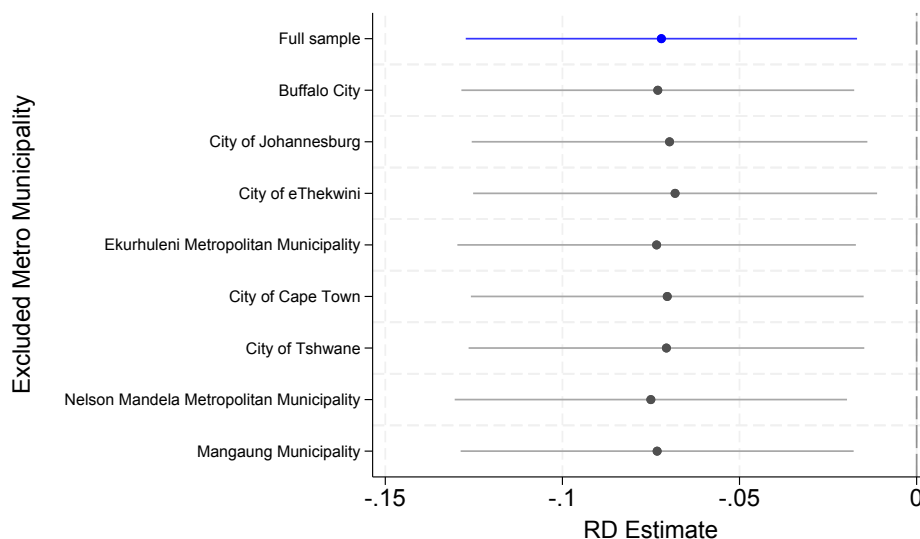
Figure A14. Outlier Municipalities

Notes: This figure shows the RD estimates as one metropolitan municipality is excluded from the main regression at a time. The vertical axis denotes metropolitan municipalities, and the horizontal axis denotes the coefficient estimate with 95% confidence intervals. The topmost estimate is from using the full sample of municipalities.

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B Additional Tables

Table B1. Summary Statistics

|	Obs.	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Panel A. Unrest Variables					
Total Events	15,552	0.853	9.487	0.00	499.00
Total Riots	15,552	0.388	2.819	0.00	120.00
Total Protests	15,552	0.465	7.171	0.00	436.00
Deadly Riots	15,552	0.070	0.742	0.00	50.00
Deadly Protests	15,552	0.001	0.037	0.00	2.00
Service Riots	15,552	0.046	0.414	0.00	22.00
Service Protests	15,552	0.018	0.207	0.00	9.00
Pr(Any Unrest)	15,552	0.116	0.320	0.00	1.00
Pr(Any Riot)	15,552	0.092	0.289	0.00	1.00
Pr(Any Protest)	15,552	0.073	0.259	0.00	1.00
Total Riots | Any Riot	1,427	4.230	8.391	1.00	120.00
Total Protests | Any Protest	1,129	6.399	25.901	1.00	436.00
Panel B. Electoral Variables					
ANC Controlled	15,552	0.787	0.410	0.00	1.00
ANC Margin	15,552	0.382	0.489	−0.98	0.99
Total Votes Cast	15,552	2895.577	2136.215	55.00	16042.00
Electorate	15,552	5470.224	3819.547	130.00	21210.00
No. of Parties	15,552	6.428	3.704	2.00	29.00
Turnout	15,552	0.533	0.097	0.02	1.00
Incumbent	15,552	0.121	0.326	0.00	1.00
Panel C. Geographical Variables					
Ward Area (sq km)	15,552	360.234	1338.724	0.14	38514.51
Eastern Cape	15,552	0.163	0.369	0.00	1.00
Free State	15,552	0.076	0.265	0.00	1.00
Gauteng	15,552	0.118	0.323	0.00	1.00
KwaZulu-Natal	15,552	0.195	0.396	0.00	1.00
Limpopo	15,552	0.130	0.337	0.00	1.00
Mpumlanga	15,552	0.099	0.299	0.00	1.00
North West	15,552	0.090	0.286	0.00	1.00
Northen Cape	15,552	0.047	0.212	0.00	1.00
Western Cape	15,552	0.081	0.274	0.00	1.00

Notes: This table reports summary statistics for the main variables used in the analysis. Panel A reports statistics for various measures of social unrest, panel B reports statistics for the electoral variables, and panel C reports statistics for the geographical variables. The unit of observation is a ward-term pair.

Table B2. Differential Effects in Western Cape Province

| | Dependent Variable: Pr(Any Riot) | | | |
| | Western Cape | | Other Provinces | |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	−0.092	−0.096*	−0.068**	−0.065**
	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.032)	(0.032)
Control Group Mean	0.068	0.068	0.131	0.131
Observations	248	248	1,257	1,257
R^2	0.016	0.165	0.003	0.241
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) separately for wards in the Western Cape province. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. The discontinuity is estimated using local linear regressions and the optimal bandwidth proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B3. Effect of ANC Control on Nightlight Density

| | Log Nightlights Density | | Log Nightlights Density Growth | |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	−0.179	−0.035	−0.039	−0.035
	(0.154)	(0.033)	(0.040)	(0.033)
Control Group Mean	2.406	2.406	0.184	0.184
Observations	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505
R^2	0.003	0.919	0.001	0.321
Bandwidth	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control on nightlight density using Equation (2). Nightlight density is the sum of light pixels per ward divided by ward area. Nightlight density growth is the (log) change in light pixels between the start and end of an election term: $\log(Lights_{wt+1}) - \log(Lights_{wt})$. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), and lagged nightlight density (logs). Discontinuities are estimated using local linear regressions and the optimal bandwidth proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B4. Effect of ANC Control on Politically Instigated Riots

	Pr(ANC Riot)		Pr(ANC YL Riot)		Pr(Any Party Riot)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ANC Controlled	0.0003	0.0009	0.0015	0.0031	−0.0018	−0.0029
	(0.0067)	(0.0081)	(0.0027)	(0.0033)	(0.0112)	(0.0118)
Control Group Mean	0.003	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.015	0.015
Observations	1,702	1,702	1,702	1,702	1,702	1,702
R^2	0.002	0.110	0.005	0.263	0.003	0.064
Bandwidth	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) on riots associated with political actors. Riots are restricted to cases where the ANC party (columns (1)–(2)), the ANC Youth League (columns (3)–(4)), or any of the ANC, the DA, or the IFP (columns (5)–(6)) were listed as actors or associated actors in the ACLED events. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), and lagged nightlight density (logs). Discontinuities are estimated using local linear regressions and the optimal bandwidth proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B5. Differential Effects by ANC Incumbency Status

	Dependent Variable: Pr(Any Riot)			
	ANC Incumbent		Opposition Incumbent	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	−0.131*	−0.130**	−0.042	−0.043
	(0.068)	(0.060)	(0.035)	(0.035)
p-val: $\beta_1(1) = \beta_1(3)$	0.271	0.271	0.271	0.271
Control Group Mean	0.172	0.172	0.095	0.095
Observations	541	541	964	964
R^2	0.010	0.252	0.001	0.263
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) by ANC incumbency status. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), and lagged nightlight density (logs). Discontinuities are estimated using local linear regressions and the optimal bandwidth proposed by Calonico et al. (2014). Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B6. Effect of ANC Control on Unrest – Alternative Outcome Measures

	Total Riots (level)		asinh(Total Riots)		Total Protests (level)		asinh(Total Protests)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
ANC Controlled	−0.665**	−0.304	−0.160***	−0.127**	−0.667	−0.122	−0.099*	−0.077*
	(0.286)	(0.191)	(0.061)	(0.050)	(1.020)	(0.404)	(0.057)	(0.045)
Control Group Mean	4.751	4.751	1.709	1.709	7.979	7.979	1.803	1.803
Observations	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,505	1,809	1,809	1,809	1,809
R^2	0.004	0.577	0.005	0.354	0.003	0.850	0.003	0.386
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.156
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) on continuous measures of riots and protests. asinh(·) denotes the inverse hyperbolic sine transformation. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B7. Effect of ANC Control on Riots – Higher Order Polynomials

	Pr(Any Riot)		Pr(Deadly Riot)		Pr(Service Riot)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ANC Controlled	−0.083**	−0.087**	−0.024*	−0.023	−0.051**	−0.061**
	(0.033)	(0.042)	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.026)
Control Group Mean	0.118	0.120	0.028	0.027	0.033	0.033
Observations	3,520	4,186	3,520	4,186	3,520	4,186
R^2	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.003
Bandwidth	0.300	0.360	0.300	0.360	0.300	0.360
Polynomial	Quadratic	Cubic	Quadratic	Cubic	Quadratic	Cubic

Notes: This table reports the coefficient on ANC victory using Equation (2) with higher order polynomials in the running variable. The outcome variable in columns (1) and (2) is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one riot occurred in ward w and election term t. The outcome variable in columns (3) and (4) is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one deadly riot occurred in ward w and election term t (i.e., riots in which there was at least one fatality). The outcome variable in columns (5) and (6) is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one service delivery riot occurred in ward w and election term t. The first column for each outcome variable shows estimates from a quadratic specification, and the second column for each outcome variable shows estimates from a cubic specification. Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B8. Effect of ANC Control on Protests – Higher Order Polynomials

	Pr(Any Protest)		Pr(Service Protest)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	−0.091	−0.082	−0.008	0.001
	(0.058)	(0.061)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Control Group Mean	0.093	0.101	0.019	0.020
Observations	2,810	3,527	2,810	3,527
R^2	0.001	0.003	0.001	0.003
Bandwidth	0.241	0.301	0.241	0.301
Polynomial	Quadratic	Cubic	Quadratic	Cubic

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) with higher order polynomials in the running variable. The outcome variable in columns (1) and (2) is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one protest occurred in ward w and election term t. The outcome variable in columns (3) and (4) is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one service delivery protest occurred in ward w and election term t. The first column for each outcome variable shows estimates from a quadratic specification, and the second column for each outcome variable shows estimates from a cubic specification. Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B9. Effect of ANC Control on Riots – Alternative Kernels

	Pr(Any Riot)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	−0.071**	−0.070**	−0.080***	−0.082***
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Control Group Mean	0.117	0.117	0.120	0.120
Observations	1,936	1,936	1,712	1,712
R^2	0.004	0.165	0.005	0.174
Bandwidth	0.167	0.167	0.148	0.148
Kernel	Triangular	Triangular	Epanechnikov	Epanechnikov
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2) with alternative kernels. The outcome variable is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one riot occurred in ward w and election term t. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), lagged nightlights (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. Standard errors clustered by municipality are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

Table B10. Effect of ANC Control on Riots – Alternative Level of Clustering

	Pr(Any Riot)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ANC Controlled	-0.074^{**}	-0.080^{***}	-0.065^{**}	-0.073^{***}
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Control Group Mean	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.119
Observations	1,482	1,482	1,482	1,482
R^2	0.003	0.135	0.177	0.238
Bandwidth	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132
Province-Term FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes

Notes: This table reports RD estimates of ANC control using Equation (2). The outcome variable is a dummy equal to 1 if at least one riot occurred in ward w and election term t. Controls are ward-level turnout, incumbency status, spoilt votes, the number of parties that stood for election, ward area (logs), and a lag of the dependent variable. Standard errors clustered by district municipality (the level above local municipalities) are reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.