

# PEACE SCIENCE DIGEST

A PROJECT OF THE WAR PREVENTION INITIATIVE

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Making Civil Resistance Work Against Rightwing Populism

FIGHT WAR  
NOT WARS,  
DESTROY POWWIE  
NOT PEOPLE.





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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.

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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**Fight War - Not Wars. Destroy Power Not People.**

This woman's home made placard reads "Fight war - not wars. Destroy power not people" during today's "Don't bomb Syria" demo in central London.

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside Downing Street to protest the government's determination to press ahead with air strikes on Syria. This woman's home made placard reads "Fight war - not wars. Destroy power not people" during today's "Don't bomb Syria" demo in central London.

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside Downing Street to protest the government's determination to press ahead with air strikes on Syria.



## NEED FOR THE DIGEST

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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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

The first issue of a new volume calls on us to reflect on progress made since the inception of the *Peace Science Digest*. For the past three years, our editorial team has produced regular analyses on the best new research in peace science. Our stated goal is to make peace science more useful, accessible, and understandable to activists, practitioners, and policy-makers. How can we ensure that our work is achieving our goal? Over the course of the next month, the team at the *Digest* will conduct a reader survey to better understand how we're doing. This will be part of a larger evaluation framework to regularly monitor and learn from our work. We greatly appreciate your participation.

This time of reflection also extends to the current state of peace and conflict in our world. We are startled by acts of violence like those in Christchurch, New Zealand. Such grotesque acts, even in countries that typically experience high levels of peace, remind us that bigotry is borderless in a world where power is concentrated in the hands of those who capitalize on hate. Fortunately, we are not without examples of the powerful who use their platform to advance empathy and humanity. Jacinda Arden, Prime Minister of New Zealand, reminded us that true leadership emotes compassion for victims and translates that into action – banning military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

But this is also a moment to use the analytical tools from peace science to ask: *whose* violence is considered a systematic threat and *whose* is not? All violence is deplorable. Yet, Western governments focus much more time and resources on targeting the violence perpetrated by Islamic extremists—as far as banning refugees from majority Muslim countries as U.S. President Donald Trump has tried to do—than they do on combating the spread of white supremacist ideology. In the aftermath of the New Zealand shooting, many have called for governments to collaborate in tracking and targeting radical white supremacists with the same fervor as they do radical Islamic extremists. That governments have failed to do so already, in light of an increase in violence perpetrated by white supremacists, reveals a systematic bias against ethnic and religious minorities. It communicates that some violent ideologies are more legitimate or at least tolerable (white supremacism) while others are not (Islamic extremism). In reality, neither are. Our policies must reflect the view that **any** violent and hateful ideology is **never** acceptable in a just and liberal society.

This critical approach is a common thread in the articles featured in this issue. Each of the articles selected either takes a critical approach to its research question or incorporates a careful perspective on the various racial, ethnic, gender, or other identities at play in its analyses. The results of this critical approach empower us to see beyond our assumptions, to be surprised by the results of our work, and to view events of the world with a dash of skepticism.

Finally, we announced in our last special issue on "Climate Change, Security, and Conflict" that our former editor David Prater had left the War Prevention Initiative team. We are happy to introduce our new program manager and editor Kelsey Coolidge. In addition to providing careful writing and analysis for the *Digest*, Kelsey is also spearheading our survey and evaluation efforts. You will hear more from Kelsey in the coming months.

Your *Peace Science Digest* Editorial Team,



Patrick Hiller



Kelsey Coolidge



Molly Wallace



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# More Civilian Casualties, Less Support for Military Action

Source | Johns, R., & Davies, G. A. (2019). Civilian casualties and public support for military action: Experimental evidence. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 63(1), 251–281.

## Keywords

Military intervention,  
war, casualties,  
civilian casualties,  
public opinion

In social science, a **representative sample** (e.g., British respondents in a survey) should reflect the same characteristics of the total population (e.g., the British public).

Most discussions on the human costs of war focus on military casualties. Civilians—those living in the countries subject to military intervention—are the “forgotten casualties.” The changing nature of modern warfare (for example, the use of drones and aerial strikes) places a greater emphasis on the need to protect civilians. Within this context, this experimental study examines how information about civilian casualties influences Western public support for military action. The researchers ask whether reporting on civilian casualties reduces public support for military action or whether the public is more preoccupied with the well-being of their own soldiers. It aims to broaden our understanding of the conditions that influence public support for military action. In other words, how concerned are Western adults about civilian casualties?

The study was conducted with four surveys drawing on **representative samples** of U.S. and British respondents. They were given hypothetical scenarios involving Western military action (aerial attacks) and different types of information on civilian casualties. Three scenarios measured the public’s support for U.S. and U.K. military air strikes. The fourth scenario tested support for a British intervention of ground troops.

In each case, the casualty numbers, surrounding factors, and so-called “moderators” were applied at differently within each scenario. Moderators are conditions that might activate or mitigate the public’s reactions to civilian casualties. The following moderators were used:

- Number of civilian casualties
- Perceived success of military action
- Perceived similarity of foreign civilians
- Mention of civilians’ innocence (with “women” and “children” used as innocence cues)
- Identifiability of civilians as individual humans

The survey revealed that the number of civilian casualties in multiple scenarios was the strongest variable influencing reduced war support. This was consistent in samples from the U.S and U.K. Whereas the number of civilian casualties clearly shaped the public’s support for military action, other moderators had no significant effect. In other words, using terms such as “Muslim civilians,” “ordinary Iranians,” and “women and children” or using pictures of identifiable victims did not influence the responses.





### Continued reading:

*Illusion IO: Suffering Is Minimized in Today's Wars* By Kathy Kelly. In *American Wars: Illusions and Realities*, edited by P. Buchheit, pages 89–95. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press Inc., 2008.

*Why Are We Allowing Yemen to Starve?*

By John P. Linstroth. Transcend Media Service, 2018. <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2018/11/why-are-we-allowing-yemen-to-starve/>

*International Influence on U.S. Public Support for Drone Strikes* *Peace Science Digest Analysis*. <https://peacesciencedigest.org/international-influence-on-u-s-public-support-for-drone-strikes/?highlight=public%20opinion>

*The Hidden US War in Somalia: Civilian Casualties from Air Strikes in Lower Shabelle* By Amnesty International, 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR5299522019ENGLISH.PDF>



### Organizations/Initiatives:

Airwars: [www.airwars.org](http://www.airwars.org)

(Monitoring and assessing civilian harm from airpower-dominated international military actions)

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism: "Drone Warfare": <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/drone-war>

This contradicted the researchers' expectations about how empathy and humanization might influence responses. It does not suggest, however, that the respondents were unmoved by the descriptions of civilian victims. Rather, it clarifies a general aversion to civilian casualties that increases with larger numbers. Empathy and humanization operate regardless of who the civilians are or how they are portrayed.

While significant, the effects of civilian casualties on public support for military action were modest. Even when civilian casualties were projected in the thousands, support for war decreased but did not plummet. Additionally, one scenario showed that the stated purpose of war—humanitarian intervention (e.g., to protect civilians) versus "realist engagement" (e.g., to strike a nuclear facility)—did not make the public more or less tolerant of civilian casualties.



## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

The nature of warfare has changed. As the authors note, traditionally most attention has been given to military deaths on one's own side. Yet, as we are writing this issue of the *Peace Science Digest*, there is a humanitarian crisis of massive proportions in Yemen. The humanitarian and civilian aspect of this crisis and the growing discomfort with the Saudi Arabian government—with significant public work done by U.S. peace advocacy groups—ultimately led the U.S. House of Representatives to pass a resolution calling for the withdrawal of U.S. support for the war in Yemen. The crisis is taking place in an internationalized civil war, where innocent civilians endure the most suffering. In this context, long-term trends and ongoing debates have become highly relevant. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, civilians have been the main victims in many of the armed conflicts since World War II. This finding is supported by numerous researchers and humanitarian organizations, while others argue that the civilian-to-military death ratio is overestimated. There are, of course, difficulties associated with finding and providing unambiguous statistical data on war casualties. However, downplaying the number of civilian casualties is a dangerous distraction from the long-lasting human costs of war. Addressing large civilian death tolls, as this research has done, better reflects the current nature of warfare. It is warfare where so-called “battlefield deaths” are decreasing—an incorrect interpretation of which, by losing sight of civilian casualties, could lead to overly optimistic conclusions about the human costs of war.

## TALKING POINTS

- People care about deaths in war, whether the killing of their own soldiers or the killing of foreign civilians, which affects their support for military action.
- People are less likely to support military strikes when civilian deaths increase.
- People are generally opposed to military strikes when the civilian death toll increases, regardless of who the victims are or how they are described (as innocent, for instance).

Photo Credit: Adam Jones  
Lidice Memorial – A Visitor (Griselda Ramirez) Photographs Memorial to Child Victims of War – By Marie Uchytlová – Near Prague, Czech Republic





## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In discussing the human costs of the post-9/11 wars, Neta Crawford, Co-Director of the Costs of War Project, suggests that “too often legislators, NGOs, and the news media that try to track the consequences of the wars are inhibited by governments determined to paint a rosy picture of perfect execution and progress.” Increased transparency about the number of civilians killed and injured “would lead to greater accountability and could lead to better policy.”<sup>1</sup> This “rosy picture” was painted when the U.S. Defense Department disputed a March 2019 Amnesty International report (see Continued Reading) on civilian casualties of airstrikes in Somalia. In a statement, the Pentagon asserted that 800 members of the designated terror group al-Shabab have been killed in 110 airstrikes since June 2017 without any civilian casualties.

Ultimately, public opinion should inform public policy. But the first step is for the public to be well informed about the reality of war and its consequences. For peace advocates, the challenge is to make sure civilian casualties remain in the public spotlight. Doing so is part of the broader work of developing a more integrative view of war casualties—not only recognizing civilian casualties but also the wider consequences of war including:

- Destruction of infrastructure
- Landmines
- Use of depleted uranium
- Refugees and internally displaced people
- Malnutrition
- Diseases
- Lawlessness
- Intra-state killings
- Victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence
- Social injustice

A thorough war casualty assessment must include direct and indirect war deaths as well as non-lethal consequences. This will counter the myth of “clean,” “surgical” warfare with declining numbers of deaths. Kathy Kelly, a peace advocate who has first-hand experience of life in war zones, repeatedly states, “the havoc wreaked upon civilians is unparalleled, intended and unmitigated.” The question for peace advocates remains: What further action can be taken for public support for war to plummet rather than modestly decline in response to civilian casualties?

1. Human Cost of the Post-9/11 Wars: Lethality and the Need for Transparency (<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2018/Human%20Costs%2C%20Nov%208%202018%20CoW.pdf>)



# Assessing the Shift from Liberal Peacebuilding to Counterterrorism and Stabilization Operations

Source | Karlsrud, J. (2019). From liberal peacebuilding to stabilization and counterterrorism. *International Peacekeeping*, 26(1), 1-21.

## Keywords

counterterrorism,  
stabilization,  
UN peacekeeping,  
liberal peacebuilding,  
Mali, Niger

**Liberal peacebuilding:** efforts in conflict-affected societies governments and market-oriented economic systems—which are assumed to limit the chances of relapse into armed conflict

Once the most prominent form of international engagement in conflict-affect countries, **liberal peacebuilding** has been on the decline. The author this research is wary of the simultaneous growth instead of stabilization and counterterrorism operations. In particular, he focuses on recent shifts in UN peacekeeping operations to see what they reveal about broader changes in global security politics and what their implications may be. Drawing on policy documents and interviews, the article “examin[es] member-state policies and mandates guiding UN peacekeeping operations since the beginning of the millennium,” focusing on UN and regional operations in Mali and Niger.

The shift away from liberal peacebuilding and towards counterterrorism and stabilization is related to broader changes in the “international security agenda”—particularly U.S. military doctrine—and in UN peacekeeping operations, including stronger connections between UN peacekeeping operations and regional military coalitions.

This reorientation towards stabilization and counterterrorism is evident in U.S. military doctrine in Iraq and Afghanistan. Large-scale counterinsurgency and nation-building operations have transformed into more targeted operations, focusing on “drone strikes, US special forces, and funding and training of local troops.” According to the author, the former better address the root causes of conflict than the latter, which are focused only on “the use of force to kill or capture enemy targets.” This shift has crept into the agendas of allies and international organizations, whose adoption of these priorities lends legitimacy to them. UN member-states—including the U.S.—can even be seen as using UN peacekeeping as a proxy for their own security concerns and agendas, especially in relation to terrorism.

As a result, the mandates for UN peacekeeping operations have shifted to entail “more limited goals, a shorter-term outlook and [a] more reactive approach to security incidents”—and, accordingly, less attention to the root causes of violent conflict. Furthermore, these operations increasingly rely on the support or incorporation of regional military coalitions in the



### Continued reading:

*America at War* By Stephanie Savell and 5W Infographics. *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 2019.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/map-shows-places-world-where-us-military-operates-180970997/>

*Human Cost of the Post-9/11 Wars: Lethality and the Need for Transparency* By Neta C. Crawford. November 2018. Costs of War Project, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University.

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2018/Human%20Costs%2C%20Nov%208%202018%20CoW.pdf>

*Smaller Military Presence in Afghanistan Will Likely Focus on Trump's Favored Pentagon Mission: Counterterrorism*

By Dan Lamothe and Pamela Constable. *The Washington Post*, December 21, 2018.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/smaller-military-presence-in-afghanistan-will-likely-focus-on-trumps-favored-pentagon-mission-counterterrorism/2018/12/21/d3df2c22-054f-11e9-b5df-5d3874flac36\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.db2b3e8e689a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/smaller-military-presence-in-afghanistan-will-likely-focus-on-trumps-favored-pentagon-mission-counterterrorism/2018/12/21/d3df2c22-054f-11e9-b5df-5d3874flac36_story.html?utm_term=.db2b3e8e689a)

*End the War in Afghanistan* By The Editorial Board of *The New York Times*. February 3, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/03/opinion/afghanistan-war.html>

*Challenges of Liberal Peace and Statebuilding in Divided Societies* By Christopher Zambakari. African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), February 16, 2017. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/challenges-liberal-peace-statebuilding-divided-societies/>

fight against armed groups. The article argues that greater participation of nearby countries—as well as the host government's instrumental use of UN peacekeeping for its own security interests—entails the increased partiality of UN peacekeeping (or other allied) forces. This increased partiality can, in effect, turn the UN into a “de facto party to the conflict.”

The author more closely examines cases in West Africa to draw out some of the troubling implications of this shift from liberal peacebuilding to stabilization and counterterrorism. First, although the adoption of more “robust” mandates is often celebrated as being more relevant to the current security environment, military counterterrorism activities do not “address[] root causes like weak and corrupt governance, marginalization and lack of social cohesion.” Second, autocratic, illiberal governments gain from this reorientation of UN peacekeeping operations, as it translates into military support for their regimes. Meanwhile, the U.S. and others are ignoring human rights violations of these regimes in order to gain their counterterrorism support. Third, this turn to more “robust” counterterrorism mandates can exacerbate the problems facing host countries. In Mali, for example, the security situation has worsened since the deployment of the UN force, MINUSMA, with attacks moving into previously stable parts of the country. MINUSMA—given “wide latitude for counterterrorism activities” and “lethal violence”—is “one of the deadliest UN peacekeeping operations on record, suffering 104 fatalities” between July 2013 and April 2018. Fourth, MINUSMA's close cooperation with regional counterterrorism forces (such as intelligence-sharing on terrorist suspects) could lead it to be seen as a “party to the conflict” and potentially cause its personnel to lose protected status under international humanitarian law.

In short, this turn to more militaristic approaches—and away from the “root causes” concerns of liberal peacebuilding—is likely to prop up illiberal, authoritarian governments and lead to a rise in terrorist group recruitment. As result, it can tarnish the legitimacy of UN peacekeeping operations to the extent that they are involved.



## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

This research urges us to be wary about the militarization of conflict in the name of counterterrorism or stabilization, whether in the form of more “robust” UN peacekeeping operations or in the form of drone strikes or special forces operations. Although such approaches address the symptoms of conflict at best and enflame cycles of violence at worst, they are widespread. As noted in recent research by the Costs of War Project at Brown University’s Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the U.S.’s “global war on terrorism” now reaches 40 percent of the world’s countries. In 2017–2018, the U.S. engaged in air or drone strikes in seven countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. All of these countries except Pakistan, plus seven other countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia) have seen direct U.S. combat on the ground against suspected terrorists/militants—often in the form of special forces, which operate beyond the view of public scrutiny and debate.

## TALKING POINTS

- Two trends are changing liberal peacebuilding: 1) a shift towards counterterrorism and stabilization and 2) UN peacekeeping operations’ support or incorporation of regional military coalitions in the fight against armed groups.
- More militarized UN peacekeeping mandates do not address the root causes of conflict and can contribute to cycles of violence and terrorist recruitment.
- By focusing on counterterrorism, the global community is propping up autocratic governments and ignoring their human rights violations in order to gain their counterterrorism support.
- Cooperation between UN peacekeeping forces and regional counterterrorism forces undermines the UN’s legitimacy as a neutral third party, risking the safety of UN personnel around the world if they are no longer seen as neutral in conflict settings.

Photo Credit: UN Photo/Amanda Voisard.  
Imvepi Refugee Camp in Arua District, Northern Uganda.





## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Global security policy should focus on actions that address the root causes of conflict rather than employing militarized counterterrorism and stabilization operations to advance military goals. Furthermore, according to the author, the international community should not shy away from exerting pressure on governments to enact reforms to “increase the legitimacy and inclusiveness of conflict-affected states.” We should be wary about simply returning to an uncritical embrace of liberal peacebuilding, however—especially the version of that concept that is seen as closely related to military occupation, “nation-building,” and counterinsurgency. Extending the author’s own logic reveals that these more insidious forms of military action suffer from the same shortcomings as counterterrorism and stabilization missions. Instead, we should try to think more carefully from the perspective of those who may choose to “tak[e] up arms against international interveners” and consider what sorts of interventions in *our* respective countries would galvanize us to resist. Would we feel any less enraged about the long-term military presence of foreign troops in our country, even if they were building schools and distributing aid in addition to fighting insurgents, than we would about counterterrorism raids or drone strikes? If we care about the lived experiences of people in conflict-affected countries, that concern should manifest itself not through military action—however laudable its goals—but through support for locally conceived peacebuilding efforts that transform the structures and relationships in society away from violent conflict and thereby truly address root causes.



# Women's Ethnic Organizations, Representation, and Informal Peacebuilding in Myanmar

Source | Pepper, M. (2018). Ethnic minority women, diversity, and informal participation in peacebuilding in Myanmar. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 13(2), 61-75.

## Keywords

women, civil society,  
peacebuilding,  
formal negotiations,  
Myanmar, UNSCR 1325

**UNSCR:** A United Nations Security Council Resolution passed in October 2000, which called on member states to incorporate a "gender perspective," as well as to ensure full participation of women, in all aspects of UN peace and security efforts.

Since the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in 2000, the international community has devoted a great deal of attention to the importance of women's participation in peace processes. The implementation of this ideal, however, often falls short. Myanmar, where the government is currently engaged in a peace process with multiple armed ethnic groups, is a case in point. Although the parties have committed to women's participation at the negotiation table, women's actual inclusion in the formal process has been limited—despite evidence of women's powerful role at the grassroots level. This article examines how women are involved in informal peacebuilding activities in Myanmar even if they are not present in significant numbers in the formal process.

The article finds that focusing too much on the formal peace process can unduly sideline the important work women are doing at the grassroots level. It draws on field research conducted in Myanmar and Thailand in 2017: 33 from ethnic women's organizations and other organizations, reports or documents from these organizations, and field notes. The author argues that women are extremely active in peacebuilding in Myanmar through ethnic women's organizations at the grassroots level and an umbrella organization called the Women's League of Burma (WLB). Through these organizations, women "document[] human rights abuses and women's experiences of insecurity" and, importantly, cross ethnic differences to address common concerns.

The author identifies four central themes in her analysis. First, there is a tension between the endorsement of international norms of women's inclusion found in UNSCR 1325 and the implementation of these in the Myanmar peace process. The government committed to ensuring that the make-up of those participating in peace negotiations would be 30% women. Yet, no substantive action has been taken to make this a reality. Women constituted only 7% of participants at the first peace conference and 13% at the second one. Second, on a related note, women report significant barriers in accessing the formal negotiation process. Some are considered too inexperienced, not occupying the requisite positions in the armed groups or government that would provide them a place at



### Continued reading:

*Negotiating at the Invisible Peace Table: Inclusion of Women in Informal Peacebuilding Processes* By Mariam Yazdani and Jennifer Bradshaw. Kroc Insight, Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, University of San Diego, January 2019. [http://catcher.sandiego.edu/items/peacestudies/19\\_KrocInsight\\_WPM\\_PDF\\_FNL.pdf](http://catcher.sandiego.edu/items/peacestudies/19_KrocInsight_WPM_PDF_FNL.pdf)

*The Rohingya Crisis* By Eleanor Albert and Andrew Chatzky. Council on Foreign Relations, December 5, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>

*Myanmar 2017/2018* By Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/report-myanmar/>

*Myanmar's Armed Forces and the Rohingya Crisis* By Andrew Selth. United States Institute of Peace, August 17, 2018. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/08/myanmars-armed-forces-and-rohingya-crisis>

*Myanmar: Peace Talks Belied by Ongoing Conflict in Rakhine and Chin States* By Elliott Bynum, ACLED. December 2018. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-peace-talks-belied-ongoing-conflict-rakhine-and-chin-states>



### Organizations/Initiatives:

Women's League of Burma:  
<http://womenofburma.org/>

the table. Others, however, are considered too “assertive” and outspoken, especially those who are active in the WLB or individual ethnic women’s organizations. Additionally, the broader lack of civil society participation in the peace talks deepens gender disparity, as women are very active and hold leadership positions in Myanmar’s civil society. The small number of women who do participate in the formal process tend to be siloed in the social committee of the negotiations, with very little representation in the economic, environment and land, and security committees. This “prevents women’s views and experiences from being introduced to the other sectors of the formal peace process”—much to its detriment.

Third, since their participation is limited at the formal level, women’s influence on the peace process happens predominantly through informal spaces and processes—often overlooked in analyses of the Myanmar peace process. Traditionally, women have more authority on social issues. Since they are often “penalised for stepping outside” their traditional role, women have used this particular area of authority to “assert their right to be included at the level of ethnic politics” and thereby influence the peace process. For example, women have created effective channels of influence on ethnic armed groups, convincing them to address concerns about sexual violence.

Finally, women’s ethnic organizations provide a potential model for building a diverse, inclusive peace process. Ethnic minority women interviewed explicitly celebrated diversity and discussed the ability of ethnic women’s organizations to cross lines of ethnic difference to work for common goals. Against the frequent tokenism of “women’s inclusion”—the assumption that any woman can represent all women—they underscored the importance of not only ethnic and gender diversity but also rural/urban diversity for ensuring a truly representative peace process.



Photo Credit: KX Studio. Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0).  
Shan women carrying more than their fair share, while chatting away. Inle Lake, Myanmar.

## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

The peace process in Myanmar is ongoing, and ten ethnic armed groups have signed on to the ceasefire since in 2015. Over the same period of time, the Rohingya population in Rakhine State experienced extreme violence at the hands of the Myanmar military, with about 6,700 killed in one month (August-September 2017). The Rohingya crisis draws attention to the fact that Rohingya Muslims are not, however, among those groups recognized as official ethnicities of Myanmar, as they are officially seen as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, despite tracing their roots in Myanmar back centuries. Attention to the multiple, intersecting identities of women—especially ethnic minority women—forces us to consider those who are not even represented in Myanmar's civil society, let alone at the formal peace table. The status of the Rohingya people in Myanmar raises broader questions about who is considered worthy of inclusion and why. What are the limits to inclusion in otherwise inclusive peace organizations or movements?

## TALKING POINTS

- Women play a crucial role in building peace at the grassroots level in Myanmar, even if they are not represented adequately in the formal peace talks.
- The government of Myanmar has pledged to increase women's formal participation in the peace process but has failed reach their stated goal of 30% participation, with women still facing significant barriers to access.
- Women influence the peace process predominantly through informal channels and by using their traditional roles in society—in particular, their authority on “social issues”—to their advantage.
- Women's ethnic organizations provide a model for building a diverse and inclusive peace process, as they bridge ethnic differences to work towards common goals and call for broad representation that affirms the profound diversity of women's lives.





## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

There needs to be a greater recognition of the peacebuilding work that women perform in informal spaces. Otherwise, we risk missing an important part of the picture, casting the spotlight on elite politics like power-sharing, economic policies, or disarmament while neglecting efforts at the grassroots level to reweave the fabric of society. This can contribute to the continued marginalization of women by overlooking their achievements and suggesting that their work is not of equal importance. Accordingly, greater attention should be given to women's organizations and how they expose human security threats of concern to local communities and build coalitions across ethnic barriers towards common goals.

The formal peace process is of course still important, so it is essential that the broadest possible range of voices be represented there. This means moving beyond “tokenism” and really thinking through issues of representation. Can a woman of the dominant Bamar ethnic identity effectively represent the needs and concerns of women of various minority ethnic identities? Can a highly educated, urban woman in a high-ranking position effectively represent the needs and concerns of rural women who have had to flee their villages multiple times to escape fighting? Getting representation right creates a peace process that is more responsive to the actual needs of Myanmar's citizens. One way to improve this representation is to ensure that the Myanmar peace process—and others like it—include civil society organizations, as these often provide entry points for otherwise marginalized populations. Furthermore, once diverse women are more prominently included in formal negotiation processes, the next step is to ensure that such inclusion is meaningful—and that women are not simply represented on committees seen to involve so-called “women's issues.” For instance, the experiences and voices of diverse women are needed on security committees if parties are to fully comprehend the human toll war has taken on communities and therefore the urgency and character of the measures that must be taken to end it.



# More Women in Government, Less Corruption, More Peace

Source | DiRienzo, C. E. (2019). The effect of women in government on country-level peace. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 31(1), 1-18.

## Keywords

gender equality,  
women parliamentarians,  
gender, peace, security,  
corruption

**Corruption** is defined as the misuse of public power for private or political gain.

There is strong evidence linking women's increased participation in government with more peaceful societies. Are there other positive outcomes associated with women's political participation? This article suggests a multifaceted relationship between the number of women in government (more specifically women parliamentarians), the levels of corruption, and country-level peace. Namely, it examines whether a reduction in levels of corruption is related to increased levels of women's participation in government and if both have an indirect impact on peace.

Corruption is considered a form of oppression that can instigate civil unrest and violence. Thus, corruption can be a root cause of country-level violent conflict and can pose a serious challenge for peacebuilding. The role of women in government and peace is explained in a twofold way. First, research suggests that women in government are more concerned with issues that affect overall societal well-being. Second, research suggests that women have better negotiation and conflict resolution skills. As a result, the theoretical assumption is that women are linked to lower levels of corruption due to high ethical standards, trustworthiness, and less opportunism.

The study was conducted by using three main data sources:

- The 2016 Global Peace Index
- Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perception Index
- World Bank data on the percentage of national parliament seats held by women

Four models of the relationships between the three main data variables (country peace, corruption, women in government), as well as control variables including other country factors affecting peace (economic development; economic freedom; ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity), allowed for approximately 150 measurable observations per model.

The article finds that the greater the percentage of women in government, the higher the level of peacefulness on the Global Peace Index. Additionally, countries with a higher percentage of women in government tend to be less corrupt. Countries with a higher percentage of women in government and lower corruption levels are more peaceful. Moreover, the study provides evidence that the indirect effect of women in government on country-level peace by reducing corruption is statistically greater than the direct one (more women in government equals more peacefulness). With higher levels



### **Continued reading:**

*Just the Facts: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography to Support Evidence-Based Policymaking on Women, Peace and Security* By Our Secure Future, a program of One Earth Future, 2019. [https://oursecurefuture.org/sites/default/files/our\\_secure\\_future\\_annotated\\_bibliography.pdf](https://oursecurefuture.org/sites/default/files/our_secure_future_annotated_bibliography.pdf)

*Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality* By OECD. <http://www.oecd.org/gender/governance/toolkit/>

*Virginia Tech Study: Government Corruption Is Lower in Countries With Greater Number of Women Political Leaders* By Virginia Tech Daily, June 2018. [https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2018/06/Science-womeninpolitics\\_corruptionstudy.html](https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2018/06/Science-womeninpolitics_corruptionstudy.html)

of women's participation in government, public corruption is lowered, which can create a better context for building and maintaining peace.

This research uniquely identifies corruption as a root cause of violence or civil unrest. Understanding women's participation in government as a pathway to overcome corruption and increase peace presents an important call to action among activists and practitioners alike. Even though the study was based on a statistical analysis, which cannot adequately capture the complexities of the real political world, the implications are hopeful and, if they hold up in further research, not as complex as they might seem—more women in government, less corruption, more peace!



## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

As noted in our 2018 *Peace Science Digest* Special Issue dedicated to gender and conflict, it is no longer possible to ignore the “work” gender does in politics. Gender is not something apart from the seemingly more crucial concerns of war and peace—something nice to be attended when we have sufficient time and resources—but rather is itself central to understanding the production of violence and the creation of peace. Simply adding women to government is not enough—broader power relations need to be examined. As the author notes, the complexities of violence in today’s world make it “imperative to examine what factors counter violence and how these factors can be employed in efforts to both build and maintain peace.” This research shows how “adding women” is a step that contributes to the transformation of power relations, namely those upheld by corruption. Promoting women’s participation in government is not merely “the right thing to do” in times when gender equality is increasingly mainstreamed. The role of women in peacebuilding now is recognized as a key component for creating a more peaceful future and must be front and center of peacebuilding efforts ranging from locally led peacebuilding to nuclear insecurity.

## TALKING POINTS

- Corruption is a root cause of violence and civil unrest.
- When there are high levels of women in government, corruption decreases.
- When governments are less corrupt and have high levels of women’s participation, they are better able to promote and support peacebuilding.

Photo Credit: Pietro Naj-Oleari  
WIP - Women In Parliaments Annual Summit



## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Policy-makers should support efforts to **recruit more women into government**, especially in countries that are considered highly corrupt. These countries are often the ones with significant social conflict. Strategies to increase women in government can include gender quotas, assistance with campaign financing, election training, and capacity building (see “Just the Facts” under Continued Reading). However, it is important to recognize different social and cultural contexts: if considered an outside imposition, efforts to increase female participation in government can be counter-productive. Globally, female candidates report threats of violence against themselves or family members, harassment, or intimidation when running for office. Strategies to support female candidates and confront threats of violence must be advanced in line with efforts to increase women’s participation.

The International Gender Champions leadership network is a practice-oriented approach bringing together male and female decision-makers to break down gender barriers. The gender champions model is based on specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic commitments (600!) ranging from equal representation on panel discussions to work-family life balance. These commitments lay the groundwork for increasing women’s participation in government. Even those practitioners who are not part of the Gender Champions network can integrate and advocate for some of the many strong commitments found there (see: <https://www.genderchampions.com>).



# Making Civil Resistance Work Against Rightwing Populism

Source | Sombatpoonsiri, J. (2018). Rethinking civil resistance in the face of rightwing populism: A theoretical inquiry. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 13(3), 7-22.

## Keywords

nonviolent/civil resistance,  
rightwing populism,  
neoliberal economic order,  
nationalism, identity

**Civil resistance** is a powerful way for people to fight for their rights, freedom, and justice—without the use of violence. (International Center on Nonviolent Conflict).

**Populism:** a form of politics "expressing popular grievances of those identified as 'the people' against the loosely defined 'elites'. The 'people' are usually portrayed as authentic, while the elites are viewed as corrupt and self-serving."

There is real urgency to this political moment. Around the world, people are anxious to find a way to confront the rise of leaders and movements espousing dangerous far-Right ideologies vilifying cultural minorities and foreigners. Yet, when progressively minded protesters take to the streets, they are often met with rightwing counter-protesters. Rather than galvanizing a broad-based movement, civil resistance seems to be only entrenching polarization between the Left and Right.

Conceived largely as a strategy for toppling authoritarian regimes, civil resistance can be limited in its ability to confront creeping rightwing populism. This is especially the case when the problem is framed as a particular populist leader rather than the conditions that make that leader's message resonate. In light of these shortcomings, the author considers how civil resistance might be reconceived to effectively counter rightwing populism. First, civil resistance needs to more adequately address the "demand side" (supporters and motivations for support) of rightwing populism rather than simply the "supply side" (leaders). Second, civil resistance theorists and practitioners must develop their thinking both on power and neoliberal economics and on culture and identity.

The first step is to examine populism and how it normally operates, drawing on contemporary examples from the U.S. and Europe. While leftwing and rightwing populism share a discontent with the current neoliberal economic system and its negative effects for broad swaths of the population, rightwing populism incorporates an additional cultural element where cultural, religious, or racial "others" are blamed and represented as a threat to the "people." The two main "demand side" motivations for people's support of rightwing populism are economic grievances—in light of labor outsourcing, declining wages, and/or growing inequality—and cultural backlash—against a perceived sudden shift away from "traditional values" to cosmopolitan values that celebrate "cultural and gender diversity." The "supply side" entails populist leaders' manipulation of popular resentment by capitalizing on economic grievances to propagate victimization narratives for the majority that scapegoat cultural, religious, or racial "others."





### Continued reading:

*Capturing the Flag: The Struggle for National Identity in Nonviolent Revolutions*

By Landon E. Hancock and Anuj Gurung.

*Peace and Conflict Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2

(2018), 1–25. [https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1477&context=pcs/)

[viewcontent.cgi?article=1477&context=pcs/](https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1477&context=pcs/)

*Viking Economics: How the Scandinavians Got It Right—and How We Can, Too*

By George Lakey. Brooklyn, NY: Melville

House, 2016.

*Lessons in Viking Economics: George Lakey's New Book Explains How the Nordic Countries Have Achieved Their Egalitarian Society and High Standard of Living*

By Chuck Collins. Inequality.org, July 15, 2016.

<https://inequality.org/great-divide/lessons-viking-economics/>

Next, outlining recent forms of civil resistance—including mass nonviolent demonstrations, boycotts and noncooperation, and more traditional legislative strategies for influencing populist leaders and policy-making—the author explores the theoretical foundations of civil resistance theory that might limit its potential to counteract rightwing populism. Most crucially, civil resistance theory is closely aligned with liberalism and focuses on strategies for achieving political freedom. Although it provides a powerful means of challenging authoritarian regimes through the strategic withdrawal of cooperation, civil resistance theory is not as well equipped to recognize or address other forms of oppression, particularly those tied up with the neoliberal economic order. Furthermore, the bias towards targeting authoritarian regimes/leaders means that the approach taken towards rightwing populism is focused on populist leaders instead of on the motivations for supporting populism, with counterproductive results. Such an approach simply strengthens populist leaders by playing into rightwing populist narratives claiming that anyone protesting against such leaders and policies must be against the “people.” It also hampers efforts to gain broad-based support by setting up a protester/counter-protester dynamic, further entrenching polarization and “demeaning stereotypes” between supporters and detractors of rightwing populism.

The article recommends that civil resistance scholars and practitioners develop their thinking in two key areas to better address the motivations (or “demand side”) of rightwing populism. The first task is to develop a more nuanced analysis of power, one that recognizes that not all oppression is dismantled when an authoritarian regime is overturned and that more insidious forms of economic, cultural, and political power can persist even in liberal contexts. This reorientation will help civil resistance better address the injustices wrought by the neoliberal economic order, providing an entry point for connecting with supporters of populism who may not buy into the cultural arguments of rightwing populism. The second task is to engage in cultural work so as to not cede discussions of culture and identity to rightwing populists. Civil resistance theorists and practitioners should proactively “reinterpret[ ] [ ] what it means and how it feels to belong to a nation,” devoting more attention to how protest and other methods of civil resistance can “be designed to stimulate national solidarity,” while also “broaden[ing] the racially and religiously exclusive components of the nation.” In short, addressing these “deeper economic and cultural crises” will help civil resistance movements confront rightwing populism and become more broad-based and effective.



## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

With rightwing populism sweeping through Europe and the United States, activists are eager to stand up against it. A critical assessment of the capacity of civil resistance is timely, to say the least. It may not be effective to use a model developed primarily against authoritarian regimes to confront injustices at the heart of today's populist discontent. The problem of rightwing populism is not only a problem of populist leaders like Donald Trump or Viktor Orbán. It is a deeper problem of economic grievance and of an unmet yearning for identity and community. Simply taking to the streets in mass demonstrations against a leader and his policies can reinforce populist narratives that represent the "people" as besieged and the leader as safeguarding their interests against so-called "liberal elites." Indeed, the emerging pattern over the past couple years in the U.S.—and particularly in the *Peace Science Digest's* home city of Portland, Oregon—has been a host of protests and counter-protests, with leftwing and rightwing activists squaring off against one another in the street—and sometimes escalating to violence. Cementing polarization in this way makes it difficult to build the kind of broad-based movement necessary to real success in uprooting rightwing populism. If the kind of civil resistance currently practiced is counterproductive, then it makes sense to reassess our activism in a way that welcomes in those who might otherwise find a rightwing populist message alluring.

## TALKING POINTS

- Civil resistance needs to more adequately address the motivations for supporting rightwing populism (the "demand side"), namely, economic grievances and cultural backlash, instead of only confronting rightwing populist leaders (the "supply side").
- The focus of civil resistance movements on ousting rightwing populist leaders is counterproductive because it plays into narratives of "us vs. them" and hampers efforts to gain broad-based support by polarizing supporters and detractors of rightwing populism.
- Civil resistance theorists and practitioners need to address the motivations of rightwing populism by 1) better identifying and confronting economic and social injustices and 2) engaging in the cultural work of what it means to be a part of a nation—one that defines national identity inclusively.



## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The author's two recommendations—developing a more nuanced analysis of power to better confront the injustices wrought by the neoliberal economic order and engaging in the cultural work of “reinterpret[ing] [ ] what it means and how it feels to belong to a nation”—are meant to make civil resistance more responsive to the motivations people have for supporting rightwing populism. The first of these entails recognizing that those who support rightwing populist leaders may have legitimate economic grievances, conceiving methods for resisting harmful neoliberal economic policies, and simultaneously building alternate economic institutions that meet the needs of those currently being cast aside by the global economy. Attention to these economic grievances builds a more just world while creating common cause with those who would otherwise be susceptible to rightwing populism.

The second recommendation is equally insightful: civil resistance should not only be about a rational dismantling of unjust power structures but should also respond to the emotional need for identity and community, a sense of being part of something bigger than oneself. In other words, civil resistance movements need to put more energy and focus into the cultural work of providing an alternate national identity that is more inclusive and expansive and by doing so reclaim national narratives that have been expropriated by rightwing ideologues.

How can “language, symbols, religious contents, and myths” be repurposed in a protest setting to reimagine what is meant by the “people”? Clearly, there is a thirst for a strong sense of national identity; better that that thirst be quenched with symbolism and narratives that emphasize the welcoming ethos of the nation. This should not be such a difficult task, especially in the U.S. where prominent national symbols like the Statue of Liberty call out for “your tired, your poor| Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” and where everyone who is not of Native American heritage is descended from immigrants, whether enslaved or free. One open question, however, is precisely how this U.S. national narrative should deal with the twin—but perhaps conflicting—histories of diverse immigration and white supremacy: one pointing to the U.S.’s welcoming ethos and the other to its foundational racism and exclusion. The answer is certainly not to ignore the latter but rather somehow to make it part of a national narrative where Americans see themselves as learning from their mistakes and growing stronger for it. In other words, instead of forming an exclusionary national identity that looks back to a fictional, culturally homogeneous past, civil resistance activists can cultivate a more dynamic and inclusive national identity that emerges resilient yet changed and more enlightened through challenges and transgressions of all kinds (whether racist violence, economic depressions, or world wars).

Photo Credit: UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran  
Peacekeeping – UNAMID



# [TESTIMONIALS]



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