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Health Effects of the Syrian War on Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees

Civil Resistance Amid Civil War

External Support and Civil War Termination

Sanctions Against Non-State Armed Actors
Our vision is a world beyond war by 2030 and humanity united by a global system of peace with justice.

Our mission is to advance the Global Peace System by supporting, developing and collaborating with peacebuilding efforts in all sectors of society.

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WHY THE DIGEST IS NECESSARY

Peace and Conflict Studies (henceforth: Peace Science) has emerged as an academic discipline with its own graduate programs, handbooks, research tools, theories, associations, journals, and conferences. As with most scientific communities, the slow migration of academic knowledge into practical application becomes a limiting factor of a field’s growth, its impact, and the overall effectiveness of its practitioners.

The expanding academic field of Peace Science continues to produce high volumes of significant research that often goes unnoticed by practitioners, the media, activists, public policy-makers, and other possible beneficiaries. This is unfortunate, because Peace Science ultimately should inform the practice on how to bring about peace.

The research and theory needed to guide peace workers to produce more enduring and positive peace, not only more peace studies, have come to stay. Bridging the gap between the peace movement moralism and foreign policy pragmatism is a major challenge facing everyone who seeks to achieve peace on Earth. (Johan Galtung and Charles Webel)

To address this issue, the War Prevention Initiative has created the Peace Science Digest as a way to disseminate top selections of research and findings from the field’s academic community to its many beneficiaries.

The Peace Science Digest is formulated to enhance awareness of scholarship addressing the key issues of our time by making available an organized, condensed, and comprehensible summary of this important research as a resource for the practical application of the field’s current academic knowledge.

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Disclaimer

Research featured in the Peace Science Digest is selected based on its contribution to the field of Peace Science, and authenticated by the scientific integrity derived from the peer-review process. Peer-reviewed journals evaluate the quality and validity of a scientific study, giving us the freedom to focus on the articles’ relevance and potential contribution to the field and beyond. The editors of the Peace Science Digest do not claim their analysis is, or should be, the only way to approach any given issue. Our aim is to provide a responsible and ethical analysis of the research conducted by Peace and Conflict Studies academics through the operational lens of the War Prevention Initiative.
Dear Readers,

It is our pleasure to introduce Volume 2, Issue 4, of the Peace Science Digest. With the steady flow of new research being published in the field of peace and conflict studies, we are increasingly confident that humans have figured out many viable nonviolent alternatives to war and violence. We are indeed capable of systematically examining the causes of wars and the conditions for peace and justice. Since our last issue was published, we witnessed the adoption of a legally binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. At the same time, escalating rhetoric and actions by both North Korea and the U.S.—two nuclear-armed nations—are of major concern. Hope and fear sometimes are very close together.

Although scholarship takes a critical distance from the world it studies, it is also necessarily a product of that world and responsive to it. Whether we like it or not, the values and worldviews of scholars inform the questions they ask and the categories of analysis they employ. The field of peace and conflict studies is no exception. Here at the Peace Science Digest, we are committed to sharing evidence-based research about peace and violence, but we are also forthright about our values: War and other forms of violence are destructive and dehumanizing, no matter how lofty their goals. Human dignity must be affirmed, no matter our differences. Conflict can be a productive force for justice and social change, as long as it is managed constructively.

These values mean that we must speak out about the current social and political context—one in the United States where, among other developments, white supremacist groups and ideologies are resurgent, fueling direct violence and reinforcing structural violence. Extremist and exclusionary thinking of this sort, with clear-cut and hierarchical categories of “us” and “them”—where “we” are clearly superior to “them” and “they” are represented as less deserving of recognition—informs systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, xenophobia, and homophobia, as well as militarism and war. We cannot stay “neutral” and “objective” in such a world. But we can clearly and transparently present recent research and then provide our informed interpretation of what it means for those of us involved in war-/violence-prevention, peace-making, and social/environmental justice work. With that in mind, you will see how our analyses below provide very clear and extensive practical recommendations addressing the implications of recent research for the current socio-political context.

This issue, for example, examines research on the impact of violent flanks on nonviolent campaigns. We take this opportunity to provide an inward reflection on the current resistance to white supremacist groups and ideologies in the U.S. Next, we discuss health effects of the Syrian War on internally displaced persons and refugees, which is highly relevant for international humanitarian organizations and campaigning. Finally, the last three entries of the Digest focus on the crucial question of how to influence armed actors—particularly non-state armed actors—in the context of civil war such that violence is prevented or terminated. The three studies examined take very different approaches to this question. While the first investigates local civil resistance and the creation of peace territories as means of resisting violence, the latter two examine the efficacy/inefficacy of more traditional tools of international politics: external support to rebel groups and sanctions against them.

As a friendly reminder, print subscriptions of the Peace Science Digest are now available and can be shipped around the world. To receive the Digest directly in your home or office, please visit us at www.PeaceScienceDigest.org.

Your Peace Science Digest Editorial Team

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It is a common belief: however “nice” the use of nonviolence may be, in the real world violence is necessary—and ultimately more effective, the thinking goes—for challenging a brutal regime, fighting injustice, or defending against an armed opponent. But what are the actual effects of adding violence to a movement’s repertoire of resistance strategies? Previous scholarship has been inconclusive on this question of so-called “radical flank effects,” as studies tend to focus on individual cases and also reflect collective confusion over what is meant by “radical”—does it, for instance, refer to the means used or the ends sought? Focusing, therefore, on violent—as opposed to “radical”—flanks, the authors set out to bring clarity and systematic analysis to bear on the question of positive versus negative violent flank effects. Examining the full universe of nonviolent campaigns with radical (“maximalist”) goals (“removal of an incumbent national government, self-determination, secession, or the expulsion of foreign occupation”) from 1900 until 2006, they ask: how does the presence of armed resistance at the same time as nonviolent resistance affect the success of nonviolent campaigns?

The authors generate three hypotheses, as follows:

1. Nonviolent campaigns with violent flanks are more likely to succeed than nonviolent campaigns without violent flanks.
2. Nonviolent campaigns without violent flanks are more likely to succeed than nonviolent campaigns with violent flanks.
3. Violent flanks have no impact on the success rates of nonviolent campaigns.

The authors use both quantitative and qualitative research methods to answer their question. To test their primary hypotheses, they search for any significant statistical relationships that might exist between the presence of violent flanks and the success/failure of nonviolent campaigns. They find none, thus providing no support for either Hypothesis 1 or 2. As the authors note, this could mean either that the presence of violent flanks has no discernible effect on outcomes or that it has mixed positive and negative effects that cancel each other out when taken together. When they compare the effects of violent flanks that emerge from inside a nonviolent movement to those of violent flanks that develop parallel to a nonviolent...
movement, they find that the former are associated with failure, suggesting that negative violent flank effects are more pronounced when a nonviolent campaign cannot distance itself from its armed counterpart. Moreover, they find that mass participation is the strongest determinant of nonviolent campaign success and that the presence of violent flanks has a negative effect on participation levels, suggesting that violent flanks may indirectly decrease the likelihood of success.

To flesh out how violent flanks operate within individual cases, the authors examine four cases where violent flanks were present: Burma 1988, Philippines 1983-1986, South Africa 1952-1961, and South Africa 1983-1994. Two campaigns were successful (Philippines and South Africa 1983-1994), and two were not (Burma and South Africa 1952-1961); two had violent flanks outside of the nonviolent movement (Burma and Philippines), and two had violent flanks associated with the nonviolent movement (the two South Africa cases). After examining the histories of these nonviolent campaigns—and the ways they interacted with armed resistance—the authors found mixed results. Violent flanks had negative effects in the two unsuccessful cases, no net impact in one of the successful cases (the Philippines), and a weak positive effect in the other (the later South African case). Overall there was greater evidence for negative violent flank effect mechanisms than for positive ones. In the one case where a violent flank had a weak positive effect (South Africa 1983-1994), that effect was mostly symbolic—energizing activists around the revolutionary mystique of violent resistance—rather than instrumental to gaining power over the apartheid regime. However, in the two cases where violent flanks had negative effects, these effects were seriously detrimental: the presence of an armed movement diminished “chances of success for otherwise nonviolent campaigns by legitimating repression, demobilizing participants, shifting to violent strategies where the state [was] superior, and discrediting regime opponents.” Notably, the armed movements were consistently shown not to protect nonviolent activists but rather to put them at greater risk, as authorities used the presence of armed actors to justify widespread repression against all resistance movements, violent and nonviolent alike.

The case studies show that violent flanks do actually influence the outcomes of nonviolent campaigns, despite the earlier quantitative findings suggesting otherwise. Negative and positive effects simply appear to cancel each other out when taken together over a large number of cases, with negative violent flank effects being somewhat more prominent than positive ones. The authors argue, therefore, that “on average, maximalist nonviolent campaigns often succeed despite violent flanks—rarely because of them.”
Despite recent scholarship demonstrating the greater effectiveness of nonviolent resistance (see Chenoweth & Stephan 2011), assumptions about the effectiveness of violence—along with its supposedly radical and/or revolutionary nature—stubbornly persist. When faced with a brutal or blatantly unjust opponent, many people are inclined to believe that only violence will bring about needed change or be able to protect/defend one’s community or fellow activists. We have seen this recent thinking everywhere from Syria to Venezuela, but for those of us in the U.S. struggling against the Trump administration and the white supremacist forces it has unleashed, we need look no further than the presence of Antifa (anti-fascist groups who do not rule out engaging in violent confrontations) in our own protests to see this same logic at work—as well as its counterproductive effects. Such groups see themselves as a necessary counterpart to white supremacist or neo-Nazi groups who come armed to demonstrations, ready to engage in street battles with left-wing activists. Although this logic of needing to use violence to defend against violence is so widespread and deeply engrained as to be almost intuitive, the problem is that such moves feed into and reinforce narratives on the Right that inspire—and provide cover for—their own claims to self-defense. Just as the presence of a violent flank in an anti-regime nonviolent movement can provide necessary and/or further justification for government security forces to fire on protesters, so too can it create a similar dynamic among non-state groups, including neo-Nazis and white supremacists, mobilizing more recruits and ultimately increasing the vulnerability of anti-racist/anti-fascist activists and the marginalized/targeted communities whom they wish to defend.

**CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE**

- There is no significant statistical relationship between the presence of violent flanks and either nonviolent campaign success or failure, the result of violent flanks having both negative and positive effects that cancel each other out when taken together.
- Violent flanks that emerge from within otherwise nonviolent campaigns appear to decrease these campaigns’ likelihood of success.
- Mass participation is the strongest determinant of nonviolent campaign success, and violent flanks have a negative effect on participation levels, suggesting that violent flanks can indirectly contribute to campaign failure.
- In case studies, armed movements were consistently shown not to protect nonviolent activists but rather to put them at greater risk, as authorities used the presence of armed actors to justify widespread repression against all resistance movements, violent and nonviolent alike.
- Research shows that, “on average, maximalist nonviolent campaigns often succeed despite violent flanks—rarely because of them.”

**TALKING POINTS**

- There is no significant statistical relationship between the presence of violent flanks and either nonviolent campaign success or failure, the result of violent flanks having both negative and positive effects that cancel each other out when taken together.
- Violent flanks that emerge from within otherwise nonviolent campaigns appear to decrease these campaigns’ likelihood of success.
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- In case studies, armed movements were consistently shown not to protect nonviolent activists but rather to put them at greater risk, as authorities used the presence of armed actors to justify widespread repression against all resistance movements, violent and nonviolent alike.
- Research shows that, “on average, maximalist nonviolent campaigns often succeed despite violent flanks—rarely because of them.”
PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research highlights an area where collaboration between academic and activist communities is urgently needed: the dissemination and discussion of research that directly contradicts persistent assumptions about the necessity of violence to achieve movement goals.

In the wake of recent events in Charlottesville, outrage has rightly focused on the neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups who came armed and even killed one of the counter-protesters. Their goals of racial supremacy and purity, fueled by hate and fear, have no place in a country that values equality, pluralism, and human dignity, and their ascendency now is nothing short of terrifying. But, for the sake of effectively challenging these groups and their repulsive vision, we must also engage in internal critical reflection, especially with regards to the strategic implications of the presence of Antifa affiliates who also came to Charlottesville armed, among otherwise nonviolent counter-protesters. Although their work to expose and tirelessly organize against fascism is admirable and necessary, those who identify with Antifa and its full range of tactics appear to endorse at least two flawed assumptions: 1) that truly radical action to effectively challenge fascism must include violence—often termed “physical confrontation”—and that nonviolence equals “dialogue” or “normal politics” and therefore implies acquiescence, submission, or cooptation, and 2) that violence/“physical confrontation” is also necessary to protect activists and targeted communities. But, in fact, here is what we know from recent social scientific research:

Nonviolent resistance is twice as effective as violent resistance when used for radical goals such as the removal of an authoritarian regime or national liberation, cases with no shortage of brutal, unreasonable opponents (see Chenoweth & Stephan 2011). Furthermore, nonviolent resistance strategy is all about analyzing and dismantling an opponent’s sources of power, including through direct action. Finally, as noted above, instead of protecting nonviolent activists, the presence of a violent flank creates justification for further repression against them, making them more vulnerable to violence.

Therefore, it is time that we un-tether violence from its “radical” and “protective/defensive” associations. Not doing so—hanging on, as Antifa does, to these tired old assertions that violence is a necessary response—is, quite simply, poor strategy. It gives white supremacists and neo-Nazis exactly what they want, reinforcing their “we’re embattled” narratives and thereby strengthening their movement. It muddies the waters by giving commentators on the Right something to point to when they try to create (ludicrous) moral equivalencies between white supremacists/neo-Nazis and anti-fascist activists. And, in doing so, it does nothing to diminish the strength of white supremacy.

Furthermore, the continued presence of armed elements like Antifa has negative effects within the resistance: it makes many fellow activists feel more vulnerable to violence and therefore less likely to show up to demonstrations, especially with children in tow, diminishing mass participation in the resistance and thereby decreasing its power and effectiveness.

For all these reasons, if Antifa activists care—as they no doubt do—about effectively challenging fascist, white supremacist forces, they must think more strategically, considering the short- and long-term effects of their actions. And fellow activists must engage in discussions with them about the strategic value and radical credentials of completely nonviolent resistance, together strategizing about those actions that will best diminish the power of the opponent to realize its fascist agenda and raising the following points:

Despite common-sense associations of armed/violent action with defense and protection, nonviolent discipline has a better chance of keeping activists safe than armed resistance does, even—counterintuitively—in the face of a violent adversary. There is no guarantee of complete safety with either type of resistance, but armed resistance is much more likely to elicit further—not less—violence from the other side.

There is a strategic logic to nonviolent resistance of which Antifa seems unaware. Far from being synonymous with “dialogue” or “debate,” nonviolent resistance involves the dismantling of an opponent’s sources of power through a range of methods, including various forms of disruption and direct action, and is twice as effective as violent resistance in achieving radical goals (see Chenoweth & Stephan 2011). Contrary to mainstream belief, there is a historical record of successful nonviolent resistance against fascism in countries under Nazi control (e.g., women saving their Jewish husbands in Berlin’s Rosenstrasse demonstrations, Denmark’s rescue of a sizable number of its Jewish community, etc.).

Only by maintaining nonviolent discipline can the resistance dramatize and capitalize on the clear contrast between its activists and the white supremacists or neo-Nazis they confront.

Finally, far from embodying a radical challenge to fascism, Antifa affiliates are doing exactly what neo-Nazis and white supremacists are hoping they will do—this is precisely the reaction that will energize the very fascists they are hoping to shut down. Only by dissociating one’s radical credentials from participation in violence will we ultimately move away from these knee-jerk responses to racist violence that do nothing to minimize the draw and strength of white supremacy—and instead move towards more strategic, effective action that actually has a chance of advancing the cause of a diverse, affirming, just society.
Health Effects of the Syrian War on Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees

Since the Syrian war began, more than half of the country’s population has been displaced, becoming either internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees. The experience of being forced from their homes has resulted in long-lasting physical and emotional trauma for affected individuals. This study analyzes a group of 111 Syrian refugees and 195 IDPs, living in either the Netherlands or Syria, to try to understand more about the physical and mental health issues caused by the Syrian war. The research team wanted to identify how, if at all, health effects differed between refugee and internally displaced communities and how the Syrian war may have impacted individual and collective identities.

To measure physical and mental health effects, the research team, comprised of both academics and physicians, constructed a questionnaire asking IDPs in Syria and Syrian refugees living in the Netherlands about their exposure to trauma, classified in this study along the Syrian Oppressive Experience (SOE) scale. The SOE scale was separated into three forms of trauma most likely experienced by victims of the Syrian war: 1) torture and injury due to torture; 2) injuries from violence or during attempts to evade violence or torture; and 3) secondary trauma, including witnessing violence and/or a family member injured or killed due to violence, imprisonment, or torture. To examine ways in which the collective Syrian identity may have been affected by the conflict, the research team used the Cumulative Trauma Scale (CTS), which specifies six trauma types: collective identity trauma, personal identity trauma, survival trauma, attachment trauma, secondary trauma, and gender discrimination. The research team also performed tests to measure for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the general physical health of the respondents.

Viewed together, all participants experienced at least one form of trauma, 95% reported direct exposure to a traumatic event, 91% reported indirect exposure to a traumatic event (a family member experienced trauma), and 28% experienced torture. Around half of the participants experienced collective identity trauma (such as discrimination) or role identity trauma (school disruptions or loss of business), and slightly less than half experienced personal identity trauma (sexual or physical abuse). The rate of PTSD among participants was also high, averaging 25% between refugee and IDP groups. Additionally, 11% of both groups claimed they had a plan, or have attempted, to commit suicide.
Differences between participants from the Syrian refugee group living in the Netherlands and the IDP group in Syria were also noted. The refugee group, on average, was younger, wealthier, and more educated, came from smaller families, had higher levels of general health, but experienced greater levels of depression than the IDP community. The IDP group reported higher levels of PTSD symptoms (including suicidal tendencies), was exposed to more traumatic events, and experienced the most trauma types in almost every category.

This is the first study to provide empirical evidence of the high suicidality among refugee and IDP communities, as 11% said they had a plan for or history of attempting suicide (as a contrast, the same rate in the U.S. is around 4%). Also notable are the higher depression rates among refugees compared to IDPs. The authors suggest this may be due to IDPs still living within a conflict zone, forcing them into a “survival mode” where “thoughts, words, and actions are limited to those associated with staying alive in the face of mortal danger,” thus not allowing the mental bandwidth to be depressed. Another possible explanation is that refugees face higher levels of depression since, once resettled in a new country, they are confronted with the reality that they may have lost their homeland, community, and/or family, and now must learn to operate in an entirely new environment.
CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

This research highlights the long-lasting health effects of war, even in those who never pick up a weapon. As victims of one of the largest humanitarian disasters in decades, Syrian refugees and internally displaced people will pay the high costs of war long after the fighting stops through high rates of physical and emotional trauma perpetrated against themselves, their family members, and the collective Syrian identity. Likewise, the high PTSD rates reported in this study are supported by the research of others who have studied PTSD rates of Syrian refugees in Turkey and Lebanon, further validating the importance of these findings. International organizations such as the UNHCR, ICRC, Mercy Corps, and many others have bolstered mental health services in their humanitarian programming. However, as this research shows, there is still an urgent need to expand these services—as well as to allow more Syrian refugees into host countries where they can receive the healthcare and security they desperately require.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Ever since the beginning of the Syrian war, issues relating to refugee resettlement have played a much larger role than they had previously in global political and social discourse. There has been fierce debate around who will, should, or won’t accept refugees. However, this research shows that by not accepting refugees, or by forcing IDPs to remain in conflict zones, the international community may be condemning them to a fate similar to the one that awaits so many on the “battlefield” of the Syrian war. These people are casualties of war. High rates of suicide, PTSD, and physically and emotionally traumatic experiences plague war zones, and countries can immediately and directly prevent trauma exposure, and thus its subsequent symptoms, by permitting more refugees to cross their borders.

Apart from the debate on refugee admittance, it is made clear by this research that more must be done to support the mental health of both these populations. Much of the burden of providing health services falls on the countries that share borders with conflict zones, where financial and personnel resources are already stretched thin. International organizations such as the UNHCR, as well as local and international NGOs, are working to address the health needs of refugees and IDPs, but most of these organizations operate on restricted budgets. This provides an additional avenue for the international community to lend material, human, or financial support to those already poised to help.
Mosul: Life-Saving Healthcare for Injured Civilians

As civilian casualties mount in war-torn Mosul, Luigi Pandolfi, a technical expert with EU Humanitarian Aid in Iraq’s Kurdistan region, discusses healthcare strategy with staff from ECHO’s partner International Medical Corps (IMC).

• Exposure to the Syrian war is directly associated with high rates of PTSD, suicide, chronic disease, and poor physical and mental health among Syrian refugees and IDPs.
• Rates of depression are much higher among Syrian refugees than among IDPs still living in Syria.
• The percentage of Syrian refugees and IDPs who have either planned or attempted suicide is nearly three times greater than the percentage of those who have in the United States.

TALKING POINTS
Civil Resistance Amid Civil War

Research on civil resistance tends to focus on cases where nonviolent methods are used to challenge authoritarian or otherwise unjust regimes, who may in turn respond with violent repression in a last-ditch (and often counterproductive) effort to maintain control. But what resources does nonviolent action have for challenging violence itself? Scholarship on this question generally falls into two categories: that on unarmed civilian peacekeeping (the use of accompaniment, proactive presence, and other nonviolent strategies to deter/prevent violence and protect civilians) and that on civil resistance against armed groups/state militaries (including the creation of zones of peace) as a means of protection and/or communal defense. Contributing to the second category, this research focuses on efforts of the civilian population in Samaniego, Colombia, to resist violence and maintain a semblance of autonomy in the face of various armed groups struggling for dominance in the country’s half-century-long civil war.

The authors base their findings on field research—in the form of interviews with local authorities, civil society leaders, community members, former rebels, and external actors (from national/international organizations); observations; and document analysis—conducted in the Colombian municipalities of Bogotá, Samaniego, Pasto, and Cali from 2011 until 2014. Breaking up their analysis into three time periods, the authors examine 1) 1997-2000, when community members resisted armed interference in their elections and declared Samaniego a peace territory under Mayor Cuéllar, 2) 2004-2007, when Mayor Montúfar negotiated a local peace pact among the armed groups, as well as an agreement to remove land mines, and 3) 2008-2014, when community members in Samaniego’s mountain region established an indigenous reserve as a strategy to resist confinement and maintain independence and impartiality in the armed conflict.

On the question of what contributed to the emergence of civil resistance in Samaniego, the authors argue that both structural factors and the agency

Key words

civil/nonviolent resistance
zones of peace
peace territories
Colombia
civil war
armed groups
peacebuilding
of particular individuals were important. During these three periods, the prominent structural/contextual factors that facilitated mobilization were, on the one hand, the experience of violence, control, and confinement at the hands of armed groups at the local level, which motivated resistance, and, on the other hand, the presence of peace negotiations and the strength of the peace movement at the national level, which provided support for and connections between local initiatives like peace territories. Additionally, especially during the third period, the support of external organizations (like the UN Development Program) and “enabling norms at the national level” with regards to the recognition of indigenous reserves shaped the ability of community members to establish a reserve with an autonomous local government to maintain independence and impartiality amid increased fighting. At the same time, the agency of individual actors was crucial, especially when structural conditions were not as conducive to civil resistance. For instance, the authors cite instances where gains made under one mayor were reversed upon the election of a new mayor or where grassroots leaders effectively counteracted unfavorable structural conditions—showing the difference individuals make.

On the question of which factors contributed to the success of civil resistance in Samaniego—including a drop from 63 to 24 homicides per year from 2003 to 2007—the authors argue that characteristics of the civil resistance movement and particular strategic choices made by the movement were crucial to stemming violence. The movement characteristics the authors found to be most important include broad participation (which facilitates movement resilience and the ability to influence armed group members), unity (which increases the movement’s leverage and self-protection), and representative leadership (both elected and grassroots leaders).

The strategic decisions made by the movement that were key to its success include the articulation of “clear, specific, and attainable objectives,” adherence to nonviolent discipline and impartiality (to take away justifications armed groups might have used to target civilian communities, especially that they may be collaborating with rival armed groups), strategic use of leverage against armed groups (especially armed groups’ concern for their reputation and reliance on the local population), and the priority placed on gaining “buy-in” from armed groups (often through direct communication). In short, civil resistance can work not only against unjust regimes and conditions but also against violence itself, enabling a community to preserve its autonomy in the context of war and not be controlled by the armed logic surrounding it.

Continued Reading:

**In Colombia’s Decades-Long Civil War, One Community Vows Neutrality**


**History: Colombian Conflict** By Conciliation Resources: http://c-r.org/where-we-work/latin-america/history-colombian-conflict

**Organizations:**

REDEPAZ (National Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against the War): http://www.redepaz.org.co/

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**Civil resistance:** “the application of unarmed civilian power using nonviolent methods such as protests, strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations, without using or threatening physical harm against the opponent.”


**Peace territory/zone of peace:** “a territory in which armed actors are asked to ‘abide by certain rules in order to limit the effects of armed conflict.’”

When civilians are subject to armed group violence during civil war, it is easy to assume that they must necessarily turn to (or join) one of those groups or the country’s military for protection. This thinking follows the common-sense logic (mentioned earlier in this Digest with reference to Chenoweth & Schock’s research) that violence is necessary to confront violence. What this logic misses is the way in which such an association can actually increase civilian vulnerability at the hands of other armed actors, who see these civilians as collaborating with their enemies and therefore as suitable targets. It is important in such cases to know that there is another option besides taking up armed protection, on the one hand, and complete submission, on the other. Peace territories or zones of peace provide this alternative—a way to carve out islands of autonomy, free from the interference of armed actors, during violent conflict. Key to this strategy is recognition of the fact that most armed actors (non-state armed groups and state militaries alike) are very concerned about whom civilian populations are supporting; if a community can clearly demonstrate that it is not supporting any side/armed actor, that is a way to, in a sense, meet the “needs” of these armed actors while also serving to protect—and maintain the independence of—community members who might otherwise be at risk.

**CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE**

When civilians are subject to armed group violence during civil war, it is easy to assume that they must necessarily turn to (or join) one of those groups or the country’s military for protection. This thinking follows the common-sense logic (mentioned earlier in this Digest with reference to Chenoweth & Schock’s research) that violence is necessary to confront violence. What this logic misses is the way in which such an association can actually increase civilian vulnerability at the hands of other armed actors, who see these civilians as collaborating with their enemies and therefore as suitable targets. It is important in such cases to know that there is another option besides taking up armed protection, on the one hand, and complete submission, on the other. Peace territories or zones of peace provide this alternative—a way to carve out islands of autonomy, free from the interference of armed actors, during violent conflict. Key to this strategy is recognition of the fact that most armed actors (non-state armed groups and state militaries alike) are very concerned about whom civilian populations are supporting; if a community can clearly demonstrate that it is not supporting any side/armed actor, that is a way to, in a sense, meet the “needs” of these armed actors while also serving to protect—and maintain the independence of—community members who might otherwise be at risk.

**TALKING POINTS**

- Civil resistance—in particular, the creation of peace territories—can be used to resist not only authoritarian regimes but also violence itself.
- The interaction between advantageous structural conditions like a national peace process or peace movement and the individual agency of local leaders facilitated the emergence of civil resistance in Samaniego, Colombia.
- The factors most responsible for the success of civil resistance in Samaniego, Colombia, include broad movement participation, unity, and representative leadership, as well as strategic movement choices regarding clear objectives, nonviolent discipline and impartiality, the use of leverage, and armed group “buy-in”.

**Photo Credit:** Nonviolent Peaceforce
This research provides useful recommendations for activists and practitioners alike. For activists, especially those living amid violent conflict, it is important to know about the protective (not just emancipatory) effects of nonviolent action, as such knowledge can create options for creative and effective strategizing. In particular, activists should encourage their communities to maintain nonviolent discipline and impartiality with regards to the various armed actors in the war—both of which can have a protective effect, while also helping to deescalate war at the local level and perhaps at the national level. As with all civil resistance movements, activists should also think strategically about leverage, with special consideration given to armed groups’ dependency relations and their concern for their reputations with regards to particular issues. At the same time that they are finding points of leverage for effectively pressuring armed groups, activists should also balance that pressure with engagement with armed groups to gain their “buy-in” with various initiatives (like the peace pacts or demining initiative noted above). Internally, activists should do everything they can to build unity and broad-based participation in the movement—the more diverse the movement, the more links and influence it is likely to have with armed groups.

As for practitioners who may be eager to find ways to assist such efforts from outside, one of the most important roles that they can play is to facilitate linkages between communities engaged in similar civil resistance or peace territory activities within a country or in different countries, so activists can share experiences, learn best practices, strategize together, and, perhaps most importantly, not feel isolated. In addition, they can provide resources and international publicity, as or when requested.
External Support and Civil War Termination


Keywords: civil wars, external support, conflict outcomes, game theory

Civil wars have emerged as one of the more common forms of armed conflict in the last few decades. Factors such as the number of warring parties, foreign military intervention, and the blurred line between civilians and combatants make civil wars especially difficult to resolve. Furthermore, although civil wars occur within a single country, the international community rarely views them merely as domestic problems. External governments and international organizations become involved (either on humanitarian grounds or in self-interest), adding otherwise nonexistent levels of financial or military support that most often makes resolving the conflict much more difficult. This study looks specifically at how external “fungible” support (mainly direct financial support) provided to rebels may influence the prospects for civil war termination. Indeed, this research shows that foreign involvement only makes matters worse and that, by providing financial support to rebels, external governments can prolong the war much more than previously realized.

The author’s hypothesis suggests that perhaps fungible support can decrease the chance of resolution by creating uncertainty about the rebel group’s ability to maintain the resources needed to wage war against their government, which in turn limits options for resolution. By not knowing how much of the outside fungible support will translate into rebel firepower, governments are less likely to negotiate for peace because they cannot accurately measure the rebels’ ability to maintain fighting.

The authors used multiple forms of statistical analysis to identify the relationship between levels of fungible support and civil war resolution and to contrast the effects of fungible support with direct military support, such as guns, troops, and equipment. In all three methodological approaches, the authors found fungible support from external parties was consistently shown to be associated with longer wars but that providing troops may be linked to shorter wars. The authors argue that this relationship may exist because it is less clear to governments to what extent fungible support actually increases rebels’ military capability—leading governments to overestimate their own ability to win wars. As an example, when outside actors provide weapons to rebels, it is easy to draw the conclusion that more guns make a more deadly/efficient opponent causing the government to lower its expectations of military victory and therefore turn to the negotiation table. However, when fungible assistance is given, rebel groups could hypothetically use that money to either a) buy more guns or b) pay out bribes. Because of the ambiguity of how rebels use fungible support, governments are less equipped to assess their chances of victory or defeat and therefore more likely to continue fighting and less likely to come to a peace agreement.

Continued Reading:

In Syria, Militias Armed by the Pentagon Fight Those Armed by the CIA
By Nabih Bulos, W. J. Hennigan, and Brian Bennett. LA Times, 2016.

Syria’s Paradox: Why the War Only Ever Seems to Get Worse

Private Donors’ Funds Add Wild Card to War in Syria
Another important finding of this study sheds light on what we know about the major civil war parties and their respective roles in ending the conflict. When reviewing past research on this topic, the authors found that the state is commonly blamed as the party most opposed to a peace agreement. However, if foreign financial support is impactful enough to cause the cost of rebel fighting to go down (and their capacity to fight to go up), the traditional power imbalance between state and rebel groups shifts to favor the rebels and continued fighting becomes more desirable for the rebels. In this scenario, it is the rebels’ inability to stop fighting and negotiate for peace that leads to ongoing conflict. Therefore, the results of this study show that fungible support may give both the state and the rebel forces a level of (perhaps misguided) confidence in their own military capabilities, providing them both with an incentive to keep fighting.
Over the last 50 years, many outside governments have chosen to support one side of a civil war. Not only can such support prolong wars, as this study has shown, but it can also be used in unintended ways or used against the outside governments in the years that follow. The ongoing Syrian war provides the most timely example, where many states have debated whether or how to support the Syrian opposition. Syria is especially relevant to this research because the war-extending effects of fungible support are compounded by the vast amounts of financial support flowing to both the Syrian government and the various rebel groups. In the case of the United States, this debate is especially heated considering how arms supplied by the U.S. to support factions in Afghanistan and Iraq have traded hands over the years—and now have become a major portion of the fighting power of the Taliban, ISIS, and other groups in open conflict against the U.S. and/or its allies. This research adds to our understanding of the dangers of supporting rebel forces during civil wars by showing that even non-military aid, such as financial support, can be detrimental to the peace process and actually prolong the fighting by substantial durations.

**CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE**

- When rebel groups receive outside financial support, civil wars are more than two times less likely to end compared to when rebels receive non-financial support.

- When states receive foreign military support (troops), civil wars last longer. When rebels receive foreign military support (troops), civil wars are shorter.

**TALKING POINTS**

Photo Credit: Nick Ares, Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0)
This research provides insight into the consequences of foreign party involvement in civil wars. While war participation of any form should be discouraged, lessons from this study show that some forms of participation are worse than others, potentially causing civil wars to last longer than they would have had outside parties not been involved. Outside parties should reconsider their policy for civil war intervention and weigh the benefits of providing military or financial support with the high costs of continued war and the uncertainty of post-civil war reconstruction, where weapons and financial support often trade hands to groups that will become even greater threats in the future. These are important talking points for advocates who want to inform policy-makers, the media, and the public when military interventions are being discussed as options. Finally, attention to the human costs of war must not be pushed aside in favor of abstract discussions about costs and benefits of military support. The effects of military support on civil war duration and outcome is always uncertain and unpredictable in any particular case; what is certain is that military support will contribute to war-making with its attendant bodily harm, trauma, and destruction. Instead, interested parties should explore the numerous viable nonviolent alternatives that exist to influence warring parties away from violence.
Sanctions Against Non-State Armed Actors

In situations of armed conflict, sanctions are tools available to the international community to influence armed actors away from violence. Although generally seen as less harmful than military action, sanctions have not been without fault—for instance, there was widespread criticism of the indiscriminate effects of UN sanctions on the people of Iraq in the 1990s. Targeted sanctions, therefore, have gained more attention in recent years to pressure specific individuals responsible for—or benefitting from—objectionable policies, without making the public in their countries more vulnerable. Both scholarship and policy on sanctions, however, tend to focus on their effectiveness as a tool for influencing states—whether through coercion, constraint, or signaling—leaving largely unexamined how sanctions work against non-state armed actors (NSAAs).

Examining two cases where UN sanctions were used against NSAAs with the goal of ending armed conflict—the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola—the author investigates the effectiveness of sanctions in coercing these NSAAs and to what extent the factors associated with sanctions’ effectiveness (with states) were relevant in these cases.

The author finds that UN sanctions were not terribly effective in influencing the behavior of these NSAAs. In the case of Sierra Leone, the author outlines five episodes of UN sanctions from 1997 to 2003—from arms and petroleum embargoes to travel restrictions and a diamond export ban. None of these measures succeeded in stopping the RUF’s or the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)’s seizure of power, armed incursions, or atrocities against civilians. The story is similar in the case of Angola: the author outlines four episodes of UN sanctions from 1993 to 2002—including petroleum and arms embargoes against UNITA, a UNITA travel ban, the closing of UNITA offices in foreign countries (and later prohibition of all official contact with UNITA leaders), the prohibition of flights (and then all other forms of transportation) to/from UNITA territory, the freezing of UNITA funds, the prohibition of mining services, and, finally, a diamond embargo—all of which failed to bring an end to the civil war. More specifically, these sanctions failed to keep the UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, from resuming his armed struggle every time a political outcome did not go as he wished. Only his death and the willingness of UNITA’s remaining leadership to agree to a ceasefire agreement brought about an end to the war.

Continued Reading:
The Effectiveness of United Nations Targeted Sanctions

Sanctioning Non-State Armed Groups: Does It Work?

The Global Regime for Transnational Crime

What Happened to Smart Sanctions?
By David Cortright. November 5, 2012: https://davidcortright.net/2012/11/05/what-happened-to-smart-sanctions/
The author argues that the failure of sanctions against the RUF and UNITA can be attributed to the state-centered bias of sanctions, making them more effective against states than against NSAAs. Drawing from these two cases, he lists the following characteristics of NSAAs that make them less susceptible to the pressure of sanctions:

- Both groups were intolerant of diverse opinions within their ranks and not particularly “depend[ent] on key allies for their stability,” therefore sanctions targeting allies of/within those groups who might then try to convince their leaders to change course were not likely to work.
- Because NSAAs usually challenge the status quo, they tend to have more to lose than states do in complying with sanctions (which often call for a return to the status quo) and therefore are less willing to give way to pressure from sanctions.
- NSAAs tend to be more secretive than states, so there is a lack of knowledge about the identity of key leaders and/or about their personalities or leadership styles—knowledge which could otherwise inform the design of sanction policy.
- NSAAs are not as dependent on international relationships or as integrated into international institutions—for example, trade relations, foreign aid, UN membership, etc.—as states are, and therefore they are not as vulnerable to the disruption of these relationships that sanctions can bring about. NSAAs tend to participate in illicit market exchanges, which are harder to track, regulate, and disrupt.

In closing, the author calls for greater attention to the unique characteristics of NSAAs and more research on how sanctions can work against them. Due to the difficulty of coercing NSAA leaders through sanctions—as illustrated by the RUF and UNITA cases—he suggests that more consideration be given to the design of sanctions to constrain NSAA rather than coerce them.

**Sanctions:** “attempts by one or more parties to change another party’s objectionable behaviour through economic and diplomatic means aimed at disrupting or interrupting the target’s normal relations.”

**Targeted sanctions:** sanctions that “put maximum pressure on those directly involved in the behaviour that is subject to the sanctions, and those who benefit from it, rather than shutting down the entire economy.”

**NSAAs (non-state armed actors):** rebel organisations whose primary goal is to overthrow an incumbent government, and actively take violent measures geared at seizing political power by force.”
Although not without their shortcomings, sanctions can be a valuable tool for putting pressure on conflict parties who might otherwise continue with violent behavior, providing an alternative to military action as a source of leverage on the global stage. Given the growing prominence of non-state armed actors (NSAAs) in contemporary warfare, however, it is important to take stock of and revise old frameworks for sanction design and effectiveness to ensure that sanctions—if justified and with strong support—can work against these types of actors as well as states. The more non-lethal tools the international community has for confronting groups like ISIS, Boko Haram, or the FDLR (in the Democratic Republic of Congo), and the more effective those tools are, the less persuasive arguments for military intervention will be, with its inevitable human costs and potential for escalation.

**CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE**

Current sanctions research and policy focus on states, with little attention given to the distinctive challenges of targeting non-state armed actors, making sanctions less effective against them.

The failures of sanctions against selected non-state armed actors illustrate shortcomings in sanctions design, such as inadequate recognition of the groups’ lack of reliance on key allies, the severe costs they face in complying with sanctions, the secrecy of their leadership, and their independence from global trade systems and international organizations.

More attention must be given to the unique challenges of influencing non-state armed actors through sanctions, so these can become more effective tools for ending armed conflict.

**TALKING POINTS**
As noted by the author, researchers and policy-makers need to give more attention to the particularities of non-state armed actors (NSAAs) when studying and designing sanctions. Once these are taken into consideration, designing sanctions that will be able to effectively influence NSAAs will be no easy task, given the challenges the author identified. There is reason to think, however, that there may be more points of leverage than he suggests. Although this research argues that NSAA leaders do not rely on key allies/constituencies for power or stability (like states do)—and therefore are not likely to respond to their recommendations to change course considering the pressure sanctions are putting on them—there is reason to believe that this particular distinction between NSAAs and states may be overstated. Political theorists as diverse as Hannah Arendt and Gene Sharp remind us that no one person is able to execute his/her will to the extent that despots (or NSAA leaders) do without the compliance and consent of lots of other people who are willing to carry out his/her orders. Even NSAAs that might be defined by their reliance on brute force to control their populations—and even their own foot soldiers—depend on the support (whether enthusiastic or grudging) of the group’s members to operate. If this support and compliance are taken away, the leader of a NSAA is no longer powerful. This does not mean that withdrawing that support is easy—especially if these individuals fear for their lives at the hands of others, like them, who fear for theirs if they disobey—but it is possible. Targeted sanctions can be part of the equation—but so can other non-military “interventions” that make it possible for individuals to defect from armed groups. Just as important to consider as these dependency relations within NSAAs are their dependency relations with the world. Although the author notes that NSAAs’ lack of integration into global trade systems and international organizations may make it more difficult to pressure them, it is worthwhile to highlight the ways they do interact with and depend on outside actors through their involvement in illicit global economies, diaspora networks, and so on. These dependencies create alternate points of leverage, albeit more difficult to access.
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U.S. Ambassador, ret.  
Chairman and CEO, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy

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<th>Our vision is a world beyond war by 2030 and humanity united by a global system of peace with justice.</th>
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<td>OUR MISSION</td>
<td>Our mission is to advance the Global Peace System by supporting, developing and collaborating with peacebuilding efforts in all sectors of society.</td>
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