

Helping Out Peacemakers or Picking Up The Tab For Gamblers? UN-sponsored Elections, Protagonist Types and Political Stability After Civil War *

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Abstract

I argue that the influence of UN-sponsored in postwar elections on political outcomes depends on the types of strategic environments of civil war actors. When warring factions face less severe commitment and information problems, UN involvement in the electoral process will tend to improve elections' quality and to enhance political stability. When the opposite is true, UN involvement will tend to exacerbate commitment and information problems, to undermine the quality of electoral outcomes and to lead to political instability. I evaluate these claims on a new data set of civil wars fought between 1960-2010. Using joint levels of accountability on the government side and rebel side as a proxy of different strategic environments, I find that when both sides of a civil war have strong accountability, UN interventions do significantly influence the likelihood that: (i) postwar elections will not be hastened; (ii) rebel groups will compete in elections and remain active as a political party after the war; and (iii) postwar peace will be prolonged. I also find that UN interventions do significantly increase the likelihood that postwar elections will be reported as free and fair, but this effect does not depend on protagonist types. Policy and theoretical implications of the results are discussed.

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