

## Effect of Security sector reform interventions on Nature and scale of violence or atrocities

Security sector reform interventions, including peace operation strategies and programs targeting rebel governance, have a small effect on reducing conflicts, full-scale wars, and unresolved or violent disputes

Geographic focus: Global, Latin America & Caribbean, South Asia

Effect: Small effect ( $g=0.045$ )

Confidence in study findings: Low (3 studies with 22 effect sizes)

### Short summary

This cell examines interventions that prioritize security, using strategies such as Security-Only, Sequential, and Simultaneous approaches. Evidence shows that Security-Only and Sequential strategies are slightly more effective at terminating conflicts and ensuring peace than Simultaneous approaches. Programs like Colombia's ComunPaz, which replaced rebel governance and improved local justice, reduced community disputes. Security sector reforms in Afghanistan also showed small improvements, with violence declining around 10% following the transition to ANSF control. Overall, these interventions have a **small effect** on reducing conflict and improving local security.

### Long summary

#### *The intervention*

Peace operation strategies include Security-Only, Sequential, and Simultaneous approaches. Security-Only provides order and security first, leaving development to specialized agencies. Sequential implements security first, followed by development tasks to avoid contradictions. Simultaneous emphasizes addressing underdevelopment and conflict together. Other security sector reform interventions include transitioning security responsibilities from international troops to local forces and Colombia's ComunPaz program, which replaced rebel governance by aligning state and community authorities and improving security and justice in FARC-controlled areas.

#### *How the intervention is expected to work*

The interventions target outcomes including low-intensity conflicts, full-scale wars, all fatal events, direct fire attacks, IED explosions, and unresolved or violent disputes. Security-Only and Sequential strategies were more successful at terminating conflicts and achieving durable peace than Simultaneous strategies. ComunPaz reduced unresolved and violent disputes at the community level but not the household level. In Afghanistan, violence declined by approximately 10% after the ANSF assumed responsibility for security provision. These interventions aim to stabilize security, strengthen local governance, and reduce violence, though effects are modest.

#### *The evidence base*

The cell contains 6 studies: 3 impact evaluations designed as quasi-experimental studies and randomized controlled trials; 2 qualitative studies (Kamau 2021 and Leib 2019) and 1 systematic review. There is consistency in findings across studies.

The studies are from Afghanistan (1), the context of various countries (Nicaragua, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique, and Cambodia = 1), Colombia (1), Kenya (1) and Liberia (1).

#### *Evidence findings*

The evidence from this cell indicates that security sector reform interventions have a small effect in reducing violence and disputes. The ComunPaz program in Colombia lowered the prevalence of unresolved and violent disputes at the community level, though it had limited impact at the household level. Overall, the cell includes three impact evaluations, each demonstrating modest improvements in security outcomes, reinforcing that these interventions can reduce conflict and enhance local stability, but the effects are relatively small.

#### *The Review findings*

The review evidence shows that there were 12 moderately-sized, low-quality studies published between 2010-15 which studied the impact of security and policing practices on urban violence have mixed findings. The review concluded that public security platforms of newly-elected mayors and governors, heavy handed policing approaches, were effective in their contribution towards reducing urban violence.

#### *Included studies*

**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.

**Blair (2022)** – The study assessed the Colombia's ComunPaz program, a scalable, inexpensive intervention that sought to replace rebel governance by harnessing complementarities between state and communal authorities and by improving security and justice provision in areas once dominated by FARC, the country's largest rebel group. The ComunPaz program comprises four modules involving a combination of lectures, discussions, group work, and Q&A. Each module lasts one day for a total of four days per treatment community, implemented over the course of three months per community, with gaps between sessions to allow residents to adopt new institutional arrangements and put new skills into practice. The study was designed as a randomized controlled trial, wherein randomization was done at the community level. The study had a total of 72 treatment communities. The program reduced the prevalence of both unresolved and violent disputes at the community but not the household level. Treatment group leaders were 5.1 percentage points less likely to report a violent dispute in their community (not significant). Residents in the treatment group were no less likely to report a violent dispute, though this may be an artifact of floor effects, as only 6.4% of control group residents reported a violent dispute in the past six months. The study is rated as low confidence due to partial definition of outcomes and no mention of attrition reported in the study.

**Fetzer (2021) -83543614** – The study assessed the recent large-scale security transition from international troops to local forces in the ongoing civil conflict in Afghanistan. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design. The district level shows that the intensity of violence

dropped sharply when the ANSF became responsible for security provision. The estimated decline is around 10% for all outcomes. Also, suggests that the shift in security perceptions matches the changes we observed in the tactical reports. An increased share of respondents reported security improved in the last 6 months after the ANSF took over security. The baseline difference-in-difference specification at the district level showed that the intensity of violence dropped sharply when the ANSF became responsible for security provision. The estimated decline is around 10% for all outcomes. The study is rated as low confidence due to no mention of power calculations.

*Confidence assessment*

Overall confidence is low due to the limited number of studies, most of which are rated as low confidence.

**Other outcomes in the study:**

Human security / Physical Security

Violence and atrocity prevention / Diplomatic relations & Peaceful dispute resolution

*Link to review summaries*

Cramer (2016)

All studies may be accessed via the EGM.