

PREVENTING ELECTION VIOLENCE IN LIBERIA

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WHAT DO WE KNOW?

THE BIG PICTURE

- Election violence is a broad term that encompasses: vote-rigging, riots or protests, repression by security forces, intimidation, vandalism, targeted killing, terrorism, sexual violence, full-scale anti-regime insurgency, etc.
- Violence usually occurs with other election-related irregularities (i.e. vote-rigging) (Kelly 2012)
- Most of this violence occurred in the pre-election period (though post-election violence is more likely to escalate) (Strauss and Taylor 2012)
- Election violence can happen before, during and after the election
- African national elections between 1990 and 2008 (Strauss and Taylor 2012):
 - 10 % of African elections have involved the highest level of violence
 - 10 % have involved substantial violence
 - 38 % had limited violence
 - 42 % had no substantial violence
- Incumbents are the primary perpetrators of violence (Strauss and Taylor 2012)
- Other actors include: official security forces OR contracting out to local thugs and gangs (privatize violence), opposition groups and factions of these groups, and “neutral” armed groups/unaligned local actors

WHY DOES VIOLENCE BREAK OUT?

- Elections can promote violence in some cases:
 - In close elections, incumbent feels threatened by the opposition (Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2013; Bekoe, 2012)
 - When there are few restraints on the incumbent (Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2013)
 - Majoritarian (winner takes all) vs. proportional representation (parliamentary system) (Fjelde and Hoglund 2014)
 - Presence of weak state institutions and informal institutions such as patronage networks (Fjelde and Hoglund 2014; Bekoe, 2012)
 - Ethnic divisions/ethnic groups kept out of power (Fjelde and Hoglund 2014)
 - In post-conflict countries (Brancati & Snyder 2012, Flores & Nooruddin 2012) and countries with higher income inequality (Fjelde and Hoglund 2014)
 - Election monitoring of fraudulent elections (post-election violence) (Daxecker 2012)
- Zimbabwe and Cote D' Ivoire: Use of land as a crucial patronage tool (Boone and Kriger 2012)
- Sudan and Nigeria: Patronage politics led to violence because it raised the stakes of the election (Sisk 2012)
- Kenya: Decrease state control (Al-Shabaab), lack of oversight of political figures, ethnic conflict (Mueller 2012)

MOTIVATIONS FOR ELECTION VIOLENCE

- Coercion, displacement, killing and intimidation are deployed to win elections. They kill or displace electoral rivals and their potential supporters → carried out by government (Staniland 2014)
- Opposition parties can also arm themselves and fight back against rulers and their backers. Goal is to influence voters' choices through threats and actively rigging and manipulating campaigns and voting. → carried out by opposition (Staniland 2014)
- Violence is intended to prevent democratization or destroy democratic politics altogether (i.e to usher in fascism or dictatorship) (Staniland 2014)
- Unsanctioned violence by security forces (principal-agent problem)

THE ROLE OF YOUTH (PARTY WINGS)

- In Ghana, political parties recruit and use foot soldiers (youth activists affiliated to political parties) to commit electoral fraud in order to win elections or to maintain their control over state resources (Bob-Milliar 2014)
- In Zimbabwe, at the time of the 2008 presidential election run-off, violence was perpetrated by the military, the police, war veterans, and youth militia and supporters (HRW 2008)
- In Uganda, youth activism helped revive the main political parties (Carbone 2003)
- In Rwanda, political parties established youth wings in order to attack opposition and disrupt political rallies (Roessler 2005)

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS TO PREVENT ELECTION VIOLENCE (I)

- **Bangladesh, Malawi, Honduras, Moldova, and Thailand (USIP):**
 - Election monitoring and mapping
 - Preventative diplomacy
 - Civic engagement programs
 - Peace messaging
 - A focus on state institutions primarily responsible for election security and administration
- **Togo and Zanzibar: (Bekoe 2012):**
 - Post-election Political Agreements (PPAs) involve power-sharing, international involvement, and a plan for reform to which both the government and opposition agree
 - Only succeeds most when international community is credibly involved to monitor agreement

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS TO PREVENT ELECTION VIOLENCE (2)

- **Ghana (Oduro 2012):**
 - Facilitation of transparent dialogue among political parties and the Election Commission
 - Mediation by National Peace Council, peace education programs by NPC with parties (use of transformative figures to facilitate dialogue)
 - Speedy adjudication of disputes by courts (fast-track courts)
 - Security at polling stations to escort election officers (both unarmed uniformed and plain clothed)
 - Early warning and pre-election monitoring by civil society groups
 - Civil and peace education
 - Election day observers
 - Parallel vote tabulation (PVT)
 - Official signing by all parties of the Political Party Code of Conduct
 - Sponsored policy debates

CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- **Bangladesh, Malawi, Honduras, Moldova, and Thailand:** Long-term civil engagement programs lead to lower levels of election violence (USIP)
- **Liberia 2011:** Civic education program had an impact in increasing enthusiasm for participation, reducing the parochialism in voter expression, and increasing voter vigilance and effectiveness, while, BUT also increased people's perceptions of the degree of violence and intimidation involved in the electoral process (Mvukiyehe and Cyrus Samii)
- **Liberia 2011:** UNMIL-led security committees had no effect (Mvukiyehe and Cyrus Samii)
- **Liberia:** Civic education and conflict resolution programs led to increased beliefs in human rights, feel more free to speak their minds to "big people" in the community, improved knowledge about citizenship, BUT increased non-violent inter-personal and inter-group disputes and land conflicts (but also lower rates of violence, and increased rates of dispute resolution and of satisfaction with those resolutions in trained communities.) (Blattman)
- **Côte d'Ivoire:** civic education around election violence primed voters to be concerned about election violence, which depressed political participation and turnout (Arriola, Matanock, Travaglianti, and M. Davis 2015)
- **Kenya:** Civic education programs increased civic competence and engagement, and among those that who were affected by the violence were less likely to adopt negative beliefs about Kenya's political system, less likely to support the use of ethnic or political violence, and more likely to forgive those responsible for the post-election violence.
- **Nigeria:** Anti-violence campaigning decreased violence perceptions and increased empowerment to counteract violence, increased voter turnout, and led to a reduction in the intensity of violence measured by journalists (Collier and Vincente 2007).

WHAT ELSE DO WE KNOW ABOUT LIBERIA?

- Community policing by elite forces such as PSU increased security of property rights; increased knowledge of the police, particularly of the Hubs; reduced the incidence of some crimes, notably simple assault and domestic violence; and increased reporting of crimes to the LNP (Blair, Karim, and Morse, IGC funded project)
- Mixed unit and sex community policing reduces perceptions of corruption, discrimination, and abuse by the police (Karim)
- Visits by officers of the same ethnicity decreases feelings of nationalism (Karim)
- Cognitive behavior therapy, combined with unconditional cash transfers of poor young men, can be an effective method of reducing criminality, violence, and drug use (Blattman)
- Ex-combatants who participate in a program that included training, counseling, and start-up capital successfully shifted high-risk men from criminal activities into farming (Blattman)

CHOOSING LOCATIONS FOR INTERVENTIONS

- High degree of electoral competitiveness
- High security threat
- High level of volatility
- Social conflicts (disputes among chieftaincies)
- Regions with weak institutions (including Election Commission and security sector)
- Migrant communities/border communities

WHAT SHOULD WE DO IN LIBERIA?

YES TO PEACE!

- Facilitate dialogue between party members
- Hosted by civil society
- Presentations from key figures in Liberia
- Several workshops over the course of the year prior to the election
- Sign Pledges

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

- Facilitate mentorships between LNP/ERU officers and youth party leaders
- Evaluate whether the officers' and the youth attitudes and actions change
- Meetings each month between mentor and mentee prior to the election

COMMUNITY ELECTION/PEACE PLANS

- Early warning monitoring by civil society groups to identify communities
- Civil society leaders work with village leaders on customized peace plans
- Implemented in rural Liberia in high risk areas
- Follow up by civil society to see how implementation is going

TRAINING FOR SECURITY SECTOR

- Training to all security forces on election violence
- Training includes role play and scenarios
- Inter-agency cooperation
- Functioning hotline for incidents

OTHER

- Local election monitoring
- Early warning/pre-election monitoring
- Sign Political Party Code of Conduct
- Role of media and radio
- Other ways to implement civic education and peace programming?