

CAPACITY-BUILDING AS A MEANS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELECTRICITY BLACKOUTS AND VIOLENT PROTEST IN LIBERIA

William G. Nomikos

Washington University in St. Louis

Patrick Hunnicutt

UC Santa Barbara

Abstract

This project investigates the relationship between public service provision and political violence in post-conflict states. Public service shortfalls exacerbate instability and undercut peacebuilding in states emerging from civil conflict. In Basra, Iraq, protestors razed government buildings in response to persistent electricity blackouts (Arraf 2018). Similarly, protestors in Caldwell, Liberia, cited the lack of access to electricity as the motivation for recent clashes with Liberian National Police forces (Yates 2018). However, existing scholarship lacks a systematic understanding of the link between public goods capacity and the micro-level behavior of individual citizens of post-conflict states. Our project will fill in this gap in two ways. First, we will directly document the micro-level attitudes of individuals in a post-conflict state. Specifically, we will launch a data collection project on electricity blackouts and protests in Liberia. Using a mobile reporting platform, we will collaborate with a local research group to construct a dataset containing household-level information of the incidence of electricity blackouts and protests in the Greater Monrovia area. Second, our research design allows us to identify the direct effect of electricity outtages on protest behavior. In addition, this data structure will allow the research team to suggest specific causal mechanisms through which public service shortfalls undercut peacebuilding processes in post-conflict states.

Please contact William Nomikos at wnomikos@wustl.edu for more details on this ongoing project.