



# European Commission United Nations Development Programme International IDEA

In collaboration with

Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation  
International Organization for Migration  
Canadian International Development Agency  
Organization of American States

## Introduction to current trends in election-related violence

*Barcelona, 22-26 March, 2010*

# Afghan presidential and local elections 2009

Insurgency – war

Weak rule of law/  
scant disarmament

Very powerful  
executive – “winner  
takes all”, patronage

Massive corruption

Long recent history  
of conflict

Historical  
grievances/ethnic  
divisions

Partisan EMB –  
distrusted by  
opposition

Legacies of fraud  
from previous  
elections

## Electoral violence

**Voter registration** – sporadic attacks on sites, staff and registrants (Taliban and factional)

**Campaign** – local candidates killed and 10 of 41 presidential candidates quit. Widespread attacks, intimidation, threats (Taliban and factional)

## **Polling** –

“most violent day since the Taliban’s ouster from Kabul”

11 election workers, 12 security forces, 58 insurgents, 31 others killed in over 300 incidents – attacks, bomb blasts

## **Results tabulation & complaints adjudication**

- Massive fraud
- One third – million -- Karzai ballots disqualified
- No reforms ahead of the second round

**RESULTS ACCEPTED PEACEFULLY**

Strong presidency – high stakes

Threatened incumbent, hopeful opposition

Weak rule of law institutions – courts, police

History of conflict – ethnic lines

Grievances – land, resources

Poverty, unemployment

Ethnic political mobilisation

Legacies of electoral violence – and impunity

President appoints commissioners

## Kenyan presidential and parliamentary elections 2007

### Electoral violence

#### Primaries

#### Voter registration

**Campaign** – less violent than previous elections

#### Polling

#### Results tabulation & complaints adjudication

- Flawed, manipulated results process led to ethnic-based violence – youth gangs, community leaders, media, reprisals
- 1,200 killed and 350,000 displaced in violence (“brink of civil war”)
- Sharp economic downturn, 80% tourism lost, rise in price of basic goods
- Entrenched social fragmentation

#### Powersharing arrangement mediated



- “...**Acts** or **threats** of **coercion**, **intimidation** or **physical harm** perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arise in the context of electoral competition. When perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the **process** of elections – such as efforts to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll – and to influence the **outcomes**: the determining of winners in competitive races for political office or to secure approval or disapproval of referendum questions.”

**UNDP 2009**

- “Electoral conflict and violence can be defined as any random or organised act or threat to **intimidate**, **physically harm**, **blackmail** or **abuse** a **political stakeholder** in seeking to **determine**, **delay**, or to otherwise **influence** an electoral process.”

**Jeff Fischer 2002**



# What is electoral violence?

1. Subtype of **political violence** – actors employ violence towards political ends, advancement of their own power. **Countries that suffer electoral violence usually suffer other types of political violence**
  2. Includes **acts** – assassination of opponents or spontaneous fighting between rival supporters – and **threats, coercion** and **intimidation** of opponents, voters or election officials, which can be just as powerful.
  3. Can be targeted against **people or things** – candidates, supporters, communities or materials, vehicles or ballot boxes.
- Spoiler or factional?**



“Since the 2003 elections, there has been a rise in the **kidnapping** of opponents, **assassination** of would-be candidates and other political figures, and **violent disruption of political meetings** and **campaigns** of rivals. These acts are...increasing in frequency as the elections draw closer.”

“Widespread **illiteracy** and **poverty** make the **lower socioeconomic classes** readily available to be drafted into odd jobs, including **acts of political violence**. A majority of the foot soldiers of electoral violence are drawn from the teen and adolescent age groups. These youths...are the ready pool from which **politicians recruit thugs** to fight their opponents.”

- ❑ **Crisis Group Africa Report N°123, [Nigeria's Elections: Avoiding a Political Crisis](#), 28 March 2007, p. 9—10.**



“Voting, like the campaign, was also marred by **widespread violence** and **general insecurity**. Most involved **official harassment of opposition leaders** on the eve of the elections, failure to secure election materials and preempt incidents during the polls or **ruthless repression of protests following the announcement of results**. Underlying all this was the tendency of security personnel to acquiesce to, or actively collaborate with, the ruling party in rigging the elections.”

- ❑ Africa Report N°126, [Nigeria: Failed elections – failing state?](#), 30 May 2007.



# Burundi elections 2010

“The polls – communal, presidential, then legislative – are scheduled between May and September, but opposition parties are facing **harassment and intimidation from police and the ruling party’s youth wing** and appear to be choosing to **respond to violence with violence.**”

“The CNDD-FDD youth wing’s **physical training, war songs** and **quasi-military organisation** raise the spectre of **militia violence** and a **large-scale intimidation** campaign. The other former rebels, the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) and the Front pour la démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU) are **mobilising their own youth wings** to oppose intimidation tactics. The police have remained passive or become accomplices to the ruling party’s abuses.”

- ❑ **Africa report N°155, [Burundi: Ensuring Credible Elections](#), 12 February 2010.**





“Opposition politicians, journalists and even bureaucrats told Crisis Group that intelligence agency officials are using both **bribes** and **coercion** to produce defections to pro-military parties. Several PML-N leaders in the Punjab said blackmail and **physical intimidation** was used against them. 137 PPP politicians in Sindh told similar stories and also accused intelligence and administrative officials of electoral manipulation at the local level. **In the past, election results have been changed at the last minute by security agency intimidation of voters and polling staff.**”

- ❑ **Crisis Group Asia Report N°137, [Elections, Democracy and Stability in Pakistan](#), 31 July 2007, p. 5.**

## What causes electoral violence?



- Context (grievances -- exclusion, inequality – ethnic divisions, patterns of conflict, corruption, context of democratisation)
- Actors and interests
- Relationships (trust)
- Expectations
- Patterns of political mobilisation (ethnic, youth gangs or militias)
- Rule of law (impartial courts and police)
- Security (well-trained official forces, weapons available, unemployed young men)
- The media
- The stakes (“winner takes all”?)
- The rules – electoral system choice
- The “process” – administration of elections

**Context-specific**

**Complex interplay between interconnected factors**

# What causes electoral violence?



## Complex link between electoral violence and fraud:

- ❑ “How the electoral process is implemented has a strong bearing on electoral violence. Those elections considered **free, fair and transparent** are **less likely** to experience electoral violence than those where allegations of **mismanagement or deliberate cheating** are prevalent.” **UNDP 2009**
- ❑ Experience shows that **nearly every election** in Africa is a risky undertaking, **whether well run or not**, as peace is easy to break. **Denis Kadima, EISA, 2010**
- ❑ “80% of the multi-party elections in the continent were marred by electoral violence. The elections declared “free and fair” by observers were as bloody as those elections rejected by observers.” **Staffan I. Lindberg 2002**
- ❑ Electoral violence is the methods of the opposition: incumbents cheat and their opposition responds violently. **Paul Collier 2009**

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# ***The impact of electoral violence on democracy and development***



1. Impact of electoral violence from a democracy perspective (e.g. Influence registration process, leading to parties/candidates leaving the process, electorate may refrain from participating in the election etc).
2. Impact of electoral violence from a conflict management perspective (e.g. leading to further polarisation, new violence, insecurity, appeals for law and order instead of reconciliation).
3. How does electoral violence impact human security?



**Democracy**

**Accountability**

**Legitimacy**

**Elections**

**Turnout**

**Economic costs**

**Fairness**

**Results**

**Marginalisation**

**Equality**

**Competition**

**Societal cleavages**

**Good governance**

**Human security**



“Within days of the supposed relaxation of the security and media laws, **police cracked down on the MDC and its supporters.** Wielding batons and firing tear gas, they beat up and arrested MDC supporters making their way to a court-sanctioned rally on 23 January 2008 at which Tsvangirai was giving an address.”

“Mugabe was concerned about the prospect of **intra-ZANU-PF violence** even before that challenge. Observers considered his uncharacteristic call at the ZANU-PF congress in December 2007 for the party to shun violence a coded message to factions to refrain from fighting each other.”

- ❑ **Crisis Group Africa Report N°138, [Zimbabwe: Prospects from a Flawed Election](#), 20 March 2008, p. 8.**



“Serious incidents involving **violence** and the loss or **destruction of voting materials** required a rerun at fourteen centres around the country. In Port-au-Prince, a tacit truce declared by armed gangs in the weeks preceding the elections was maintained, and there were no violent incidents.”

- ❑ **Crisis Group Latin America/Caribbean Briefing N°10, [Haiti after the Elections: Challenges for Préval’s First 100 Days](#), p. 4.**



# *Sudan elections 2010*



“Most Internally displaced people (IDP) living in camps, people from groups hostile to the NCP living in “insecure” quarters of cities, and the population in rebel-held areas were not counted. Disenfranchising large numbers of people will only **further marginalise them**. They will...look to rebel groups to fight and win back their lost rights and land...”

## ❑ **The Elections and Darfur (forthcoming)**