



Promoting Democracy in Fragile States: Insights from a Field Experiment in Liberia

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Introduction



- ▶ Democracy promotion is central in aid to fragile states.
- ▶ Populations in fragile states express enthusiasm for it.
- ▶ But state fragility presents challenges to democratic practice:
 - ▶ Shadow of war and institutional breakdown,
 - ▶ Poverty and underdevelopment.
- ▶ This may undermine quality of democratic expression.
- ▶ Can foreign assistance play a helpful role?



Introduction

- ▶ Troubling conditions in fragile states:
 - ▶ Warlords and abusive elites empowered by institutional breakdown,
 - ▶ Extreme scarcity due to underdevelopment,
 - ▶ Civil society in disarray.
- ▶ Possible challenges to democracy from these conditions:
 - ▶ Incumbent elites have incentive to hoard power and information jealously, possibly with threats,
 - ▶ Civic initiative undermined by fear or collective action problems,
 - ▶ Citizens are denied opportunity for full democratic expression.
- ▶ Implications for third party assistance:
 - ▶ Security, organization, or information that incumbents don't provide.



Our study

- ▶ Operationalize and study two types of strategies:
- ▶ **Curriculum-based strategy** combining civic and rights education.
- ▶ **Security-based strategy** with the UN peacekeeping operation.
- ▶ Goal was to study potential of these strategies to
 - ▶ Reduce electoral intimidation & fraud,
 - ▶ Enhance quality of electoral participation and democratic expression,
 - ▶ Help to “lock-in” legitimate representation.
- ▶ Study was targeted at the Liberian country-side
 - ▶ Liberia’s political instability historically originates in country-side
 - ▶ Existing capacity to reach these areas was very low



Context

- ▶ The particular context is contemporary Liberia
 - ▶ Pop. 4 million ca. 2010, very bottom of HDI.
 - ▶ Two bouts of brutal civil war between 1989 and 2003.
 - ▶ Conflict cleavages have included family/cliqve rivalries and ethnicity.
 - ▶ UNMIL since 2004: ca. 10,000-15,000 troops.



Context

- ▶ Generally successful elections in 2005.
 - ▶ Although 30% still reported fear of intimidation (Mvukiyehe & Samii 2009).
 - ▶ Of those, by far most common response was fear of party loyalists.
 - ▶ Ethnic cleavages from conflict reflected in parties.
 - ▶ Lingering CDC resentment.
- ▶ 2011: August constitutional referendum, October elections.
 - ▶ Central competition between UP and CDC.
 - ▶ Context of troublesome elections in recent years in region.
 - ▶ Spectacular failures of UN peacekeepers recently.
 - ▶ Concerns about violence or fraud were high.





Assumptions & hypotheses

Security-based strategy:

- ▶ Assumptions about prevailing equilibrium:
Large swathes of territory lack credible security providers who abide by the rule of law, leading to perceived vulnerability.
 - ▶ May persist despite intervening forces like peacekeepers.
 - ▶ Reduces voter decision making to a single dimension---stability---and undermines the electoral experience for voters.
- ▶ Hypothesis:
 - ▶ *Enhancement of local security guarantees should reduce levels of intimidation, increase voters' enthusiasm for participation, and increase freedom of voter expression from reflecting local security monopolies.*



Assumptions & hypotheses

Curriculum-based strategy:

- ▶ Assumption about prevailing equilibrium:
Undersupply of information and consequent lack of coordination in country-side:
 - ▶ Applies to voting processes, national political issues, and availability of credible alternative to parochial or clientelistic appeals.
 - ▶ Political leaders have few incentives to supply information.
 - ▶ Media penetration low (2/3 of 2009 respondents no regular radio access).
 - ▶ Voters may unknowingly surrender rights.
 - ▶ They may be more easily persuaded by parochial appeals.
- ▶ Hypothesis
 - ▶ *External provision of political information and creation of political forums for discussing such information should increase voters' enthusiasm for participation, local campaign vitality, make voters more vigilant and effective in using their voting rights, and reduce receptivity to parochial appeals.*



Project activities

Security Committee intervention:

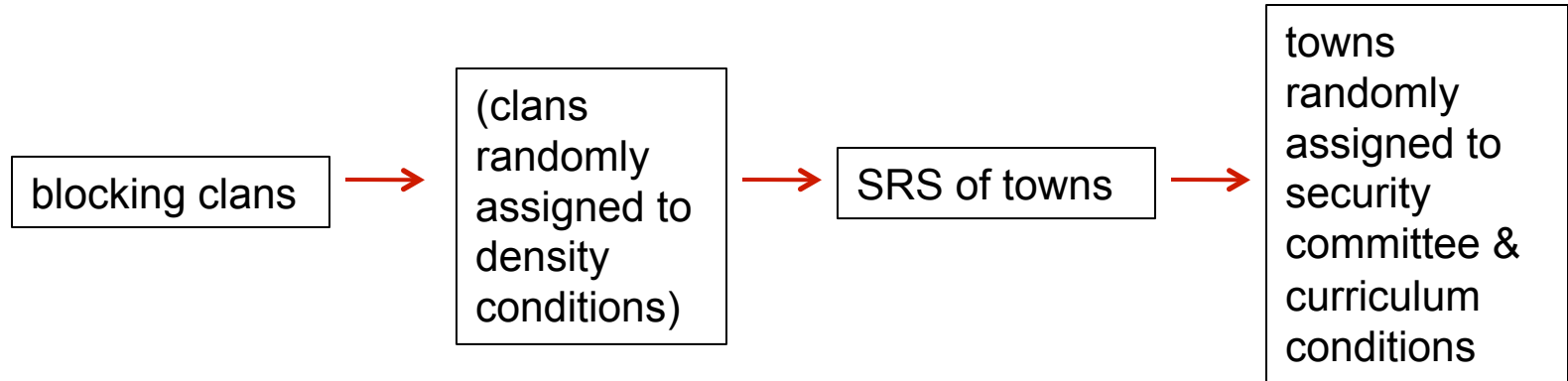
- ▶ Nominate 6-8 community members to “security committee.”
- ▶ Instructions on threat monitoring and appointment of community observers to keep notes on committee’s behalf.
- ▶ Once a month, 2 members brought to local peacekeeping base to participate in afternoon discussion on security situation.

Civic Education Curriculum intervention:

- ▶ Open meetings once a month led by a field facilitator. Held at palava hut, school, or other village meeting facility.
- ▶ Civic education curriculum designed in partnership with NEC.
- ▶ Human rights, gender rights, and peace education curriculum designed with NGO partners.



Experimental design



Experimental design

	No curriculum	Curriculum	Total
No security committee	41	17	58
Security committee	58	26	84
Total	99	43	142



Experimental design

Timeline:

- ▶ Dec 2010 – Jan 2011 establish contact and assent of host villages.
- ▶ Jan-Oct 2011 curriculum and security programming as well as regular collection of village level incident reports.
- ▶ 11 Oct 2011: Elections
- ▶ Oct 2011- November 2011 post-elections data collection.
(Done before presidential run off on November 8.)
- ▶ Dec 2011 – March 2012 data entry and processing.
- ▶ Now: analysis.



Outcomes

- ▶ Official polling place-level electoral returns.
- ▶ Survey data on perceptions, behavior, and experiences.
- ▶ Behavioral measures:
 - ▶ Anti-violence petition.
 - ▶ Fill and send issues card to representative.
 - ▶ Ballot tests.
 - ▶ News pamphlet sales.



Outcomes

Outcome	Polling place	<i>Data Source and Measures</i>	
		Survey	Behavioral
Enthusiasm for participation (H1 & H2):		Attend rally; register to vote; vote	Petition; Issues post card
Voter expression reflecting local security monopolies or receptivity to parochial appeals (H1 & H2):	Diversity of vote choice (party Herfindahl); major versus regional party voteshares	Voting vignette	
Levels of intimidation (H1):		Perception that process is unfair; Witness protests; subject to intimidation; fear being in trouble for voting the way you want to; subject to threats; witness calls to violence	
Vigilance and effectiveness (H2):	Valid vote proportions	Able to associate slogans with parties	Ballot test; News clippings offer
Local campaign vitality (H2):		Contacted by party; Attempted to be persuaded; Had big or small gift offered; had offers of help with ballot	



Results

Intervention	Enthusiasm for participation	Going beyond local monopolies & parochial appeals	Intimidation	Vigilance and effectiveness	Local campaign vitality
Civic education					
Security committees					



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Security committees	.	+diversity			



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Discussion

- ▶ The civic education intervention was effective in many ways
 - ▶ Increased participation in ways indicative of more enthusiasm
 - ▶ Increased coordination on national over parochial candidates
 - ▶ But, puzzling findings regarding influence and intimidation, although these may be due to willingness to report and heightened sensitivity to these issues
- ▶ Security committee intervention was quite ineffective
 - ▶ Is the difference due to the messengers?











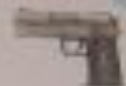
EXIT

SECURITY FORCES - LAC

LIBERIAN NATIONAL POLICE
(LNP) AND POL SP UNIT
(PSU)

PLANT PROTECTION
DEPARTMENT
(PPD)

ARMED & DANGEROUS



UNMIL



ENLARGEMENT OF PAJSAATT-16 ACR



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- ▶ Security committee intervention was quite ineffective
 - ▶ Is the difference due to the messengers?
 - ▶ Was security really a non-issue?
 - ▶ Are PKOs simply not credible?



Conclusion

- ▶ Results provide some justification for democracy assistance in the form of civic education and capacity building
 - ▶ Demonstrated effectiveness
 - ▶ They supply goods that are unlikely to arise endogenously
- ▶ For the security intervention, UN partners were very content to collaborate. And, people enjoyed the interaction.
 - ▶ But effectiveness was not demonstrated
 - ▶ Echoes findings from observational research
 - ▶ Is peacebuilding programming for PKOs simply misguided?

