The Long-Term Chilling Effect of Mass Political Violence: Evidence from China's Cultural Revolution

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Abstract: This paper investigates the effect of early-life experience of mass political violence on political participation and attitudes in China. Using geographical and cohort variation of exposure to political violence during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), we find that exposure to violence reduced political participation several decades later in the 2010s: it made people less likely to vote in local elections, pursue political action in response to government mistreatment, or join the Chinese Communist Party. The adverse effect is stronger when the political action in question entails a greater degree of political participation, and is weaker in places with high social capital. We also show that experiencing political violence heightened oppositional attitudes towards the Communist regime. Together, these results document a "chilling effect" of political violence: whereas experiencing mass political violence makes people more skeptical of the Chinese government, it discourages engagement in political action.

I. Introduction

State-sanctioned mass political violence in autocracies, such as Stalin's Great Purge and Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, often has the effect of shaping individual political behavior and change the political trajectory of a country for decades to come. On the one hand, mass political violence is prone to generating backlash that weakens the regime, as seen in China's fitful liberalization in the 1980s immediately after the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution. On the other hand, the violence may also leave a long-lasting scar on the population, with negative effects on political participation and political action. Indeed, scholars have long recognized that political institutions and critical events tend to produce self-reinforcing trajectories, whereby past arrangements shape and sustain future ones in similar directions. Past experience of democracy, for example, creates "democratic capital" that increases the likelihood of future democratic survival (Persson and Tabellini 2009). Similar dynamics apply to authoritarianism: Xu (2025), in tracing the origins of China's institutions and totalitarianism, points out that past authoritarianism begets future authoritarianism, or at least lays the ground for future authoritarianism to flourish.

This paper investigates the long-term consequences of mass political violence on individual political behaviors and attitudes in the context of China's Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, a political campaign launched by Mao Zedong to purge his rivals at the top and root out real and perceived disloyalty at the bottom, resulting in millions of deaths and even more victims. The study of political violence during the Cultural Revolution offers two distinct advantages that underscores the contributions of this paper. First, because the same Communist regime that unleashed the violence has endured to this day, it is possible to observe how exposure to past political violence continues to shape individuals' political participation and attitudes vis-à-vis the very same regime. Second, the Cultural Revolution constituted a nationwide experience that nonetheless exhibited substantial variation in intensity across localities, providing both broad substantive significance and credible opportunities for iden-

tification. Leveraging archival data from China's county gazetteers on the number of victims of the Cultural Revolution, we use both geographical and cohort variations of the intensity of violence. For geographical variation, the intensity of violence varied across counties. Cohort variation stems from the fact that people born in different cohorts spent different amount of time under political violence during their "impressionable age" of 14-24 years old, the formative period for the development of political preferences.

Using political violence data from Walder (2014) and individual-level survey data for outcomes related to politics, we find that early-life exposure to political violence during the Cultural Revolution decreased political participation several decades later in the early 2010s. We start by looking at a direct form of political participation: voter turnout in local elections. While of limited scope, these elections have a meaningful impact on policy (Martinez-Bravo et al. 2022), and a rich set of information allows us to parse the effect on local election turnout and establish that these results indeed captures political participation: the adverse effect of political violence on voter turnout is larger for more competitive, higher-stakes elections — precisely those requiring a higher level of political engagement from voters. We then show that experience of political violence also has a broader negative impact on political engagement, making people less likely to pursue political action against government mistreatment or join the Chinese Communist Party. Social capital mitigates this detrimental effect on political participation: the effect manifests itself primarily in places with a low level of social capital, as measured by the presence of family clan networks. We also have some evidence that the aversion to political participation is passed on to the next generation.

We then show that individuals more exposed to violence in the Cultural Revolution have more negative attitudes towards the Chinese government. Despite the lack of opinion polling on attitudes towards the central government, we find that experiencing political violence made people more unsatisfied with the local government. We also find another subtler form of disapproval that is directly linked to the Cultural Revolution and the popular political

discourse in today's China: those more exposed to violence during the Cultural Revolution seems to be more skeptical of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign. In official propaganda and popular political discourse, the Cultural Revolution is often thought of as an egalitarian movement in which the corrupt and the privileged were purged. Therefore, nostalgia towards the Cultural Revolution and support for similar heavy-handed political movements often stems from discontent regarding corruption. We find that, prior to China's authoritarian turn under Xi Jinping in the name of the anti-corruption campaign in 2012, people's prior experience during the Cultural Revolution had no effect on the importance of issue of corruption in their minds. However, after the start of Xi's anti-corruption campaign, those more exposed to political violence began to think of corruption as a less important issue. This suggests that the memory of political violence engender disapproval of authoritarianism in general and mass purges in particular.

Together, these results amount to a "chilling effect" of political violence: it makes people more skeptical of the authoritarian regime, but less likely to perform any kind of political participation or action, whether supportive, neutral, or oppositional towards the regime. What's more, the effect persists four decades after the end of the Cultural Revolution, even though economic and political changes in the meantime have made China unrecognizable compared with the Mao era. This further testifies to the profound and enduring influence of the "institutional genes" of authoritarianism, as is conceptualized by Xu (2025), that continues to linger in the national consciousness long after the atrocities have passed.

This paper mainly contributes to three strands of literature. First, the long-term effect of political institutions and events has been of enduring scholarly interest. At the country or regional level, past research have emphasized structural continuity of how foundational institutions or historical shocks generate long-term trajectories in governance and development (North 1990; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001; Banerjee and Iyer 2005; Lowes et al. 2017). In particular, Persson and Tabellini (2009) constructs a measure of "democratic capi-

tal" from a country's historical experience with democracy and the incidence of democracy in its neighborhood, and finds that countries with higher democratic capital is less likely to exit from democracy and more likely to exit from autocracy. Xu (2025) traces the "institutional genes" of China's institutions of regionally administered authoritarianism from the ancient Chinese imperial authoritarianism and Russian Bolshevism, arguing that these institutional genes tend to breed enduring authoritarianism. At the individual level, regarding the long-term effects on individual political behavior, evidence is mixed on the effect of exposure to political violence on political participation and political attitudes. On the one hand, political violence in civil wars can lead to political apathy, having a negative effect on voter turnout and other forms of political participation (Alacevich and Zejcirovic 2020; Rodon and Tormos 2023). On the other hand, there is also contrasting evidence that violence could mobilize people politically (Bellows and Miguel 2009; Oto-Peralías 2015). This paper contributes to this strand of literature in two ways: (1) we provide additional evidence to the debate on whether political violence leads to political apathy or mobilization; (2) our institutional setting differs from previous work in that, whereas the papers cited above concerns countries where the perpetrators of past political violence were replaced by a democratic government, our paper studies the case of China, where the same regime that sanctioned political violence survived to this day.

Second, this paper contributes to quantitative research on the consequences of political upheavals in Mao Zedong's China, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. These periods of upheaval were characterized by heavy-handed propaganda campaigns, mass repression, and large-scale loss of human life (see Yang (2012) and Yang (2021) for a comprehensive historical account). On the propaganda side, Ou and Xiong (2021) shows that exposure to Communist radio propaganda is a predictor for the severity of political violence during the Cultural Revolution. Qian (2024) shows that a propaganda campaign in the later stages of the Cultural Revolution had the effect of elevating women's status that persisted for several decades. There has been notable research on the long-term effect of social upheaval

during the Cultural Revolution, such as educational disruptions (Roland and Yang 2017) and the "send-down movement", a campaign in which millions of educated youth were sent to the countryside for "re-education" by the peasants, on personal preferences and education (Gong, Lu, and Xie 2015; Chen et al. 2020; Liu, Lu, and Yuan 2025). With regard to the effect of political violence, which is the focus of this paper, there has been extensive research showing the effect of casualties during the Great Famine or the Cultural Revolution on trust (Chen and Yang 2015; Bai and Wu 2020; Kong, Zhao, and Liu 2021), corporate risk-taking (Feng and Johansson 2018), and local economic development (Bai and Wu 2023). Our paper builds on this literature to explore the effect of the Cultural Revolution on political participation long after the experience of political violence had ended.

Third, this paper adds to a nascent literature that studies political participation in China, especially local elections. There has been a rich set of theoretical and empirical work on the rationale behind *national* elections in autocracies (e.g. Enikolopov et al. 2013; Miller 2015; Egorov and Sonin 2021; see Egorov and Sonin 2024 for a recent survey), but local elections in autocracies such as China has been rarely studied. Earlier work focused on the consequences of China's rural local elections on policy implementation and welfare (Shen and Yao 2008; Mu and Zhang 2014; Martinez-Bravo et al. 2022). One of the few studies about the determinants of participation in these local elections is Lai (2024), which shows that a compulsory education law in China that raised the population's level of education had the effect of lowering local election turnout through the opportunity cost channel. Our paper takes this a step further and is the first to investigate the political determinants of electoral and other political participation in China.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II introduces the institutional background about the Cultural Revolution and political participation in China. Section III describes the data and the estimation strategy. Section IV presents the results on political participation. Section V presents the results on political attitudes. Section VI concludes.

II. Background

II.1. The Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution was a sociopolitical movement launched by Mao Zedong in May 1966 and lasted until his death in September 1976. The events of the Cultural Revolution have been extensively documented by historians (see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006) and Yang (2021) for a comprehensive account); here we provide a brief summary. Historians argue that the Cultural Revolution had two original intentions: (1) to purge Liu Shaoqi, Mao's main rival within the Communist Party elite, and root out any real or perceived disloyalty to Mao; (2) to eradicate perceived privileges in the bureaucracy and "bourgeois thoughts" in the society, establishing Mao's ideal egalitarian society (Gao 2014). Originally confined to the party elite, the movement soon widened to the general population and engulfed the entire country. It imposed a stark uniformity on the Chinese society, cut off access to information outside of Maoist teachings, and politically took the one-man rule of Mao Zedong to the extreme.

In the highest echelons of Chinese politics, Mao soon succeeded in his objective of purging Liu Shaoqi, who was stripped of all official positions and hounded to death in 1969. In purging Liu, Mao enlisted the help of Marshall Lin Biao, who was then codified as Mao's right-hand man and successor. But the two soon also fell out in a way typical of the power struggle between a supreme leader and his heir apparent in autocracies, culminating in the dramatic plane crash in September 1971 that killed Lin on his way to flee to the Soviet Union. Lin's death dealt a severe blow to Mao personally (his health declined precipitously thereafter) as well as the legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution in general; mass violence subsided in the remaining years of the movement. It can be argued that, after 1971, the Cultural Revolution merely trudged along until Mao died.

As for the general population, mass repression, large-scale political violence, and social up-

heaval swept the country during the Cultural Revolution. With regard to political violence, which is the focus of this paper, there are mainly two types. First, successive political campaigns during the Cultural Revolution targets "class enemies" and others deemed disloyal or insufficiently loyal to the regime all over the country. Notable campaigns during this period include "Cleansing the Class Ranks" (1968-69), "One-strike, Three-anti Campaign" (1970), and the campaign against "May 16 Elements" (1970). Even outside of these specific campaigns, mass repression became part of the daily life in China. People in the "five black categories" (*heiwulei*), primarily consisting of pre-revolutionary elites, petty criminals, dissidents, and intellectuals, were routinely and violently persecuted. Social trust broke down, as informing on one's neighbors, friends, and family was encouraged, and any suspicion (mistaken or not) of disloyalty invited immediate persecution.

Second, armed conflict broke out between ideologically-driven factions vying to seize local power. Unlike Stalin's Great Purge in the late 1930s that used the state apparatus as the main vehicle of repression, Mao Zedong chose to utilize "mass movements", harnessing populist energy against the party elite in a bottom-up fashion. This resulted in the formation of so-called "rebel groups" (*zaofanpai*) that attempted to grab power from local governments. The local governments, in turn, mobilize their own militia to defend their power, often resulting in violent armed conflicts.

Due to the violent and chaotic nature of the Cultural Revolution as well as the fact that the same Communist Party that launched it is still in power today, it is impossible to obtain an accurate tally of the number of deaths, injuries, or victims of the Cultural Revolution. Current estimates from historians of the death toll range from just under 1 million to more than 3 million (Song 2011), making it one of the most atrocious events of political violence in the 20th century.

II.2. Political participation in China

This paper investigates three forms of political participation in China: voting in local elections, pursuing political action against government mistreatment, and joining the Chinese Communist Party. Whereas most forms of participation is straightforward to understand, local elections in China require a more detailed introduction.

China's local elections were introduced in the 1980s as a response to governance challenges at the grassroots level. In rural areas, some villages spontaneously set up village committees to address the vacuum in local governance. The central government took note of the experiments, and in 1987 passed the Organizational Law of Village Committees, which established rural elections of village committees nationwide. According to the law, village committees consist of 3-7 members, including one chairperson, one to two vice chairpersons, and ordinary committee members. As the legally mandated governance body at the lowest administrative level, village committees hold substantive power. Key responsibilities of village committees include: (1) managing local public affairs and communal resources (e.g. maintenance of village roads and utilities); (2) overseeing village budget, land, and other assets; (3) mediating disputes and maintaining public order; (4) implementing state policies and mandates at the local level, such as the One Child Policy and social assistance programs (Pei 2008; He and Wang 2017;Martinez-Bravo et al. 2022).

Elections for village committees are held every three years, and elected village officials can run for re-election without term limits. In these elections, there are no opposition parties. Candidates, nominated by fellow villagers, "typically run on very local issues and are probably selected for qualities that have been long observed by their fellow villagers" (Martinez-Bravo et al. 2022). In practice, the vast majority of village elections are at least nominally competitive: among the villages covered by the CFPS survey that we use, more than 85% had two or more candidates for committee chairperson in the last village elections. Elected village officials, despite the substantive power that they have, are local representatives but not state

bureaucrats: they are not eligible for promotion to the upper ladders of the bureaucracy.

In urban areas, residents' committees have existed since the 1950s as an extension of the municipal administration. In 1989, China passed the Organizational Law of Urban Residents' Committees, which provided the legal basis for the direct election of urban residents' committees. Residents' committees in urban areas have less power than village committees, partly because of the higher mobility of the urban population, partly because much governance of local affairs in urban areas, which are more densely packed than their rural equivalent, is administered by upper-level jurisdictions such as the municipality. The jurisdiction of the residents' committee, called a "community" (*shequ*), is roughly the same size in population as a village. Residents' committees consist of 5-9 members, whose elections are held every five years. In practice, residents' committees are mostly responsible for mundane administrative tasks and community services, but they also implement upper-level government policies at the neighborhood level. Most famously, the enforcement of the draconian lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic was carried out by community-level officials.

In sum, the elections for rural village committees and urban residents' committees were introduced as a means to improve governance and accountability at the grassroots level. These elections are the only meaningful direct elections in China. Although they are often less relevant and more tightly controlled than equivalent elections in rich democracies, these elections still have material impact on people's livelihoods.

III. Data and estimation

We use two main sources of data. For the intensity of violence during the Cultural Revolution, we use data for political violence following Walder (2014). For individual-level election turnout, we use the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), a nationally representative household survey.

III.1. Regional variation

We first exploit the regional variation of the intensity of violence. We use data on political violence during the Cultural Revolution from Walder (2014). To date, this is the only known comprehensive dataset of victims during the Cultural Revolution. The number of victims are compiled from China's county gazetteers, which are book-length encyclopedias of a county's history, politics, economy, culture, and geography. These gazetteers were mostly published during the 1990s and the early 2000s, a time when the Chinese authorities exercised far less control and censorship of archival materials than they do now, and when memories of the Cultural Revolution were still fresh. The data contains information for 2,264 counties and cities, which amounts to 98.7% of China's county-level jurisdictions. The 31 counties where data is missing are all located in sparsely populated areas such as Tibet. The data provides us with county-level statistics of the total number of deaths, injuries, and other victims (e.g. someone who is arrested, interrogated, put through a struggle session, etc.) during the Cultural Revolution. Then, we can calculate the death, injury, and victim rate of each county, which we use as a proxy for the intensity of violence. While this dataset is almost surely not an exhaustive tally of all victims of the Cultural Revolution, it is still the most comprehensive account to date, and is widely used and verified in previous literature.

III.2. Cohort variation

Apart from regional variation, we also exploit cohort-level variation of individual exposure to political violence. In political science, the "impressionable years" theory posits that events and environments during adolescence and early adulthood plays a crucial role in shaping people's political attitudes, which can persist for decades (Krosnick and Alwin 1989; Jennings and Niemi 2014). There is no universally-accepted definitive age bracket that is considered "the impressionable age"; of course, attitudes could well be affected at an age slightly outside of any tentative impressionable age bracket. For the purpose of this paper, we use the age bracket of 14-24 years old from Ghitza, Gelman, and Auerbach (2023) as the impressionable

age, which falls squarely within adolescence and early adulthood.

We construct a variable for the length of exposure to political violence using the number of impressionable years spent under the Cultural Revolution. For example, someone born in 1947 was 14 years old in 1961 and 24 years old in 1971, so the number of impressionable years he/she spent under the Cultural Revolution is 6 (i.e. 1966-1971). We multiply an individual's impressionable years under Cultural Revolution with the intensity of violence at his/her birthplace to obtain the key right-hand-side variable, the exposure to violence.

III.3. Data for political participation and attitudes

For individual-level data on political participation and attitudes, we use the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), a nationally representative individual survey covering 25 of mainland China's 31 provinces with 95% of the country's population. The data contains a rich set of information at the individual level, including demographic information, education, life history, socioeconomic status, health, and political attitudes. The data also has household-level and community-level information.

For example, for the decision to vote at local elections, the 2014 wave of CFPS asks the following question:

— *Did you vote in the last election of the village committee/residents' committee?*

The dummy variable for whether the individual voted, constructed from this question, is used as the left-hand-side variable for our estimation of the effect on voter turnout in local elections. Variables for other forms of political participation can be similarly constructed, and will be introduced in later sections.

III.4. Baseline specification

For our baseline specification, we use the following regression:

$$Y_{icy} = \alpha + \beta Yearsof Exposure_y \times VictimRate_c + \gamma X_{icy} + u_c + v_y + \epsilon_{icy} \quad (1)$$

Where Y_{icy} is outcome variable for person i born in county c in year y. $Yearsof Exposure_y$ is the number of impressionable years that a person spent under the Cultural Revolution. $VictimeRate_c$ is the Cultural Revolution victim rate in county c, i.e. the number of victims divided by the total population of the county at the time of Cultural Revolution. X_{icy} is a set of controls, which include gender and whether the person belongs to the majority Han ethnicity. u_c and v_y are county and birth year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the county-birth year level.

We first perform balance tests according to certain innate characteristics of the individual that should not be affected by the exposure to violence. These include gender, Han ethnicity, parents' Communist Party membership, and parents' education. Table A.1 presents balance tests of $Yearsof Exposure_y \times VictimRate_c$ according to these innate characteristics, showing that our key independent variable of violence intensity is balanced. Table A.2 estimates Equation (1) using these characteristics as the left-hand-side variable. The coefficients are small and statistically insignificant, further suggesting that the sample is balanced.

IV. Results: political participation

IV.1. Local election turnout

Panel A of Table 1 presents the results of the estimation of our baseline Equation 1, using the dummy variable for the decision to vote in the last local election as the outcome variable. From Column (1) which uses the full sample, we see that exposure to political violence under the Cultural Revolution do have an effect on political participation even several decades later:

the coefficient on voter turnout is negative and significant at the 1% level. An increase in violence intensity from the 25th to the 75th percentile causes one additional year of exposure during the impressionable age to depress turnout by 0.26%. Then, increasing impressionable-age exposure from 0 to a full 11 years results in a reduction of turnout by 3%, which accounts for 6.5% of the average turnout level of 46.3%. Columns (2)-(3) split the sample into rural and urban residents, because rural and urban communities are organized differently, and different laws govern rural and urban elections. We see that the effect of political violence on turnout at urban elections is a bit larger than the effect on rural elections, but they do not differ much.

We then validate the causality of our results using alternative impressionable age brackets and Cultural Revolution periods. First, the impressionable age bracket of 14-24, although corroborated by the literature, is still rather arbitrary. We conduct placebo tests using the age brackets of 3-13 and 25-35 respectively as the placebo impressionable age. The results are shown in Panel B of Table 1. With both placebo age brackets, the coefficients on the placebo exposure to violence are smaller in magnitude and no longer statistically significant. These placebo age checks also alleviate concerns that the intensity of violence could be endogenous. If pre-existing regional factors that could have affected Cultural Revolution intensity in different counties also had a direct effect on later election turnout, then the effect of violence intensity should not be concentrated exclusively during the impressionable age.

We then look at alternative definitions of the Cultural Revolution that can be used to construct the variable for exposure to political violence. For this, we exploit the heterogeneity of violence during the Cultural Revolution. In today's popular discourse, "The Cultural Revolution" often refers to the entire period of 1966-76. However, historians have noticed that mass political violence mostly took place during the earlier years of the Cultural Revolution, whereas the later years consisted mostly of political infighting at the top and a "natural

Table 1: Effect of political violence on voter turnout

	(1) All	(2) Rural	(3) Urban
Panel A: baseline results			
Violence Intensity	-0.067***	-0.057**	-0.067***
	(0.017)	(0.027)	(0.023)
Constant	0.450***	0.502***	0.393***
	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.033)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,164	9,814	7,131
R-squared	0.202	0.233	0.267
Panel B: placebo impressionable age		(4) Age 3-13	(5) Age 25-35
Violence Intensity		-0.015	0.043
		(0.018)	(0.026)
Constant		0.446***	0.443***
		(0.020)	(0.020)
Controls		Yes	Yes
Observations		17,164	17,164
R-squared		0.201	0.201
Panel C: alternative definitions of Cultural Revolution		(6) 1966-71	(7) 1972-76
Violence Intensity		-0.121**	-0.060
		(0.048)	(0.046)
Constant		0.502***	0.500***
		(0.025)	(0.025)
Controls		Yes	Yes
Observations		17,164	17,164
R-squared		0.234	0.233

Note: This table presents results regarding voter turnout in local elections using Equation (1). Panel A presents baseline results: Columns (1)-(3) uses the entire sample, the rural subsample, and the urban subsample, respectively. Panel B uses different placebo age brackets as the impressionable age: Column (4) uses 3-13 years old as the placebo impressionable age, and Column (5) uses 25-35. Panel C uses alternative definitions of the Cultural Revolution: Column (6) uses 1966-71 as the period of interest, and Column (7) uses 1972-76. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

extension" of the repressive political environment at the bottom, but without the fatal zeal of the earlier years (Bu 2008). The exact demarcation of the earlier and later period may vary. For example, Fairbank (1987) said flatly that "The Cultural Revolution proper lasted three and a half years, from late 1965 to April 1969." Shi and Li (2008) argues that "The first period, the five years from 1966 to 1971, was a period when the 'continuous revolution' started and spread, and conflicts intensified. The second period, from 1972 to 1976, was characterized by the continuation, restriction, and reluctant maintenance of the 'continuous revolution'."

Since what this paper cares about is political violence, we follow Walder (2014) that identifies 1966-71 as the period when the bulk of political violence took place, and construct variables of exposure to political violence using 1966-71 and 1972-76 respectively. As shown in Panel C of Table 1, when the period of 1966-71 is used, the result is negative, large and statistically significant. The coefficient of -0.121 also makes sense: since the number of years of exposure ranges from 0 to 6 instead of 0 to 11 in the baseline Panel A, the coefficient using 1966-71 should be approximately twice the coefficient using 1966-76 (-0.067), which is indeed the case. But if the period of 1972-76 with much less political violence is used, the results is smaller and no longer significant. This further validates the causality of our baseline results: it is the exposure to the truly violent years of 1966-71 that drives the reduction of voter turnout, whereas the less violent years of 1972-76 matters less. This also alerts us to the nuances within a long-lasting political event such as the Cultural Revolution: although it is tempting to treat it as a single political event, it is actually a succession of events and phases, and its "periodization" has substantive consequences for research.

Notice that in Panel C of Table 1 we only explore alternative definitions of the Cultural Revolution *within* the period of 1966-76. We don't use alternative definitions that falls before or after this period. This is because, for example, a placebo Cultural Revolution definition of 1977-87 with the baseline impressionable age bracket of 14-24 is equivalent to

the baseline Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 with a placebo impressionable age bracket of 3-13, which is exactly Column (4) of Table 1.

At the time of the survey in 2014, Chinese law stipulates that village committees and urban residents' committees serve three-year terms. But the survey data shows that a small minority of locales held their last local elections more than three years ago, suggesting that local implementation may vary. In Table A.3, we run the baseline regressions using only the subsample of locales whose last elections were held in the past three years in accordance with the law. The results are essentially the same, which indicates that they are not driven by the timing of the last elections.

Local elections and political participation

A rich set of information about local elections allows us to look deeper into the effect of political violence on voter turnout. In particular, the rules of elections and the characteristics of communities determine the stakes of these elections: the higher the stakes of elections, the greater the degree of political participation that voting in these elections requires. In the following, we show that the effect of political violence on local election turnout is larger in places where the stakes of elections are higher, confirming that the effect we captured is indeed about political participation.

We start by investigating the heterogeneous effect according to the number of candidates running in the elections. In our sample, one candidate ran unopposed in the latest election in around 14% of villages and urban communities, whereas the rest had two or more candidates running. In Panel A of Table 2, Columns (1)-(2) run regressions on these two subsamples. We see that, for the villages and communities with only one candidate running for elections, the effect of political violence on turnout is small and statistically insignificant. But the effect is much larger and also significant at the 1% level when we consider competitive elections with multiple candidates.

We also have information on whether the list of candidates in local elections in each village or community requires approval from higher-level authorities. approval is required in most villages and communities, but there is also a substantial share (more than 20%) of villages and communities where such vetting and approval is not needed. The effect of the requirement for approval is not to have more elections where one candidate run unopposed: in fact, the share of elections with only one candidate is almost the same both for elections that require candidate vetting and for those that do not. However, the average number of candidates in elections that do not require candidate vetting (3.55) is somewhat larger than the average for elections that require vetting (2.80). Freer elections involve more political participation, whereas in elections with vetting requirements, higher-level authorities may try to restrict the entry of candidates that deviate from the party line or even stage-manage the elections, making them less meaningful. Columns (3)-(4) of Table 2 shows a noticeable difference in the effect of political violence on turnout. Whereas both are statistically significant, the effect on turnout is 3 times larger for elections without vetting requirements compared with those with vetting requirements. These results suggest that the effect we have been measuring is indeed on political participation: it is larger for elections that require a greater degree of political participation.

We now focus our attention on rural elections, where we have more information about the stakes of a local election. Martinez-Bravo et al. (2022) shows that the introduction of rural elections of village committees improved local policymaking: public goods expenditure increased, and the enforcement of unpopular policies such as the One-Child Policy (OCP) declined. We expect that, in places where public goods expenditure is low or the enforcement of One-Child Policy is high, villagers have more grievances towards local officials, and the stakes of local elections are higher. Elections with higher stakes imply a greater sense of political participation, so we hypothesize that the effect of political violence on turnout should be greater for these elections. In Panel B of Table 2, we present results of the heterogeneous effects according to public goods expenditure and one-child policy enforcement. First, in

Columns (5)-(6), we divide the sample according to whether public goods expenditure exceeded 50% of total government expenditure in 2010, before most places in our sample held the last elections. The effect of political violence on voter turnout concentrates among places where public expenditure was low. (In Table A.4, we use the share of administrative expenditure instead of public goods expenditure. As expected, the effect is more pronounced in places with a *higher* share of administrative expenditure.) As for One-Child Policy, we have information on the minimum amount of fine for One-Child policy violations. In Columns (7)-(8), we divide the subsample according to whether the minimum fine equals or exceeds zero.[1] The effect on voter turnout is pronounced in places with a positive minimum fine, but not so in places with a zero minimum.

The stakes of rural elections could also potentially depend on the degree of autonomy that villages committees actually have. Martinez-Bravo et al. (2022) documents that, since the early 2000s, there has been a gradual erosion of the power of the elected village committees. This erosion is positively associated with the bureaucratic capacity of the higher-level county government, but is mitigated as the distance between the village and the county seat increases. This means that the distance between the village and the seat of the county where it belongs can be used as a proxy for the power of the elected officials: the greater the distance, the greater their power. Columns (9)-(10) shows the heterogeneous effects according to whether the distance to the county seat is greater than 15km. Indeed, the effect is large, negative, and significant only for villages that are farther away. In Table A.5, we show that the results are robust to alternative thresholds for the distance to the county seat.

Besides confirming that the effect of political violence is indeed about political participation, the above results also help rule out the alternative explanation of opportunity cost: if exposure to political violence reduced turnout by somehow increasing the opportunity cost of

[1]Enforcement of One-Child Policy has always varied ever since its inception in the early 1980s. By the early 2010s, policymakers have gradually realized that the policy might have been a mistake; this is probably one reason why the minimum fine of zero in some places were tolerated.

Table 2: Heterogeneity according to stakes of rural elections

Panel A: Heterogeneity according to the election rules

	Number of candidates		Approval of candidates	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	One candidate	More candidates	Required	Not required
Violence Intensity	-0.025	-0.062***	-0.047**	-0.145**
	(0.113)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.060)
Constant	0.498***	0.457***	0.454***	0.485***
	(0.074)	(0.020)	(0.028)	(0.033)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,982	14,638	11,140	4,077
R-squared	0.304	0.202	0.220	0.262

Panel B: Heterogeneity according to the stakes of rural elections

	Public goods expenditure		Lowest OCP fine		Distance to county seat	
	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	$\leq 50\%$	$> 50\%$	> 0	$= 0$	> 15km	≤ 15km
Violence Intensity	-0.176**	-0.021	-0.067**	-0.017	-0.138***	-0.020
	(0.075)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.052)	(0.028)
Constant	0.508***	0.552***	0.492***	0.448***	0.533***	0.469***
	(0.048)	(0.037)	(0.024)	(0.081)	(0.029)	(0.061)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,136	4,676	9,581	1,615	5,464	3,841
R-squared	0.253	0.243	0.243	0.197	0.240	0.278

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) using different subsamples according to the characteristics of the elections or the community. In Panel A, Columns (1)-(2) divide the sample according to the number of candidates in the last election: Column (1) has elections where one candidate ran unopposed, and Column (2) has elections where two or more candidates were running. Columns (3)-(4) divide the sample according to whether approval from higher-level authorities is required for a candidate to run in elections: Column (3) covers elections where approval is required, and Column (4) covers elections where approval is not required. In Panel B, Columns (5)-(6) divide the sample according to public goods expenditure as a share of total government expenditure: Column (5) covers places where the the share is less than 50%, and Column (6) covers places where it accounts for more than 50%. Columns (7)-(8) divide the sample according to the minimum fine for One-Child Policy violations: Column (7) covers places where the minimum fine is positive, and Column (8) covers places where the minimum fine is zero. Columns (9)-(10) divide the sample according to the distance from the village committee to the seat of the county where it belongs: Column (9) covers places where the distance is greater than 15km, and Column (10) covers places where the distance is less than 15km. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

voting, the effect should be less pronounced in relatively meaningful elections, not more. Lai (2024) shows that more educated people face a greater opportunity cost of voting in China's elections. In Table A.6, we show that the level of education is not significantly affected by exposure to violence during the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, educational disruption during the Cultural Revolution is uniform across the country, and did not depend on the level of local political violence or the number of impressionable years a person spent under the Cultural Revolution.[2]

IV.2. Political action in face of unfair treatment

The previous section investigates the effect of political violence on a relatively neutral form of political participation — voting in local elections. In this section, we turn to political participation against the government. *Actual* political participation can be hard to measure at the individual level, since household surveys in China would not and probably could not ask about past participation in political actions that can be perceived as against the government. However, the 2014 wave of CFPS did ask the following question about individual responses to government mistreatment:

— *If you received very unfair treatment by the government, such as forced demolition, forced appropriation of land, forced taxation, and unreasonable punishment by law enforcement, what would you usually do?*

The question allows for seven different actions: (1) go to the superiors, (2) appeal to government departments, (3) go to court, (4) speak out on the Internet, in the media, or via social organizations, (5) sign petitions or protest, (6) swallow it and do nothing, (7) other. Among these actions, (2)-(5) can be thought of as having a political nature.[3] A dummy variable can

[2]China's college entrance exams were suspended for a decade until 1976. As for high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools, the Communist Party ordered schools across the country to cease teaching and participate in the revolution by the end of 1966. But in October 1967, this order was reversed, and schools were then asked to "resume classes and make revolution".

[3]Appealing to government departments can be politically sensitive in China. When people are unsatisfied with the local government and choose to petition (*shangfang*) to the next level of government or even Beijing,

then be constructed to denote whether an individual chooses to pursue any political action against the government in the face of mistreatment. Table 3 present the regression results using this dummy variable as the outcome variable. Indeed, early-life experience of political violence makes people less likely to engage in (or at least think of engaging in) political action against the government in the face of mistreatment. This reflects more of an aversion to political action than a decrease in mistrust against the government. First, other evidence in Section IV points to an unequivocal decline in all kinds of political action. Second, we will present evidence that experiencing political violence during the Cultural Revolution actually makes people more skeptical of the Chinese government (see Section V). Third, the phrasing of the survey question already conditions on being very unfairly mistreated by the government. In sum, these results demonstrate that, even if experiencing the Cultural Revolution turned people against the government, it also decreased the willingness for political action against the government at the same time. This can be thought of as a "chilling effect" of political violence.

IV.3. Communist Party membership

Apart from voting in local elections, other forms of political participation are also potentially of interest. One such form of participation is to become a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In 2014, the year of our survey data, 6.4% of the Chinese population (and 6.5% of our sample) are CCP members. Membership of the party confers political benefits that are unavailable to non-members; it is a must for anyone wishing to climb the bureaucratic ladder. There is also evidence that, although party membership does not directly bring material benefits, it does bring positive economic returns (McLaughlin 2017). Party membership is voluntary (although certain positions in the public sector may require it), and an aspiring member had to go through a long vetting and educating process before obtaining

it is common for the local government to dispatch agents to intercept the petitioners and (often forcibly) bring them home.

Table 3: Political action against the government

	Baseline	Placebo impressionable age		Alternative CR	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Political Action	3-13	25-35	1966-71	1972-76
Violence intensity	-0.029***	-0.009	0.015	-0.060**	-0.032
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.020)
Constant	0.493***	0.492***	0.490***	0.493***	0.492***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,176	17,176	17,176	17,176	17,176
R-squared	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) using a dummy variable for anti-government political action as the outcome variable. Column (1) present the baseline regression result. Columns (2)-(3) uses the placebo impressionable age brackets of 3-13 and 25-35 respectively. Columns (4)-(5) uses the alternative definition of Cultural Revolution of 1966-71 and 1972-76 repsectively. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

it. Therefore, those who choose to become party members can be thought of as being more aligned with the Communist regime than non-members.

The effect of early-life exposure to political violence on party membership is ambiguous *ex ante*. On the one hand, experiencing the Cultural Revolution could turn people against the Communist Party and reduce pro-regime political participation such as applying for party membership. On the other hand, the experience could also make people more likely to join the party, for fear of being purged or for improved chances of survival. Table 4 presents results regarding membership of the CCP. In Panel A, Columns (1)-(3), we use a dummy variable for CCP membership as the outcome variable. From Column (1), which uses the full sample, it seems that exposure to political violence has no significant overall effect on party membership. But this belies notable differences according to gender: in 2014, 75.3% of all party members were men, which confirms that Chinese politics is very male-dominated, and that men cares more about politics than women in China. Columns (2)-(3) splits the

sample into men and women, and we indeed see that there is a negative and significant effect on men, whereas the effect on women is negligible and insignificant.

The effect on men is meaningful: if we increase violence intensity from the 25th to the 75th percentile, and increase the time of exposure from 0 to a full 11 years, a man would be 1.5% less likely to join the CCP. Considering that only 11.6% of men are CCP members, this translates into a relative effect of 12.5%. The direction of the effect also confirms this paper's key idea about the relationship between mass violence and political participation. First, we have seen that exposure to political violence reduces political participation. Second, exposure to violence also means that people are more likely to oppose the Chinese government (see Section V below). Then it is natural that the violence would have a large negative effect on pro-regime political participation.

In Panel B and Panel C of Table 4, we restrict our attention to males and use placebo impressionable age brackets and alternative definitions of the Cultural Revolution, just like with local elections, and reach similar conclusions: the coefficients on political violence are small and statistically insignificant when using placebo impressionable age brackets of 3-13 or 15-25; and they are only significant when using 1966-71, the years when the bulk of violence happened, as the period of interest. One thing that could confound our analysis is that some people were already party members by the time the Cultural Revolution happened. Since we want to investigate the effect of political violence on people's subsequent choices of political participation, our results would be more robust when those who were already party members were excluded. In Table A.7, we run the same regressions with the male sample excluding those who were already party members before 1966, 1971, and 1976 respectively. The results remain significant and are not meaningfully different from the baseline.

IV.4. Robustness checks

We conduct several robustness checks. First, in Table A.8, we use alternative definitions of violence to replace the $VictimRate_c$ variable in Equation 1. Column (1) in each panel uses

Table 4: Membership of Chinese Communist Party

	(1) All	(2) Male	(3) Female
Panel A: baseline results			
Violence Intensity	-0.011	-0.032***	0.009
	(0.010)	(0.012)	(0.006)
Gender	0.091***	—	—
	(0.004)	—	—
Han	0.001	-0.002	0.008
	(0.014)	(0.025)	(0.010)
Constant	0.024*	0.116***	0.018*
	(0.013)	(0.023)	(0.010)
Observations	18,563	9,651	8,912
R-squared	0.057	0.043	0.046
Panel B: placebo impressionable age		(4) Age 3-13	(5) Age 25-35
Violence intensity		-0.004	0.002
		(0.023)	(0.034)
Han		-0.002	-0.002
		(0.017)	(0.017)
Constant		0.118***	0.118***
		(0.016)	(0.016)
Observations		9,651	9,651
R-squared		0.043	0.043
Panel C: alternative definitions of Cultural Revolution		(6) 1966-71	(7) 1972-76
Violence intensity		-0.069**	-0.030
		(0.033)	(0.042)
Han		-0.002	-0.002
		(0.017)	(0.017)
Constant		0.116***	0.117***
		(0.016)	(0.016)
Observations		9,651	9,651
R-squared		0.043	0.043

Note: This table presents results regarding membership of the Chinese Communist Party. Panel A presents baseline results. Columns (1)-(3) estimates Equation (1) using a dummy variable for party membership as the left-hand-side outcome variable. Column (1) uses the full sample, and Columns (2)-(3) uses the male and female sample respectively. Panel B uses the male sample and uses different placebo age brackets as the impressionable age: Column (4) uses 3-13 years old as the placebo impressionable age, and Column (5) uses 25-35. Panel C uses the male sample and uses alternative definitions of the Cultural Revolution: Column (6) uses 1966-71 as the period of interest, and Column (7) uses 1972-76. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

the absolute number of total victims (deaths + injuries + other victims, divided by 1 million in order to reduce the number of decimal places in the coefficient), instead of the victim rate used in Table 1, as the measure of violence. Columns (2) and (3) use the death rate (i.e. excluding the injured and other victims) and the absolute number of deaths (divided by 1 million as well) respectively as the measure of violence. All of the resulting coefficients are in the right direction to be negative, and the vast majority are statistically significant at least at the 10% level. The reduced statistical significance is to be expected, because the absolute number of victims (or deaths) is naturally a less reliable measure of violence intensity than the victim rate adjusted by the local population. In fact, a key feature of the successive political campaigns in Mao Zedong's China is that the authorities often decreed a percentage of victims to be persecuted. For example, in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, the Communist Party stipulated that each place should identify 5% of members as rightists. Local quotas may be even higher (MacFarquhar, Fairbank, and Twitchett 1987). What's more, as the most extreme form of violence, deaths are a less comprehensive measure of violence than total victims, which also explains the reduced statistical significance compared with the main results.

To ensure that our estimated effects are not driven by outliers, in Table A.9 we conduct the same estimation after winsorizing the counties whose victim rate is in the top 1%. The results are somewhat larger in magnitude to our baseline results and remain statistically significant at least at the 5% level, suggesting that our main results are not driven by outliers: if anything, outliers are attenuating our estimates. In Table A.10, we perform the same estimations in Table 1, but cluster the standard errors at the coarser county level. The statistical significance of the resulting coefficients are not meaningfully impacted. In Table A.11, we run regressions including all three impressionable age brackets of 3-13, 14-24, and 25-35 — that is to say, both the main impressionable age bracket of 14-24 and the two placebo brackets that we have tested above, instead of checking them one by one. The results confirms that the age bracket of 14-24 is indeed the one that matters; it is the

only coefficient that is large and statistically significant, whereas the coefficient for the other two age brackets are not. The relatively large coefficient for the age bracket of 25-35 for local elections (Column (5), Table 1) is also much attenuated. The only exception is the regression for charitable donations in the past year, for which the effect of the 3-13 age bracket dominates. But this is not surprising, as we know that trust formation could start at an earlier age than political beliefs.

Another concern is that people might move out of their place of birth, which would potentially render the intensity of violence at their place of birth an invalid measure of their exposure to violence. This concern is alleviated by the fact that the movement of people was strictly controlled and very rare during the reign of Mao Zedong. The household registration system (*hukou*), together with the planned economy where a person's livelihood was tied to the collective farm or the work unit he was assigned to, severely restricted the within-country mobility of people. It could also be that people's subsequent decision to move out of their county of birth in the post-Mao era could have been affected by their early-life experience of political violence. Table A.12 shows that this is indeed the case: those more exposed to violence were more likely to move out of their county of birth. This is unsurprising: the traumatic impression of political violence may well give people an extra reason to take the opportunity to move during China's post-Mao wave of urbanization. Moving, however, does not seem to have implications upon the results for political participation. In Table A.13, we estimate the effect on political participation using the subsample of never-movers, those who still live in their county of birth. The results are essentially the same as the baseline results.

We also check for a known episode of mass movement of people during the Cultural Revolution: the "send-down movement" (*shangshan xiaxiang*). At the start of the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong unleashed the Red Guards, primarily consisting of urban students, to spread his propaganda and seize power from local bureaucracies. However, by 1968, Mao became wary of the chaos that ensued, and the accumulation of unemployed urban youth

had become a headache for social stability. At the end of 1968, he instructed the educated youth to "go to the countryside and to receive re-education from the poor, lower and middle peasants", resulting in the relocation of millions of urban youths to the countryside. If someone was sent-down to the countryside during his or her impressionable age, this person would have been affected, at least in part, by the political violence in his or her place of residence instead of the birthplace, creating potential issues for our results. In Table A.14, we exclude those who were sent down to the countryside or affected by other smaller-scale episodes of relocation during the Cultural Revolution. The coefficients stay essentially the same as the baseline results.

IV.5. The mitigating effect of social capital

The effect of political violence on political participation may vary according to the level of social capital within a community. An extensive literature demonstrates the importance of social capital for socioeconomic outcomes and state-society interactions (e.g. Coleman 1988; Knack and Keefer 1997; Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2006). In particular, family clans, associations of related Chinese people with common surnames and ancestries, are a major informal institution that provides social capital in China. Clans enforce norms among members, provide public goods, facilitate collective action, and often fight against or at least try to mitigate the effect of government policies that are perceived to harm the clan and/or its members' interests (Greif and Iyigun 2013; Xu and Yao 2015; Martinez-Bravo et al. 2017; Chen, Kung, and Ma 2020). In places where clans provide high levels of social capital, the detrimental effect of mass violence on political participation might be mitigated. Lost trust could be rebuilt via such informal networks, and the cost of political participation could be reduced by thick networks provided by kinship groups. In short, violence coupled with weak informal institutions and low social capital results in persistent atomization that normalizes political withdrawal, whereas high levels of social capital mitigates the damage.

We measure social capital using three variable available in CFPS. Two of the variables

are at the community level: the proportion of the local population that shares the biggest local surname, and the presence of ancestral shrines in the village/community. One variable is at the household level: whether the family keeps a genealogy book. Ancestral shrines are temples dedicated to ancestors of a clan. They are used for clan-related rituals, serve family and community functions, and are a proxy for the presence of strong clan networks. In Table 5, we investigate whether the effect of political violence on the three forms of political participation differ according to the level of social capital. Columns (1)-(2) of each panel divides the sample into places where the biggest local surname accounts for $\leq 30\%$ or $> 30\%$ of the local population, respectively. Columns (3)-(4) divides the sample into places without and with ancestral shrines. As for genealogy books, the presence of a genealogy book indicates a high level of clan cohesion, and has been widely used as a proxy for social capital (Cao, Xu, and Zhang 2022). Columns (5)-(6) divides the sample into individuals whose family without and with a genealogy book. It is assumed that the level of social capital is high in places where the biggest surname accounts for a large proportion of the population and places with ancestral shrines, as well as in families keeping a genealogy book. We see that the detrimental effect of political violence concentrates at places with low social capital (Columns (1), (3), and (5) in each panel). These results suggest that social capital serves as a buffer against the politically "atomizing" effect of violence. As a robustness check, in Table A.15, we vary the threshold of the share of the biggest surname, and the effect is still driven by places with weaker biggest surnames.

There are two possible explanations as to the mechanism behind the mitigating effect of social capital. One explanation is that the effect of social capital kicks in at the time of the violence in the 1960s and 1970s: the support network from family clans mitigated the adverse psychological effect of political violence on the people. The other is that social capital takes effect at the time of the choice of political participation: the presence of family clans mitigates the collective action problem, meaning that people have less qualms about contemporary political participation. While we do not have definitive evidence of either explanations, Panel

Table 5: The mitigating effect of social capital

	Biggest surname as % of population		Ancestral shrine in community		Geneaology book	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	$\leq 30\%$	$> 30\%$	No Shrine	Shrine	No	Yes
Panel A: Local election turnout						
Violence intensity	-0.086**	-0.021	-0.065***	-0.020	-0.064***	-0.037
	(0.033)	(0.027)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.042)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	6,122	5,761	15,066	2,098	12,730	3,966
R-squared	0.241	0.253	0.217	0.166	0.214	0.214
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	$\leq 30\%$	$> 30\%$	No Shrine	Shrine	No	Yes
Panel B: Political action against gov't abuse						
Violence intensity	-0.054**	0.001	-0.027***	-0.022	-0.036***	-0.012
	(0.025)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.174)	(0.011)	(0.061)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	6,128	5,765	15,076	2,100	12,741	3,967
R-squared	0.158	0.127	0.106	0.198	0.113	0.133
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	$\leq 30\%$	$> 30\%$	No Shrine	Shrine	No	Yes
Panel C: Communist Party membership						
Violence intensity	-0.031	-0.005	-0.035***	-0.019	-0.024*	-0.032
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.040)
Controls	Yes (w/o gender)	Yes (w/o gender)	Yes (w/o gender)	Yes (w/o gender)	Yes (w/o gender)	Yes (w/o gender)
Observations	3,393	3,109	8,517	1,132	7,134	2,236
R-squared	0.065	0.063	0.049	0.089	0.051	0.105

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) using different subsamples according to different levels of social capital in the village or community. Panels A-C use local election turnout, political action against government mistreatment, and Communist Party membership as outcomes variables respectively. In each panel, Columns (1)-(2) divide the sample according to the size of the biggest surname in the village/community: Column (1) covers places where the biggest surname accounts for $\leq 30\%$ of the population, and Column (2) covers places where it accounts for $> 30\%$. Columns (3)-(4) divide the sample according to whether there are ancestral shrines in the village/community: Column (3) covers places without ancestral shrines, and Column (4) covers places with them. Columns (5)-(6) divide the sample according to whether the family keeps a genealogy book: Column (5) covers those without a genealogy book, and Column (6) covers those with a genealogy book. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

C of Table 5 on CCP membership provides a clue. CCP membership differs from our other outcomes of political participation in several meaningful ways. First, joining the CCP is a once-in-a-lifetime decision, whereas voting in elections or fighting against government abuse are contemporary, everyday forms of repeated participation that depend on the particularities of the event. Second, less than 7% of the population are CCP members, which means that the collective action problem in political participation is much less manifested in the decision whether to join the CCP — members of family clans do not join the CCP in droves. The upshot is that any effect of social capital on CCP membership is likely to happen at the time of the violence instead of at the time of political participation. In Panel C of Table 5 we see that, compared with the effect of social capital on other outcomes, the statistical significance and the magnitude of coefficient differences between subsamples with regard to CCP membership are much attenuated. This provides suggestive evidence that is supportive of the second explanation of the effect of social capital, that it mostly happens at the time of political participation.

There might be concerns that social capital is endogenous to political violence during the Cultural Revolution. First, the Cultural Revolution called for the destruction of "Four Olds" (old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits), with kinship networks also frowned upon as an feudal and backward "old". It could be that clan power is still weaker today where violence during the Cultural Revolution was more intense. Second, people with different experiences of violence during the Cultural Revolution might strategically choose to move to places with different levels of social capital when the movement of people became freer in the reform era.

In the following, we address these concerns about endogeneity. Regarding the effect of violence on social capital at the community level, whereas the Cultural Revolution may well have affected the level of social capital, the length of the campaign lasted well shorter than a generation, and a lot of the shrines and genealogy books destroyed by the Cultural

Revolution have been reestablished in the reform era. There were also no Stalin-style mass displacements of entire communities. Indeed, Alesina et al. (2021) shows that pre-revolution inequalities was transmitted through family lines despite the Communist Revolution and Cultural Revolution and re-emerged in the reform era. Regarding individual choices to move, we note that the social capital that we measured is based on kinship networks. Unless the individual's family members live at his or her destination, there is no point in moving to a place with higher social capital established by other clans. In Table A.16, we check for potential endogeneity of social capital. The results show that, at the individual level, early-life experience of political violence has no significant effect on the social capital of the place an individual chooses to live in the 2010s. Table A.17 shows that, at the community level, the victim rate during the Cultural Revolution has no significant effect on the level of local social capital.

IV.6. Intergenerational transmission

In the above, we focused on the effect on the political participation of the generation that experienced political violence first-hand. A natural next question is whether they transmitted their aversion to political participation to the subsequent generation, as the metaphor of "institutional genes" (Xu 2025) implies. To investigate this, we run the following regression:

$$Y_{icy} = \alpha + \beta Parent_Exposureicy + \gamma X_{icy} + u_c + v_y + \epsilon_{icy} \tag{2}$$

Where Y_{icy} is the outcome variable for younger-generation person i of birth cohort y living in county c. $Parent_Exposure_{icy}$ is father's or mother's exposure to violence during the Cultural Revolution, as calculated by the multiplication of the parent's years of exposure and the victim rate in the parent's county of birth. X_{icy} are a set of controls. Now that the treatment is less attached to the individuals themselves, we can afford to include more controls: gender, Han ethnicity, years of education, and marital status. u_c and v_y are county

and birth-year fixed effects. For these regressions, we use only the subsample of those born in or after 1977 in order to exclude any direct effect of the Cultural Revolution itself on the younger generation. The results are shown in Table 6.

There are some evidence of intergenerational transmission of the aversion to political participation, especially with regard to local elections. Those whose parents are more exposed to violence during the Cultural Revolution are less likely to vote in local elections. The size of the effect of father's and mother's exposure are very close to each other. The intergenerational effect on political action against government mistreatment is statistically less significant, and there is no significant effect on Communist Party membership.

Table 6: Intergenerational transmission

	(1) Voting	(2) Voting	(3) Action against abuse	(4) Action against abuse	(5) Party member	(6) Party member
Father's exposure	-0.070**		-0.029*		0.013	
	(0.027)		(0.017)		(0.021)	
Mother's exposure		-0.068***		-0.011		0.018
		(0.019)		(0.030)		(0.014)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,233	3,250	3,238	3,253	4,066	4,007
R-squared	0.259	0.267	0.145	0.138	0.125	0.139

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) using father's or mother's exposure to violence. Columns (1)-(2) use turnout in local elections as the outcome variable. Columns (3)-(4) use political action against government mistreatment as outcome variable. Columns (5)-(6) use CCP membership as outcome variable, using the subsample of males. Control variables include gender, Han ethnicity, years of education, and marital status. Standard errors are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

V. Results: political attitudes

V.1. Disapproval of the government

In this section, we look at the effect of exposure to violence on individual political attitudes. How does exposure to political violence affect approval of the regime? Because China is a tightly controlled autocracy, surveys would not ask whether respondents approve of the Communist Party, the central government, or the country's president. However, CFPS

does ask for respondents' approval rating of the local government, which we use as a (albeit imperfect) proxy for their attitude towards the regime. We use the following survey question:

— *How do you rate the overall work of your county/district government in the past year?*

Responses are on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strong approval and 5 indicating strong disapproval. The result of the regression is shown in Column (1) of Table 7. As we can see, those with higher early-life exposure to political violence tend to disapprove the local government more.

Another piece of evidence comes from China's anti-corruption campaign. When Xi Jinping, China's current president, came into power in 2013, he launched a sweeping anti-corruption campaign that lasted to this day. The campaign went hand-in-hand with China's increasing repression and Xi's consolidation of power into his own hands: journalists and scholars alike have argued that the anti-corruption campaign is but an excuse to get rid of political rivals and establish strongman rule (Economist 2014; Wang, Lützenrath, and Wolton 2022). Notably, the issue of corruption is associated with the Cultural Revolution in China's official propaganda popular political discourse: according to this narrative, Mao Zedong had an egalitarian streak, and one of the key reasons why he launched the Cultural Revolution is that he was fed up with the rampant corruption and bureaucratic privileges within the regime, and wanted to crack down on it using his favorite "mass movement" method (Gao 2014). Since Deng Xiaoping opened up China in the late 1970s, inequality and corruption has crept back, fueling nostalgia for the Cultural Revolution to the consternation of some who experienced the violence (Wang 2009; Mai 2016). The CFPS asks respondents to rate the importance of the issue of corruption in China, both just before the anti-corruption campaign (2012) and just after (2014). We use the following survey question:

— *Overall, how important do you think the issue of government corruption is in China?*

Responses are on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 indicating not important at all and 10 indicating very important. Columns (2)-(3) of Table 7 use this as the outcome variable. When this

question was asked in 2012, just before the start of the campaign, exposure to political violence had no effect on people's judgment of the importance of the issue of corruption. However, in 2014, just after the start of the campaign, those who experienced higher political violence tended to think that the issue of corruption was less important. This change suggests that people who experienced political violence during the Cultural Revolution are more keenly aware of the dangerous link between anti-corruption purges and the return of the specter of the Cultural Revolution. They tend to think that the issue of corruption is not so important as to warrant the return of mass repression or even a second Cultural Revolution. There may be concerns that this result is simply due to the decrease of corruption following the anti-corruption campaign. Here we offer two arguments against this possibility. First, the overall trend around the start of the campaign is that people felt corruption was more important (the mean for the response was 5.84 in 2012 and 7.15 in 2014). Our result goes against this general trend. Second, it takes time for the anti-corruption campaign to have a tangible effect on people's everyday lives. When the 2014 wave of the CFPS survey was conducted, the anti-corruption campaign was just getting started. The investigations of two of the most prominent officials to fall from grace in the campaign, Zhou Yongkang and Guo Boxiong, had not yet been announced at that time. While we cannot completely rule out the possibility that a decrease in corruption is at play, our arguments above indicate that the mechanism linking anti-corruption and the Cultural Revolution at least plays a substantial role, revealing subtle forms of stronger disapproval of the regime among those who experienced higher political violence in the past.

V.2. Salience of politics

We now look at the effect on the salience of politics in people's minds: do people more exposed to political violence care less about politics? The CFPS asks respondents how many days per week they check political news on TV or on the Internet. We collapse this into binary variables of whether they check political news. As shown in Columns (1)-(2) of

Table 7: Attitudes towards the regime

	(1) Disapproval	(2) Corruption, 2012	(3) Corruption, 2014
Violence intensity	0.067**	-0.062	-0.143**
	(0.032)	(0.090)	(0.071)
Gender	0.063***	0.268***	0.435***
	(0.018)	(0.051)	(0.042)
Han	0.011	0.298**	0.008
	(0.050)	(0.148)	(0.122)
Constant	2.344***	5.212***	6.725***
	(0.048)	(0.143)	(0.118)
Observations	17,172	14,092	15,653
R-squared	0.078	0.090	0.102

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) using outcome variables related to approval of the regime. Column (1)-(2) uses the respondent's rating of the importance of the problem of corruption (on a scale of 0-10) in 2012 and 2014, respectively. Column (3) uses a variable of the respondent's disapproval rating of the local government (1 being strongest approval, 5 being strongest disapproval). Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.18, exposure to political violence during the Cultural Revolution has no effect on the predilection for receiving political news. However, things change when it comes to the salience of politics that is more related to action. Among non-voters in the local elections, the CFPS asks for the reason why they did not vote. Four choices are provided: (1) having something else to do at the time of the elections; (2) feeling that elections are useless; (3) unaware of the elections taking place; (4) other. We construct a binary variable of whether they did not vote because they were unaware of the elections at all. The result, shown in Column (3), indicates a positive and significant effect: people more exposed to political violence are more likely to be unaware of local elections. Taking together, these results suggest a certain kind of heterogeneity of the effect of political violence on the salience of politics: it does not seem to have an effect on the salience of political news and topics in general, but it does decrease people's willingness to be aware of political events that require their action.

VI. Conclusion

This paper finds a "chilling effect" of mass political violence in an autocratic context. Violence turns individual attitudes against the regime, but at the same time makes people less likely to engage in all kinds of political participation: voting in local elections, pursuing political action against government mistreatment, or join the Chinese Communist Party. These effects persist even several decades after the violence in the Cultural Revolution ended. Together with previous literature on the effect of Cultural Revolution on beliefs, this paper demonstrates one potential way in which the "institutional genes" of authoritarianism are passed on: by shaping the political attitude and behavior of individuals who experienced mass purges at their formative age.

In this regard, this paper is closely related to the concept of path dependence of political institutions. By showing the effect of mass purges on individual political beliefs and behav-

iors, we are taking a tentative step to unveil the mechanisms behind path dependence and institutional persistence: on a national scale, past authoritarianism tend to entrench future authoritarianism, but how? One possible corollary from this paper is that past institutions shape individual beliefs and behaviors, which in turn shapes future institutions. This paper demonstrated the first part of the link; the second part would be an interesting avenue for future research.

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A Appendix: Additional figures and tables

Table A.1: Balance test

	Yes		No		Unconditional		Conditional	
	(1) Mean	(2) Std	(3) Mean	(4) Std	(5) Difference	(6) p-value	(7) Difference	(8) p-value
Gender: Male	0.073	0.268	0.074	0.286	-0.001	0.820	0.001	0.804
Ethnicity: Han	0.076	0.283	0.046	0.191	0.029	0.000	-0.002	0.842
Father: CCP member	0.075	0.320	0.073	0.281	0.001	0.847	0.003	0.504
Mother: CCP member	0.123	0.523	0.072	0.277	0.051	0.002	0.009	0.494
Father: any edu	0.056	0.277	0.076	0.280	-0.020	0.000	-0.001	0.822
Mother: any edu	0.040	0.210	0.073	0.270	-0.033	0.000	-0.004	0.383

Note: This table presents the balance tests of our key independent variable — violence intensity — according to innate characteristics of the individual. Columns (5)-(6) presents the t-test of the unconditional difference in mean from Columns (1) and (3). Columns (7)-(8) present the conditional difference, controlling for birth place and birth year fixed effects.

Table A.2: Balance test

	(1) Han ethnicity	(2) Gender	(3) Father CCP member	(4) Mother CCP member	(5) Father's education	(6) Mother's education
Violence intensity	-0.001	0.004	0.009	0.003	-0.073	-0.139
	(0.006)	(0.020)	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.131)	(0.110)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.922***	0.527***	0.154***	0.017***	3.085***	1.205***
	(0.002)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.005)	(0.165)	(0.116)
Observations	18,563	18,563	15,663	15,963	14,197	14,515
R-squared	0.569	0.010	0.042	0.031	0.161	0.188

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation 1, using as outcome variable certain "innate characteristics" that should not vary with exposure to violence. Columns (1)-(6) uses the majority Han ethnicity, gender, father's CCP membership, mother's CCP membership, father's years of education, and mother's years of education, respectively. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.3: Subsample of communities with an election in the past 3 years

	(1) All	(2) Rural	(3) Urban
Violence Intensity	-0.069***	-0.063*	-0.066***
	(0.019)	(0.034)	(0.023)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.459***	0.520***	0.399***
	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.034)
Observations	16,269	9,286	6,764
R-squared	0.198	0.230	0.268

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation 1, using the subsample of communities where the last local election was held in the past 3 years. Columns (1)-(3) uses the entire subsample, rural areas, and urban areas, respectively. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.4: Heterogeneous effect according to administrative expenditure share

	(1) $> 33\%$	(2) $\leq 33\%$
Violence Intensity	-0.170**	-0.023
	(0.081)	(0.026)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.433***	0.539***
	(0.060)	(0.031)
Observations	3,527	5,820
R-squared	0.262	0.219

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation 1, using subsamples according to the share of administrative expenditure in total government expenditure. Column (1) uses the subsample with administrative expenditure greater then 33%. Column (2) uses the subsample with administrative expenditure less than 33%. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.5: Alternative thresholds for the distance from village to county seat

	(1) $>$ 10km	(2) $\leq$ 10km	(3) $>$ 20km	(4) $\leq$ 20km
Violence Intensity	-0.116***	0.001	-0.138***	-0.021
	(0.039)	(0.042)	(0.052)	(0.028)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.504***	0.585***	0.534***	0.447***
	(0.028)	(0.089)	(0.029)	(0.056)
Observations	6,943	2,363	5,185	4,121
R-squared	0.247	0.273	0.240	0.276

Note: This table presents the results of the regressions in Columns (5)-(6) of Table 5 using different thresholds of the distance from the village committee to the seat of the county where it belongs. Columns (1)-(2) of this table use 10km as the threshold. Columns (3)-(4) use 20km. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.6: Effect of political violence on education

	Years of Education			≥ Middle School		
	(1) All	(2) Rural	(3) Urban	(4) All	(5) Rural	(6) Urban
Violence Intensity	0.174	0.199	0.133	0.024	0.004	0.031
	(0.147)	(0.219)	(0.187)	(0.017)	(0.029)	(0.023)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	4.666***	3.657***	6.478***	0.333***	0.250***	0.489***
	(0.159)	(0.183)	(0.300)	(0.018)	(0.022)	(0.032)
Observations	18,563	10,465	7,528	18,563	10,465	7,528
R-squared	0.342	0.338	0.377	0.276	0.249	0.323

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1), using education as the left-hand-side outcome variable. Columns (1)-(3) use years of education, and Columns (4)-(6) use a dummy variable for whether the person has ever enrolled in middle school. Columns (1) and (4) use the entire sample. Columns (2) and (5) use the rural subsample. Columns (3) and (6) use the urban subsample. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.7: Excluding pre-existing party members

	(1) After 1966	(2) After 1971	(3) After 1976
Violence intensity	-0.040***	-0.041***	-0.031***
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.104***	0.092***	0.090***
	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.016)
Observations	9,504	9,372	9,222
R-squared	0.042	0.040	0.041

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation for party membership of the male sample, excluding those who were already Communist Party members before a certain year. Columns (1)-(3) use 1966, 1971, and 1976 as the cutoff year respectively. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.8: Alternative definitions of violence

	(1) Number of victims	(2) Death rate	(3) Number of deaths
Panel A: Local election turnout			
Violence intensity	-0.029*	-1.568**	-1.758**
	(0.016)	(0.735)	(0.885)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.447***	0.447***	0.447***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Observations	17,164	17,164	17,164
Panel B: Communist Party membership			
Violence intensity	-0.017	-0.641**	-0.448
	(0.016)	(0.315)	(0.886)
Controls	Yes (w/o gender)	Yes (w/o gender)	Yes (w/o gender)
Constant	0.117***	0.119***	0.118***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Observations	9,651	9,651	9,651
Panel C: Political action against gov't mistreatment			
Violence intensity	-0.025*	-0.394	-1.402*
	(0.015)	(0.897)	(0.822)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.492***	0.491***	0.492***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Observations	17,176	17,176	17,176

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) with alternative definitions of the $ViolenceIntensity_c$ variable: Column (1) uses the absolute number of total victims divided by 1 million; Column (2) uses the death rate; Column (3) uses the absolute number of deaths divided by 1 million. Control variables include gender (except for Panel B, where only the sample of men are used) and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.9: Winsorizing top 1% of victim rate

	(1) Voter turnout	(2) Political Action	(3) Party membership
Violence intensity	-0.087***	-0.041**	-0.041**
	(0.023)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes (w/o gender)
Constant	0.451***	0.494***	0.116***
	(0.020)	(0.027)	(0.023)
Observations	17,164	17,176	9,651
R-squared	0.203	0.104	0.043

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1), after winsorizing the counties whose victim rate is in the top 1%. Column (1) uses local election turnout as outcome variable. Column (2) uses political action against government mistreatment as outcome variable. Column (3) uses Communist Party membership as outcome variable. Control variables include gender (except for Column (2) where only the male sample is used) and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.10: Clustering standard errors at county level

	(1) Voter Turnout	(2) Political Action	(3) Party Membership
Violence intensity	-0.067***	-0.029*	-0.032**
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes (w/o gender)
Constant	0.450***	0.493***	0.116***
	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.017)
Observations	17,164	17,176	9,651
R-squared	0.202	0.099	0.043

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1), clustering standard errors at the county level. Column (1) uses local election turnout as outcome variable. Column (2) uses political action against government mistreatment as outcome variable. Column (3) uses Communist Party membership as outcome variable. Control variables include gender (except for Column (2) where only the male sample is used) and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.11: Specification with three existing age brackets

	(1) Voter Turnout	(2) Political Action	(3) Party Membership
Violence intensity (3-13)	-0.028	-0.016	-0.014
	(0.020)	(0.010)	(0.023)
Violence intensity (14-24)	-0.072***	-0.032***	-0.035***
	(0.017)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Violence intensity (25-35)	0.025	0.005	0.009
	(0.028)	(0.024)	(0.039)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes (w/o gender)
Constant	0.452***	0.494***	0.115***
	(0.020)	(0.027)	(0.023)
Observations	17,164	17,176	9,651
R-squared	0.202	0.104	0.043

Note: This table presents the results of regressions using all three impressionable age brackets of 3-13, 14-24, and 25-35. Column (1) uses local election turnout as outcome variable. Column (2) uses political action against government mistreatment as outcome variable. Column (3) uses Communist Party membership as outcome variable. Control variables include gender (except for Column (2) where only the male sample is used) and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.12: The effect of political violence on moving

	(1) All	(2) Rural *Hukou*	(3) Urban *Hukou*
Violence Intensity	0.014***	0.018***	-0.000
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.091***	0.064***	0.162***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.033)
Observations	18,563	14,178	4,038
R-squared	0.347	0.397	0.339

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) with a dummy for having moved out of the county of birth as the outcome variable. Column (1) uses the full sample; Column (2) uses the subsample of those with rural *Hukou* (household registration); Column (3) uses the subsample of those with urban *Hukou*. Control variables include gender (except for Column (2) where only the male sample is used) and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.13: Subsample of never movers

	(1) Voter Turnout	(2) Political Action	(3) Party Membership
Violence intensity	-0.066***	-0.026**	-0.034***
	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.013)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes (w/o gender)
Constant	0.456***	0.500***	0.107***
	(0.020)	(0.027)	(0.022)
Observations	16,112	16,123	8,887
R-squared	0.209	0.109	0.042

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1), using the subsample of those who are still living in their county of birth. Column (1) uses local election turnout as outcome variable. Column (2) uses political action against government mistreatment as outcome variable. Column (3) uses Communist Party membership as outcome variable. Control variables include gender (except for Column (2) where only the male sample is used) and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.14: Excluding those affected by the send-down movement

	(1) Voter Turnout	(2) Political Action	(3) Party Membership
Violence intensity	-0.067***	-0.021*	-0.030**
	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.013)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes (w/o gender)
Constant	0.452***	0.495***	0.105***
	(0.020)	(0.028)	(0.023)
Observations	17,661	16,755	9,391
R-squared	0.134	0.106	0.041

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1), excluding those who were sent down to the countryside or affected by other known episodes of relocation during the Cultural Revolution. Column (1) uses local election turnout as outcome variable. Column (2) uses political action against government mistreatment as outcome variable. Column (3) uses Communist Party membership as outcome variable. Control variables include gender (except for Column (2) where only the male sample is used) and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.15: Alternative thresholds for the share of biggest surname

	(1) $\leq 20\%$	(2) $> 20\%$	(3) $\leq 40\%$	(4) $> 40\%$
Violence Intensity	-0.208***	-0.021	-0.091***	-0.017
	(0.064)	(0.023)	(0.033)	(0.028)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.539***	0.537***	0.539***	0.370***
	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.026)	(0.084)
Observations	3,972	7,911	7,693	4,190
R-squared	0.250	0.238	0.226	0.264

Note: This table presents the results of the regressions in Columns (1)-(2) of Table 5 using different thresholds of the share of local population with the biggest local surname. The outcome variable is voting in local elections. Columns (1)-(2) of this table use 20% as the threshold. Columns (3)-(4) use 40%. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.16: Checking potential endogeneity of social capital: individual level

	(1) Biggest surname	(2) Shrine	(3) Genealogy book
Violence intensity	0.587	-0.000	0.014
	(0.536)	(0.004)	(0.011)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	41.728***	0.097***	0.177***
	(1.088)	(0.013)	(0.017)
Observations	12,605	18,563	18,141
R-squared	0.529	0.468	0.281

Note: This table presents regressions that check the potential endogeneity of social capital as a result of political violence. Columns (1)-(3), at the individual level, use as the outcome variable the characteristics of the place the individual chooses to live: Column (1) uses the share of the local population with the biggest surname; Column (2) uses whether the community has an ancestral shrine; Column (3) uses whether the household keeps a genealogy book. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.17: Checking potential endogeneity of social capital: community level

	(1) Biggest surname	(2) Shrine
Violence intensity	26.942	-0.286
	(28.201)	(0.224)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Constant	40.623***	0.081***
	(3.238)	(0.025)
Observations	353	585
R-squared	0.069	0.034

Note: This table presents regressions that check the potential endogeneity of social capital as a result of political violence. Columns (1)-(2), at the community level, checks whether violence affects community characteristics: Column (1) uses the share of population with biggest surname as outcome variable, and Column (2) uses the presence of ancestral shrine as outcome variable. Control variables include the area of the community, the population, the share of the population working elsewhere as migrant workers, and income per capita. Standard errors are in parenthesis. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table A.18: Salience of politics

	(1) TV	(2) Internet	(3) Unaware of election
Violence intensity	-0.010	-0.004	0.048***
	(0.015)	(0.011)	(0.018)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.373***	0.080***	0.767***
	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.026)
Observations	17,138	17,164	8,082
R-squared	0.148	0.168	0.140

Note: This table presents the results of the estimation of Equation (1) using outcome variables related to the salience of politics. Column (1)-(2) uses a binary variable of whether the respondent check political news on TV and on the Internet respectively. Column (3), with the subsample of non-voters in local elections, uses a binary variable for whether they did not vote because they were not aware of the elections. Control variables include gender and whether the individual belongs to the Han ethnicity. Standard errors, clustered at the county-birthyear level, are in parenthesis.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$