



Joint EC-UNDP Task Force on Electoral Assistance
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

Thematic Workshop on Elections, Violence and Conflict Prevention



ANALYSIS: Patterns of Violence in the Pre- Electoral Period (3-18 months before polls)



Definition

“...Acts or threats of coercion, intimidation or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arises 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.”

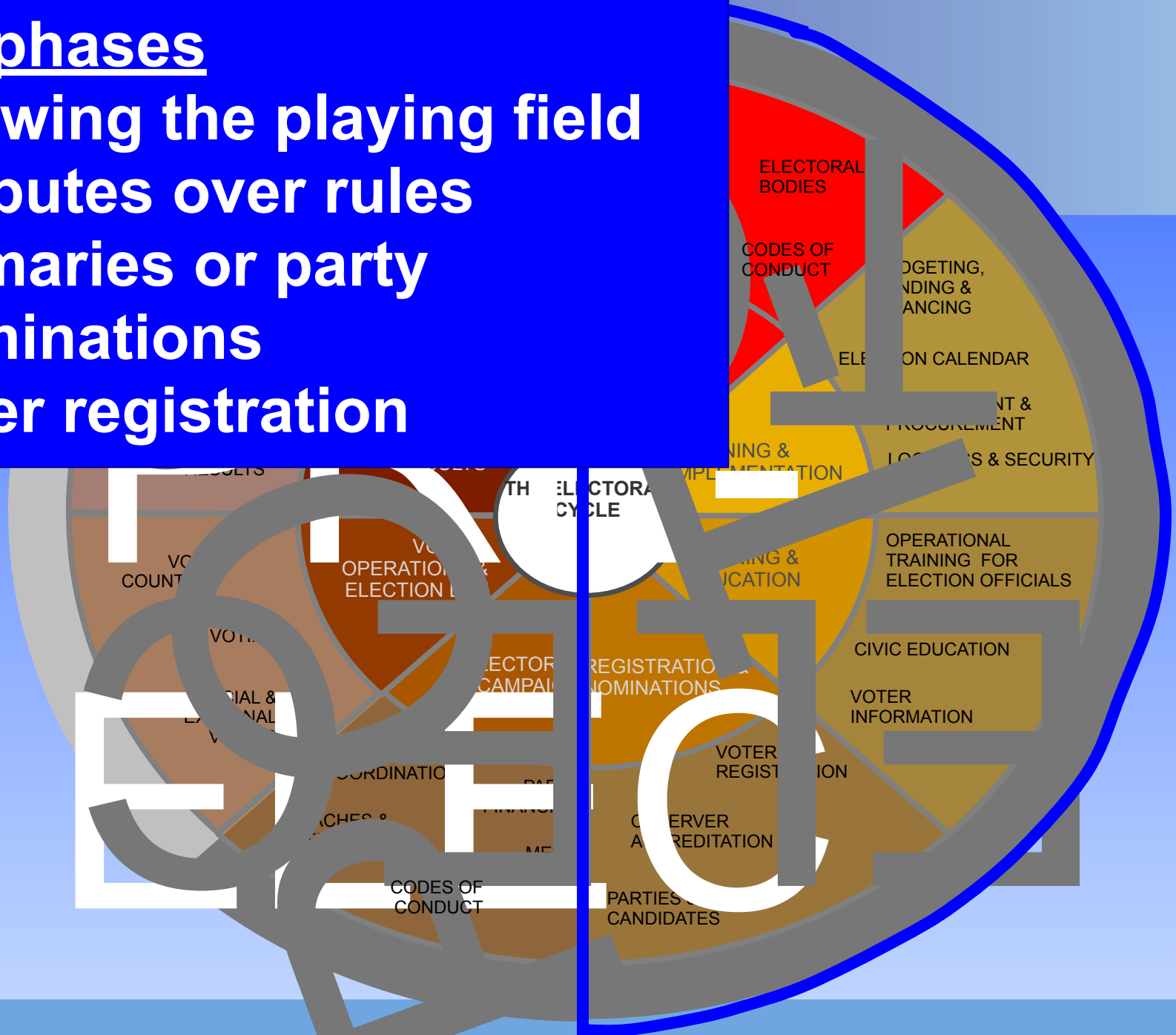
UNDP, Timothy Sisk 2009

“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

Early phases

- **Skewing the playing field**
- **Disputes over rules**
- **Primaries or party nominations**
- **Voter registration**





Analysis

Perpetrators

Targets or victims

Method and intensity

Location

Motives

Causes and enabling conditions

Effects



Closing political space

- Perpetrators?

- Targets, victims?

- Methods,
intensity?

- Location?

- Motives?

- Causes, enabling
conditions?

- Effects?

Opposition supporters have been attacked and arbitrarily detained and high-profile incidents have garnered some international attention. For example, Birtukan Midekssa, leader of the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) party, was re-arrested and now serves a life sentence. However, repression is usually more subtle, involving threats, harassment, closure of offices, breaking up of meetings.

(Human Rights Watch, ahead of 2010 Ethiopian elections)



Closing political space

Reducing this violence (*violence committed by the government*) “depends almost entirely on whether external actors (UN, regional organizations, international civil society) or internal actors (opposition leaders or parties, the public, independent judges, civil society) can successfully influence government leaders.”

(Alston Report)



Intra-party competition

- Perpetrators?

- Targets, victims?

- Methods,
intensity?

- Location?

- Motives?

- Causes, enabling
conditions?

- Effects?

“In Rivers State, eight people were killed during the ruling party primaries. At Eleme, a youth was shot dead, while twenty others were injured in clashes between rival aspirants. In the Ogoni area, the primaries were postponed after two people were killed in an ambush and a senator’s car smashed by an angry mob. In Ogubolo, primaries had to be rescheduled because violence broke out when some delegates alleged voting materials were hijacked by local party chiefs.”

(Crisis Group ahead of Nigerian 2007 polls)



Voter registration

- Perpetrators?

- Targets, victims?

- Methods,
intensity?

- Location?

- Motives?

- Causes, enabling
conditions?

- Effects?

“The lead-up to the election was marked by insecurity as insurgent forces increased their activities, hoping to disrupt voter registration. The Taliban threatened to kill anyone involved. Inadequate security and the mounting insurgency, which included attacks on election workers, reduced voter registration, particularly in parts of the south.”

Crisis Group ahead of 2004 Afghan elections



Patterns of violence

Early phases

Skewing the playing field

- Harassment of opposition
- Intimidation during EMB appointments
- Intimidation of lawmakers during reform
- Attacking independent judges
- Closing down or bullying free media outlets
- Increased rates of hostage taking, kidnapping, extortion
- Protecting or expanding turf or no-go zones

Contesting rules:

- Violence related to reform or boundary delimitation

Intra-party competition:

- for party nominations or positions on lists, killings, intimidation etc

Voter Registration

- Displacement of voters
- Attacks on groups to prevent them registering
(- Breaches of information security)



UNDP – A “common understanding” is that “those elections considered to be free, fair and transparent are less likely to experience electoral violence than those where allegations of mismanagement or deliberate cheating are prevalent.”

Liisa Laakso – “the elections that were declared free and fair by observers were no less violent than elections that were not declared free and fair”



Paul Collier: “Violence is predominantly a tool of the opposition. Incumbents rig; the opposition uses violence.”

Strauss and Taylor: “Of the 124 cases of elections with any violence, incumbents were the primary perpetrators in 105. Challengers were the primary perpetrators in only 18 cases.”