

Peacebuilding Interventions and Democracy Promotion From the Bottom-Up: Survey Evidence from Liberia *

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Abstract

The mainstream approach to peacebuilding in war-torn societies rests on theories that emphasize promotion of liberal norms and values as the basis for self-sustaining peace at the macro- and micro-level. This paper addresses the need for evidence at the micro-level, and employs matching methods and original survey data to investigate the effects of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) operations on political attitudes and behaviors of ordinary Liberians. Three sets of results emerge: (i) mean effects computed across 16 outcome indicators provide evidence for moderate in size, but highly statistically significant effects of UNMIL deployments on standard measures of political participation (.21 standard deviations on -3.5 to +3.5 scale) and on an overall measure of participation that includes a wide range of liberal norms and values explicitly promoted in peacekeeping operations (mean effect size = .32); (ii) self-reported measures of exposure to UNMIL military reveal stronger associations to political participation: .70 and 1.00 standard deviations positive change in both outcome measures, respectively; (iii) effects on individual outcome indicators display heterogeneity, with most positive effects concentrated on measures associated with liberal orientations and participation in national politics, but virtually no effects on measures of participation in local politics. Theoretical implications and areas for future research are discussed.

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