MARCH 29 - JUNE 27, 2008

Representing time on a map remains a cartographic challenge. The use of video and interactive media has greatly expanded the possibilities for such representations. Using a traditional 2D surface is more limiting but does have the advantage of allowing the reader to look at the full timescale in a single image, quickly surmising any trends and large scale pattern(s). The large map of Zimbabwe to the right represents spatial and temporal patterns of political violence that took place between March 29, 2008, the first presidential election date, and June 27, the second round of polling. The data consists of total number of serious violent incidents, including murder, torture, and assault, collated by political constituency. This information was collected by pro-democracy groups in Zimbabwe, some of which can be viewed at http://www.sokwanele.com/node/2333. Data was gathered for 70 out of the 210 political constituencies in Zimbabwe.

Violence was used in the months after the March 29 poll to secure the result of the second vote. With no candidate winning the required 50% in the first round, a second round of polling was needed. Human rights reports indicate that incumbent president Robert Mugabe’s party was involved in organized violence against perceived opponents. Escalating violence eventually led opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai to withdraw from the poll on June 22nd. The vote went ahead however and in a climate of shock and fear, Mugabe won with 85%.

To represent the three months of violence on a map, a tree-ring type of graphic was used where each ring symbolizes a single month of incidents. The incidents were normalized by population, grouped into five equal groups or quantiles and colored from light to dark brown. The striking patterns in the north east diverge from the general trend of increasing violence starting in May and peaking in June. The fact that the violence peaked much earlier in the north east is interesting as this is a Mugabe stronghold. It suggests that there was an initial reaction to the lost election in areas where Mugabe already had a foothold, followed by a sustained and cynical cross-country roll out in June. The north east also has large communal land areas which are governed by traditional leaders who in many cases, provided a platform for violence and intimidation.

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ELECTION RESULTS

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