

Effect of public sector provision, governance and institutionalisation on nature and scale of violence or atrocities

The interventions had a small effect on nature and scale of violence or atrocities and confidence in study findings was low.

Geographic focus: Global, Middle east and North Africa, South Asia, East Asia & Pacific,

Effect: Small effect ($g=0.021$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (5 studies with 18 effect sizes)

Short summary

The interventions have small effects on the violence outcomes. Strategies that prioritize security before development such as Security-Only and Sequential approaches tend to be more effective in ending conflicts. Simultaneous interventions addressing security and development concurrently show more variable results. Other measures include redistricting, creating new governments, counterinsurgency aid initiatives, and donor aid management. Redistricting reduced violence in ethnically diverse districts but increased it in highly polarized areas. Aid provided by a single donor reduced violence, while fragmented aid diminished impact. Overall, the cell shows a small effect on reducing violence.

Long summary

The intervention

The set of interventions studied as part of this cell includes the Security-only strategy which proposes providing order and security first and leaving developmental assistance to specialized agencies, 2) the Sequential strategy, which promotes providing security and order first, and then assuming development-related tasks as a means to avoid contradictory effects, and 3) the Simultaneous strategy emphasizes the relationship between underdevelopment and conflict, thus urges the implementation of both security and development related tasks simultaneously. Other interventions include creating new districts and governments; reconstructing sector-specific counterinsurgency aid using data from NATO C3 Agency's Afghanistan Country Stability Picture (ACSP); aid fragmentation under various donors; and post-conflict institutions and policies can either exacerbate or mitigate group-based violence and identity politics.

How the intervention is expected to work

The interventions designed with strategies prioritizing the establishment of security first (*Security-Only* and *Sequential* strategies) are more successful at terminating conflicts; redistricting resulted in no decline in the average incidence of conflict, however, there were relatively larger reductions in violence after splitting in those original districts that experienced the largest reductions in diversity. The child districts exhibited slightly more violence than parents after splitting, and these differences are largest in child districts with high ethnic polarization around the time of the first election; there was a greater incidence of violence in areas more concentrated with reconstruction activity. There was a correlation between reduced political competition with the increased likelihood of violence committed based on group differences and governmental control over rent extraction and armed forces, decentralization, and citizenship also lead to a reduction in violence. And lastly, the intervention showed that when aid is given under one donor the violence is reduced but when it gets fragmented under various donors then the impact of intervention is reduced.

The evidence base

The cell contains 8 studies: 5 impact evaluations designed as quasi-experimental studies, 2 qualitative studies and 1 systematic review.

The impact evaluations studies are from the context of various countries, including Nicaragua, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique, and Cambodia (1), Indonesia (1), Afghanistan (2), North Carolina and Iraq (1). The qualitative studies were conducted in Mozambique (1) and Sudan (1). The systematic review focused on developing and middle-income countries. There is inconsistency across impact evaluations in their findings.

Evidence findings

Security-first interventions (Security-Only and Sequential strategies) were generally more effective at ending conflicts. Redistricting showed no overall decline in violence but led to reductions in districts with decreased diversity. Violence was higher in newly split, ethnically polarized districts and in areas with intense reconstruction or low political competition. Centralized single-donor aid reduced violence, while fragmented aid was less effective.

The review findings

The review evidence shows that there was no consensus on the impacts of international peace operations or community level peacebuilding on armed violence prevention or mitigation. The evidence summaries of 5 impact evaluations and 1 systematic review are as follows:

Akman (2010) -examines peace operations and their strategies in post-conflict societies, focusing on the interaction between security and development efforts. It explores three main strategies: Security-only, Sequential, and Simultaneous, in the context of various countries, including Nicaragua, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique, and Cambodia. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative case studies. The quantitative analysis uses a dataset covering civil wars from 1946 to 2006, employing logit models corrected for temporally dependent data to test the effectiveness of different peace operation strategies. The qualitative component involves structured, focused comparisons of six case studies, selected based on the strategy of intervention and varying in terms of success and failure. The findings indicate that interventions prioritizing security first, through Security-Only and Sequential strategies, are more successful in terminating conflicts and achieving durable peace compared to Simultaneous strategies. The study suggests that while Simultaneous strategies are less effective, the quality of peace achieved is not fully accounted for in the statistical analysis and requires further qualitative investigation. The study is rated medium confidence as it is a non-experimental study.

Bazzi (2016) assessed the exogenous timing of new district creation i.e., redistricting in Indonesia to identify the implications of these changes for violent conflict. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. A total of 52 districts, 2000 district borders and 7904 conflict observations were used in the analysis. First, we find that ethnic and religious polarization have positive differential effects on the change in conflict after splitting ($p < 0.05$), particularly when focusing on non-crime violence. Meanwhile, ethnic fractionalization has much weaker differential effects close to zero ($p < 0.05$). Second, we find that districts with large reductions in diversity experience a statistically and economically significant decrease in the likelihood of political conflict after splitting. The parent districts with very low diversity (at the 10th percentile) experience a decline in all types of violence after redistricting with the largest and most significant decline happening for political conflict. The study is rated as medium confidence due to quasi-experimental study design.

Child (2019) was conducted in Afghanistan. The study measured the impact of counterinsurgency aid on conflicts by sector-specific reconstruction on conflict by examining monthly changes using a district-level fixed effects model. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. The study uses the unit of analysis as district month. The sample covers 398 districts over 57 months (from January 2005 to September 2009), and thus contains a

total of 22,686 observations. The study estimates the cross-sectional relationship between (lagged) reconstruction and violence, clustering errors at the province level. Mean projects are significantly positively correlated with violence in the cross-sectional setting ($p < 0.05$). The incidence of greater violence in areas more concentrated with reconstruction activity may simply reflect the spatial selection of projects. The study is rated as low confidence due to quasi experimental study design.

Child (2020) tested the existing theory on aid fragmentation by studying aid provision under numerous donors throughout Afghanistan from 2006-2009. Leveraging granular military data on aid, corruption, public opinion, and conflict, we conduct the first micro-level analysis of aid fragmentation. When delivered by a single donor, aid curtails corruption, boosts public opinion, and reduces conflict. However, under donor fragmentation, the benefits of aid are significantly reduced. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. The primary unit of observation is the district-quarter. Total sample covers 398 districts over 15 quarters (from Q1 2006 to Q3 2009), containing 5,970 observations. The study suggests fragmentation facilitates corruption and erodes aid's ability to win hearts and minds in the fight against insurgents. Independently of aid, however, fragmentation benefits the quality of institutions. The study is rated as medium confidence due to quasi-experimental study design and partial description of interventions and outcomes.

Cramer (2016) focuses on identifying effective interventions for preventing or mitigating armed violence, especially in developing and middle-income countries. The interventions examined include peace operations, economic support, mediation, governance initiatives, justice, reconciliation programs, and media interventions. The analysis considers the various socio-political, economic, and geographic factors influencing these interventions. The assessment uses a systematic review methodology, analyzing 149 studies published from 2010 to 2015. These studies vary widely in quality and design, with a mix of qualitative case studies, quantitative analyses, and mixed methods approaches. It includes literature from English, Spanish, and Portuguese sources, though much of it focuses on sub-Saharan Africa. There is a particular focus on community-level peace initiatives, economic interventions, and security/policing practices, with limited high-quality evidence on governance and justice. The findings are mixed and inconclusive. Only a few high-quality studies provide strong evidence on what consistently "works" across settings. For peacekeeping and mediation there are mixed outcomes, with some studies noting positive impacts on local violence reduction and trust-building but others highlighting unintended negative effects on state-building. For economic interventions employment initiatives may reduce violence under specific conditions, but results are mixed. Limited evidence supports formal justice mechanisms in reducing violence; some success is observed in community-driven reconciliation. Broadcasting and digital media show promise in changing attitudes, though effects on long-term behaviour are uncertain. The study is rated low confidence systematic review as report notes a generally fragmented evidence base with limited high-quality studies. Most of the research assessed as "low quality" limits confidence in overall conclusions about effectiveness. Nonetheless, certain themes—like community-based peacebuilding—show potential, but further rigorous studies are needed to support these findings confidently.

Daugherty (2016) analysed the role of governmental and non-governmental actors in influencing intergroup conflict after war, particularly when group differences have been a significant aspect of war mobilization. The context of this study spans various countries, with specific case studies in Iraq and North Carolina, USA. The dissertation aims to understand how post-conflict institutions and policies can either exacerbate or mitigate group-based violence and identity politics. The study design includes cross-national, national, and sub-national analyses to explore the incentives for actors to institutionalize group differences after war. The research utilizes data from sources like Princeton's Empirical Studies of Conflict project and public records, focusing on variables such as ethnic violence, political competition, and demographics in Iraq from 2003 onwards. In North Carolina, the study examines lynching

violence and its correlation with state capacity and political competition, using historical data and imputation methods to address missing data. Findings from the Iraq case study indicate that higher representation ratios at the governorate level correlate with decreased sectarian violence, while increased budget allocations are associated with higher casualties. In North Carolina, the study finds that higher levels of county-level tax extraction relative to state-level extraction correlate with increased lynching violence, suggesting a political nature to racial violence. These findings highlight the complex interplay between political representation, resource allocation, and violence, suggesting that post-conflict policies need to carefully consider these dynamics to foster lasting peace. The study is rated low confidence as it is a non-experimental study with no clear description of the intervention, as the document primarily focuses on analysing variables such as representation ratios and budget allocations without explicitly detailing the intervention process or its implementation. The study's reliance on existing datasets and imputation methods further complicates the understanding of the intervention's scope and impact.

Confidence assessment

Overall low: The confidence rating for this cell is low due to most of the included studies rated low confidence.

Link to review summaries

Cramer (2016)

Review can be accessed through EGM

Other outcomes

Community and state governance / Government performance