

## Effect of Foundational state design processes, transitional political processes, and election support intervention on transition of power

UN peacekeeping operations have a moderate impact on promoting democratization and electoral democracy.

Geographic focus: Sub Saharan Africa, Global

Effect: Moderate effect ( $g=0.138$ )

Confidence in study findings: Low (2 studies with 6 effect sizes)

### Short summary

UN peacekeeping missions had a **moderate effect** on democratization and political transition by supporting elections, voter education, political party development, and institutional strengthening. Missions with explicit democracy mandates, larger personnel deployments, and greater engagement with host governments were associated with improved democratic quality and smoother transitions of power. Election assistance emerged as particularly effective in advancing democratic outcomes. However, the overall confidence in the cell is low due to the small number of studies and variation in methodological quality.

### Long summary

#### *The intervention*

The interventions focus on UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions implemented in post-conflict settings, targeting democratization and peaceful power transitions. These missions included activities such as voter education, political party assistance, support for democratic institutions like parliaments, and election organization. The initiatives aimed to enhance political participation, institutional accountability, and democratic governance while supporting countries emerging from civil conflict. Missions were categorized based on the presence of explicit democracy mandates and engagement in democracy-related activities even without such mandates.

#### *How the intervention is expected to work*

These UN interventions are designed to promote democratization by strengthening governance structures, improving institutional capacity, and facilitating inclusive political processes. By incorporating democracy-related mandates and deploying trained civilian and military personnel, peacekeeping missions work to rebuild trust in political institutions, enhance electoral transparency, and encourage political participation. Engaging host governments is critical to ensuring legitimacy and sustainability of reforms. Election assistance—through technical support, voter education, and electoral monitoring—serves as a key mechanism for improving electoral integrity and democratic stability. The success of such missions depends on the level of engagement, resource allocation, and the pre-existing political and economic conditions of the host country.

#### *The evidence base*

The evidence base for this cell includes two impact evaluations and one qualitative study conducted across Sub-Saharan Africa, Sudan, and 103 post-conflict countries. One evaluation is of medium confidence and the other of low confidence. The studies employ quasi-experimental designs and comparative analyses, drawing on the Peacekeeping Mandates (PEMA) dataset, which classifies UN missions by democracy mandates and related activities. The evaluations assess how variations in mission mandate, personnel composition, and interaction with host governments influence democratization outcomes.

#### *Evidence findings*

The evidence indicates that UN peacekeeping missions have a **moderate effect** on improving democratic quality when they include explicit democracy mandates, engage directly with host governments, and provide election support. Missions that integrated democracy promotion activities were more likely to facilitate democratic transitions and strengthen electoral integrity. However, variations in mandate strength and implementation consistency limit generalizability, and the small evidence base warrants cautious interpretation.

#### *Included studies*

**Blair et al. (2023)** assess the effects of UN peacekeeping missions on democratisation in Africa since the end of the Cold War (1991 to 2016). Specifically, they address three issues: mandates, composition of peacekeeping missions, and tactics. The authors use the Peacekeeping Mandates (PEMA) dataset to code two treatment variables: UN peacekeeping missions with a democracy mandate, and those carrying out democracy-related activities despite not having the mandate. Democracy-related activities are voter education, assistance to political parties, assistance to democratic institutions such as parliaments, and assistance in planning and conducting elections. Sensitivity analysis is conducted including also assistance to media and civil society organisations (for which the results do not substantially change). The number of countries with peacekeeping missions with democracy mandates and activities has grown markedly since 2001. The authors code the number and composition of peacekeepers from the Providing for Peacekeeping (PFP) project. The outcome is the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) electoral democracy index. Identification is through the following strategies: (i) including country fixed effects, (ii) controlling for time varying confounders such as GNP per capita (lagged to avoid endogeneity); and (iii) instrumental variable estimation, where the instrument is number of missions that year with a democracy mandate or activities in that year, not including the case for those observations. The instrument is provided as evidence shows that a peacekeeping is more likely in a given year if other peacekeeping missions have been approved, with the authors call path dependence and mimicry. The results show that peacekeeping operations go where conflicts are more severe, with larger placements during active conflicts rather than after. This demonstrates that is selection bias in the estimation of effects. Peacekeeping with democracy mandates and activities both increase democratisation. The effect is larger when there is a mandate and is larger if there are more personnel, especially civilian personnel compared to military, Support to elections are the most effective approach to improving electoral democracy, other activities are not statistically significant. This study is rated medium confidence as it is a non-experimental study.

**Steinert & Grimm (2014)** examines the effectiveness of United Nations (UN) peacebuilding missions in democratizing war-torn states, with a focus on missions that include democracy promotion components in their mandates. The context involves post-civil war countries where the UN has deployed peacebuilding missions to foster democratic transitions. The research employs a multinomial logistic regression analysis to assess the impact of UN peacebuilding missions on democratization trends in 103 post-civil war countries, of which 31 experienced a UN peacebuilding mission. The study uses Freedom House data to measure democratization, comparing rankings from the first mission year to those five years later. The analysis controls for various factors, including battle deaths, peace agreements, and oil wealth, to account for selection bias in mission deployment. The study finds that democratization is significantly more likely if a UN peacebuilding mission is deployed, with a 68% probability of increased democracy in host countries compared to 34% in non-host countries. The presence of oil wealth negatively impacts democratization prospects, while a clear victory by one conflict party can lead to regime transitions in both directions. Descriptive statistics suggest that greater mission capacity, such as longer duration and more resources, may enhance democratization outcomes, although this relationship is not statistically significant. The study is rated as low confidence as it is a non-experimental study and lacks clear description of the intervention as it does not provide detailed information on the specific components or implementation of the

UN peacebuilding missions, making it difficult to replicate or fully understand the intervention's scope and impact.

*Confidence assessment*

Overall confidence in the cell is rated low, reflecting the limited evidence base and inconsistencies across study findings.

**Other outcome in this study**

Community and state governance / Access to justice, rights and public services