

Effect of Foundational state design processes, transitional political processes, and election support intervention on Physical security

Election support interventions, including anti-violence campaigns, election education events, and peacekeeping operations, showed a moderate effect on reducing physical violence and perceived threats of violence during election periods.

Geographic focus: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Moderate effect ($g=0.137$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (2 studies with 2 effect sizes)

Short summary

The interventions aimed to reduce election-related violence through anti-violence campaigns and UN peacekeeping operations, such as UNOCI. Campaigns included slogans opposing political violence, civic education, and radio broadcasts, while peacekeepers provided civilian protection, disarmament support, and assistance in elections. Evidence suggests that these efforts moderately reduced the perceived threat of violence and, in some cases, actual physical violence, while improving citizens' sense of security, political confidence, and engagement. However, effects were inconsistent across studies, with one study showing clear reductions in violence and the other showing no significant effect. Overall confidence in the cell is low due to the small number of studies and inconsistent findings.

Long summary

The intervention

The interventions in this cell focused on election-related anti-violence campaigns and multi-dimensional UN peacekeeping operations. Campaigns reached local communities through town-level outreach, promoting opposition to voter intimidation and encouraging peaceful political behavior. UNOCI supported these initiatives by protecting civilians, disarming combatants, assisting elections, and providing civic education via radio broadcasts.

How the intervention is expected to work

The interventions are expected to reduce violence by lowering perceived threats to voters, fostering collective action, and influencing the behavior of violent actors. In war-affected areas, peacekeeping increased political confidence and enhanced economic and political stability. Trust in peacekeepers amplified the effect of election-education campaigns, mitigating fears and encouraging peaceful engagement. However, the effectiveness varied across locations and contexts.

The evidence base

The evidence base consists of two quasi-experimental impact evaluations from Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire.

Evidence findings

The evidence from the two quasi-experimental studies suggests that election support interventions had a moderate impact on physical security. One study demonstrated reductions in physical violence and increased empowerment of the population to resist political violence, while the other study found no significant effect on violence or perceived threat. The effects

from a third relevant study could not be extracted due to insufficient data. Overall, the results indicate some potential for anti-violence campaigns and peacekeeping operations to improve physical security during elections, but inconsistency across studies and the limited number of evaluations reduce confidence in these findings. The evidence summaries of the 3 studies are thus provided here:

Included studies

Collier (2014) conducted a field experiment based on anti-violence campaigning. The campaign appealed to collective action through electoral participation and worked through town meetings, popular theatres, and door-to-door distribution of materials. The campaign was designed to induce experimental subjects to oppose voter intimidation. The main mechanism employed was to lower the perceived threat to individual voters through collective action. The study was conducted in Nigeria. The study is designed as a randomized controlled trial. The study included 24 enumeration areas, 1200 participants in baseline (50 per area), and 1149 participants during the post-election survey. Overall, the study found clear and statistically significant effects of the campaign on diminishing perceptions of political violence and increasing empowerment of the population against political violence. These effects are 0.39, 0.23, and 0.22 standard deviation units for general political freedom and conflict, local electoral violence from the top, and local empowerment from the bottom (respectively). These effects are strongly significant at the 1 or 5 percent levels using cluster-robust standard error inference. The study is rated as low confidence due to no attrition being not reported in the study.

Mvukiyehe (2009) evaluates the micro-level impacts of the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) on security, economic recovery, and political reintegration after the 2002-2007 civil war. The analysis used survey data from 1,459 civilians and ex-combatants, conflict event data, and socioeconomic indicators. It employed a mixed-methods approach, including panel methods for time-variant data and cross-sectional methods for static data, alongside hierarchical small-area estimation techniques to address sparsity in community-level observations. Sampling weights and clustering techniques were applied to ensure representativeness and robustness in the estimates. The findings show that UNOCI deployments had minimal impact on reducing victimization rates, as these had already declined significantly before their arrival. However, there was limited evidence that UNOCI-monitored zones deterred renewed hostilities. Households in areas with peacekeeping deployments experienced fewer economic losses and somewhat better recovery, although these findings are preliminary and require further causal analysis. UNOCI's electoral sensitization activities were associated with increased confidence in the fairness of upcoming elections. However, its presence did not significantly influence the return of local political leaders or broader political reintegration. The study is rated low confidence due to the non-experimental study design and attrition not being reported.

Smidt (2020) assessed the impact of United Nations peacekeeping operations routinely organizing election education events on violent protests and rioting involving civilians during electoral periods via three pathways in Côte d'Ivoire. These include learning about PKO's electoral security assistance during elections for mitigating fears of election violence; provision of politically relevant information that can strengthen political efficacy and people's ability to make use of peaceful political channels and finally, peace messages during election-education events can change people's calculus about the utility and appropriateness of violent behavior. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design and data for analysis was obtained from secondary datasets. The statistical analyses support the argument that PKOs' election-education events can mitigate violent protest and rioting ($p < 0.01$) by soothing fears of election violence, reducing political alienation, and delegitimizing violence ($p < 0.01$). Yet election education makes little difference in opposition strongholds and among opposition supporters, who tend to perceive the PKO as biased. The study is rated as low confidence due to non-

experimental study design, partial description of intervention, and attrition being not reported in the study.

Confidence assessment

Overall low confidence as there are a limited number of studies and all three studies are rated as low confidence. There is consistency in findings across both the studies.