UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

. . .

An independent institution established by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity
to promote peaceful resolution to international conflicts

For Immediate Release
Contact: Kay Hechler, 202-429-3816
Steven Ruder, 202-429-3825

(Washington)—Eighteen African countries held presidential, primary, or legislative elections in 2011. Eleven of these experienced violence that ranged from low-level intimidation and harassment to violent displacement and death. In "Voting in Fear: Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa," a new volume published by the United States Institute of Peace, editor Dorina Bekoe and nine contributors address the causes of electoral violence and strategies for preventing it.

"Voting in Fear" documents the scope and nature of electoral violence in Africa, investigates the forms such violence takes, and analyzes the stakeholders, structures, and strategies that can precipitate or prevent it. In distinguishing between elections that saw violence from those that did not, the case studies demonstrate the high risks posed by close elections, a state's declining economic fortunes, and weak institutions.
The book makes a major contribution toward a unified theory of electoral violence as a specific phenomenon, distinguished by its timing, perpetrators, victims, objectives, and methods, and it offers pioneering research that

- describes the incidents, patterns, and scope of electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa since 1990;
- accounts for how democratization, political economy, and institutional capacity and structure affect the probability of electoral violence;
- considers the impact of patronage resources on electoral politics;
- cautions against reliance on postelection political agreements that do not include institutional reform;
- acknowledges how the payoff from electoral violence encourages its emergence;
- identifies critical interventions that can mitigate electoral violence.

"While this phenomenon happens in other regions," says Bekoe, "the book's focus on Africa—Nigeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Ghana, specifically—is an opportunity to study electoral violence among a group of countries that have come of age and embarked on democratization at roughly the same time."

The book also introduces the only known dataset of electoral violence in Africa, compiled by Straus and Taylor, spanning from 1990 to 2008. "The African Electoral Violence Dataset (AEVD) allows scholars and policymakers to determine the frequency, intensity, scope, and nature of electoral violence in Africa over eighteen years," states Bekoe.

"Voting in Fear" shows that electoral violence has distinct patterns and that by recognizing them, policymakers, civil society activists, and scholars can devise strategies to mitigate—and even prevent—its occurrence.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Former senior research associate in the Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention at USIP, **Dorina A. Bekoe**, specializes in African conflicts, political development, institutional reform, electoral violence, and peace agreement implementation. She is currently a research staff member with the Africa Team at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

ABOUT THE UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan conflict management center created by Congress to prevent and mitigate international conflict without resorting to violence. USIP saves lives, increases the government's ability to deal with conflicts before they escalate, reduces government costs, and enhances national security. USIP is headquartered in Washington, DC. To learn more visit www.usip.org.

Voting in Fear: Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa
November 2012
United States Institute of Peace Press
300 pp. • 6 x 9
$22.50 (paper) • ISBN: 978-1-60127-136-5

Contact:

Kay Hechler
Sales, Marketing, and Rights Manager
Publications Office
United States Institute of Peace
2301 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20037
P: 202-429-3816
F: 202-429-6063
E-mail: khechler@usip.org

Steven Ruder
Media Assistant
Public Affairs and Communications
United States Institute of Peace
2301 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20037
P: 202-429-3825
F: 202-429-6063
E-mail: sruder@usip.org

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

. . .

An independent institution established by Congress to strengthen the nation's capacity
to promote peaceful resolution to international conflicts

Praise for "Voting in Fear"

"In developing the volume of essays for 'Voting in Fear,' the United States Institute of Peace has assembled a comprehensive set of insights into the political, security, social, and economic factors which create vulnerabilities for electoral violence in Sub-Sahara Africa. As a result, this book represents an important contribution to understanding the conflict dynamics of such violence so that policymakers and practitioners can develop effective response measures to prevent, manage, and mediate electoral conflict."

—Jeff Fischer, Electoral Security Consultant

"This comprehensive volume introduces state-of-the-art-data that helps focus debate and research on electoral violence in conflict. Featuring excellent case studies by prominent scholars, 'Voting in Fear' is an accessible, well-researched book that offers thoughtful and realistic policy recommendations."

—Terrence Lyons, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University

"This volume is an excellent addition to the growing body of work on electoral violence. It explores many of the key variables relating to the causes, actors, and impacts of electoral violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, providing much-needed depth and complexity to a phenomenon that many dismiss as inevitable and simplistic in its motivations."

— Lisa Kammerud, Electoral Conflict Specialist, F. Clifton White Applied Research Center, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

"Electoral violence remains an impediment to democratic consolidation in Africa's emerging democracies, but there has been very little systematic scholarly analysis of it. With a novel data set, this volume fills a gap in the literature. It presents a theoretically informed and context-sensitive analysis of the historical, institutional, and structural conditions that facilitate electoral violence, and the calculations of political actors that drive, electoral violence."

—Shaheen Mozaffar, Bridgewater State University

2301 CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20037
TEL 202-457-1700 • FAX 202-429-6063 • TDD 202-457-1719 • WEB www.usip.org

"Voting in Fear"

Questions and Answers with the Editor

How does this volume contribute to our understanding of electoral violence and democratization in Africa?

This book is a first attempt to document the scope, quality, and circumstances of electoral violence in Africa using both quantitative methods and case studies.

The dataset and the case studies suggest that electoral violence is not necessarily inevitable, may be prevented, and should be understood within its location-specific political context. Collectively, they suggest that a country's history of electoral violence, a close election, the presence of weak institutions, and declining state resources raise the risk of electoral violence. Thus, at a time when holding elections remains a key objective of many international institutions, non-governmental organizations, and Western governments, it is important to distill the difficulties of doing so in the new and transitional democracies found in Africa and to develop strategies for avoiding the violence that often accompanies them.

In shaping a definition of electoral violence as a specific phenomenon, several questions rise to the top. Where does electoral violence happen, and what triggers it? Who are the perpetrators and victims? What are the consequences, and how can it be stopped? A theoretical and practical framework is necessary to properly interpret the available data within the appropriate context.

How do you define electoral violence, and why is it distinctive from other forms of political violence?

The existing scholarly literature does not offer much guidance in thinking about elections and violence in Africa, and only a few books and articles aim to understand electoral violence as a specific phenomenon. Therefore, what it is and when it occurs will likely remain a source of debate as more scholars begin to focus on it.

This volume defines electoral violence as a subset of political violence distinguished by its timing, perpetrators and victims, objectives, and methods. In other words, electoral violence occurs before, during, or after elections; perpetrators include politicians and other stakeholders that disagree with voters' choices; victims include those that disagree with a state's official position and political party supporters; the objective of electoral violence is to either influence the outcome of an elections or protest its results; and the methods of committing electoral violence range from violent clashes between different political groups, clashes with security services and intimidation and harassment of voters.. Understanding these criteria help differentiate electoral violence from other

kinds of political violence so that its particular impacts can be understood and potentially mitigated. It also emphasizes that just because an act of violence occurs around election-time does not mean it is tied to the election.

What is the African Electoral Violence Database, and what does it reveal about electoral violence?

The African Electoral Violence Dataset (AEVD), spanning from 1990 until 2008, compiled by Scott Straus and Charlie Taylor, is the only known dataset of electoral violence in Africa. The AEVD allows scholars and policymakers to determine the frequency, intensity, scope, and nature of electoral violence in Africa in the eighteen-year span. These data show that electoral violence has distinct patterns and that by recognizing them, policymakers, civil society activists, and scholars have an opportunity to devise strategies to mitigate—and even prevent—its occurrence. The data show:

- Most violence takes place before an election.
- For nearly half the countries in the database, electoral violence is a regular occurrence.
- The incumbent is usually the perpetrator of the violence that occurs.
- Presidential elections are slightly more violent than legislative elections.

The data also suggests six possible scenarios and motivators of political violence of varying levels of intensity.

Why is understanding electoral violence important in an African context?

While electoral violence occurs in other regions, the book's focus on Africa is an opportunity to study electoral violence among a group of countries that have come of age and embarked on democratization at roughly the same time.

Eleven out of 17 African elections in 2011 were marked by some form of violence. The nine countries scheduled for elections in 2012 have not fared much better: in Togo and Guinea the elections have not taken place in part due to opposition protests, which have resulted in violent clashes with security forces; in Guinea-Bissau, the second round of the presidential election did not take place because of a coup d'état; and in Senegal and Lesotho there were fears that the voting process would degenerate into violence. This spotty record of peaceful elections in Sub-Saharan Africa underscores the need for scholarly work that specifically studies elections in Africa and their impact on short and long-term stability.

Although electoral violence specifically is less frequent and more varied than other forms of violence, it has enormous bearing on the success of democratization in a country or region. It is important to investigate, for example, whether repeated bouts of electoral violence dampen support for democracy.

How can we identify and quantify forms of electoral violence?

While the most overt forms of violence—clashes between two opposing sides, state security services' violent suppression of demonstrators, political assassinations—are the easiest to document, less obvious forms of conflict are more difficult to recognize or quantify. In this volume, Straus and Taylor identify a broad set of actions characterizing electoral violence. These include not only overt acts that result in assassinations, deaths, and injuries, but also harassment and intimidation of political rivals, confiscation of newspapers, disqualification of candidates, and short-term arrests of political opponents. These categories of violence can hinder the administration of and participation in elections.

The critical factor in identifying the perpetrators and victims is to understand the objectives of electoral violence: which groups want to alter the outcome of the election, and which groups will be affected in their pursuit of this goal.

Why study electoral violence?

Some have dismissed the need to study electoral violence as a separate phenomenon, because, per capita, it is not a significant source of violence. Indeed, even in this volume, Straus and Taylor point our that electoral violence does not necessarily result in a significant spike in a country's overall level of violence; other sources of conflict are more significant. The paradox of electoral violence is that it is usually a brief, time- and event-bound period of violence, with generally low levels of tension but with enormous bearing on a country's democratization process and institutional reform priorities and on its leaders' legitimacy.

What impact does electoral violence have on the country's democratization process, institutional reform processes, and leaders' legitimacy?

Repeated or intense electoral violence may affect the process or outcome of an election, undermining the legitimacy of the election and weakening the winner's ability to govern. Voter turnout, candidates' participation in the electoral process, whether an election should be held, or a government's legitimacy may cloud elections and leave the results uncertain.

Electoral violence can also affect a country's regard for democratization. Citizens who experience repeated or intense electoral violence may view democratization in a less favorable light than do others who have not been so subjected. The perception of elections as free and fair is important to people's satisfaction with democracy as a whole. If democracy is a goal, then policy should include the reduction of electoral violence as an objective. Electoral violence is also a variable in explaining the conditions under which a democracy is consolidated.

New democracies face a particularly high risk of political violence in general, and electoral violence in particular. This is especially true for poorer, ethnically

diverse, and post-conflict countries. If institutions wish to replace dictatorships with democracies, they need to recognize that political violence may initially increase rather than decrease. If democracies do not usher in an era of more accountability and legitimacy, then governments will not fear repercussions. When checks and balances are missing, as in poorer, newly democratizing countries, governments do not have incentive to perform better. Democracy in these settings does not make a government legitimate. Democracy does not bring peace, and political and electoral violence are much more likely.

Post-conflict states are also prone to electoral violence due to strong patronage networks, incomplete demobilization and disarmament resulting in easy availability of arms, and a persistent culture of violence and intolerance. Weak institutions may result in a culture of impunity, rewarding violence.

Ethnic diversity in Africa may also make the transition to democratic and multiparty elections more violent and difficult. Where political parties are based on ethnic, religious, or regional divisions operating in a highly centralized system, politicians may exploit existing cleavages or grievances for political gain. In such divisions, winners and losers have higher stakes and thus greater potential for violence.

Finally, electoral violence may serve as the impetus for a civil war.

How can this book aid practitioners working to prevent electoral violence?

This book documents and analyzes the incidents of electoral violence in Africa through rich quantitative and qualitative approaches. Most prominently, the chapters demonstrate the high risks posed by close elections, a state's declining economic fortunes, and weak institutions. In seeking to prevent electoral violence, the chapters give policy recommendations that are designed to create inclusive forums for discussing divisive issues, developing programs that specifically focus on electoral violence, and starting violence prevention programs several months before elections.