

Effect of diplomatic recognition and other diplomatic efforts on social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Support for peace processes by leaders does not affect public support for peace settlements, and reduces support if peace process endorsed by another group.

Geographical region: sub-Saharan Africa

Effect Size: Large effect ($g = -0.206$)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (1 study; 2 ES)

Short Summary

The study in this cell examines how leader endorsements influence public support for peace policies in South Sudan during ethnic conflict. “Out-group” endorsement dramatically reduce public support for the peace plan, whereas “in-group” endorsement has no effect.

We have low confidence in the cell findings due to the limited number of the studies in the cell.

Long summary

The interventions

The intervention involved an endorsement experiment in South Sudan, testing how in-group (ethnically aligned) and out-group leader endorsements affected public support for six peace policies. Respondents ($n=490$) were randomly assigned to control (no endorsement) or treatment groups, where policies were endorsed by either Dinka or Nuer leaders during ongoing conflict.

How the intervention is expected to work

The intervention leverages leader endorsements to influence public support for peace policies, if individuals use endorsements as informational shortcuts in low-information conflict settings. It hypothesizes that in-group leader endorsements would increase trust and support, while out-group endorsements would decrease trust due to perceived threats and distrust rooted in ethnic divisions and violence. By presenting real endorsements from Dinka and Nuer leaders, the intervention aimed to reveal how trust, fear, and ethnic identity shape public opinion on reconciliation and conflict resolution, ultimately affecting peace policy acceptance and implementation.

The evidence base

The cell includes one primary experimental study which uses an endorsement experiment design. The study was conducted in South Sudan, across 42 villages in 8 counties spanning 5 of South Sudan's 10 states.

Evidence findings

Out-group endorsements have large negative effects on public support, while in-group endorsements have little or no effect. While efforts to promote a peace settlement aim to promote peace, social divisions and distrust may hinder the effectiveness of such efforts.

Included studies

Haas and Khadka (2020) investigates the impact of leader endorsements on public support for peace settlements during civil wars. The core intervention involved testing whether public support for peace policies would change depending on whether the endorsement came from in-group or out-group leaders. The study was conducted in South Sudan, specifically covering 42 villages across eight counties in five states, during a brief lull in the civil war in 2016. The study involved an endorsement experiment designed to evaluate how leader endorsements affect public support for peace policies during civil conflicts. The study included a total of 875 respondents. The experiment assessed the impact of endorsements on six key peace policies drawn from real-world agreements, including power-sharing, military unification, and constitutional reform. By systematically varying the endorsing leader's identity, the study aimed to isolate the influence of social trust, fear, and perceived credibility on public support for peace settlements. The findings provide critical insights into the direct effects of endorsements by leaders from the Dinka and Nuer groups, irrespective of the respondent's ethnicity. Both in-group and out-group leader endorsements tend to reduce support for policies in the general population, with Dinka leaders having a more pronounced negative impact ($p=0.005$). The study rated as low confidence quantitative study due to the sample, while diverse, may not fully represent broader South Sudanese society, especially in regions less affected by conflict. The study captures short-term responses to endorsement cues.

Confidence assessment

We have low confidence in the cell findings due to a limited number of studies.