



The Missing Links Between Military Integration and Civil War Resumptions

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Does military integration make renewed civil wars less likely? Evidence from several cases of postwar military integration over four decades reveal little evidence that it contributes to the durability of postwar peace.

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Military integration following a civil war is a common practice, evidenced by the fact that nearly 40 percent of peace settlements for the 128 civil wars from 1945 to 2006 called for some form of integration of combatant military forces. It has become accepted wisdom that integration is crucial to preventing a society's relapse into war and there is much about this that feels like common sense. After all, a professional, communally representative force could conceivably diminish vulnerable groups' security fears in a post-civil war environment by:

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- serving as a credible signal of the government's commitment to power sharing which would make an army less likely to employ violence against the society's constituent communal groups;
- protecting populations against potentially dangerous militias;
- providing employment to former fighters from all sides;
- and facilitating, through symbolic power, popular identification and unity with an inclusive vision of a nation.

But is this faith regarding military integration and civil wars actually true based on the research or is it fundamentally misplaced?

The empirical evidence

Quantitative studies generally find a correlation between military integration and the likelihood of renewed civil wars (Walter 2002; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; DeRouen, Lea, and Wallenstein 2009; Toft 2010). However, aside from one notable dissent (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008) the studies assumed that all military integration efforts were equivalent. They focused on agreements to integrate rather than their actual implementation, and it was possible that the causal arrow was reversed, that easier cases would allow military integration than those more likely to fail. Two comparative case study analyses reached opposing conclusions (Knight 2011; Call 2012).

My study of eleven cases began with the expectation that military integration would be difficult to carry out (bringing people who have been killing one another with considerable skill and enthusiasm and giving them weapons did not seem like a bright idea) but that doing so successfully would reduce the likelihood of renewed civil war. I ended with precisely the opposite conclusions.

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The study – does military integration make renewed civil wars less likely?

The study specified five plausible causal mechanisms linking the phenomena:

1. The willingness of leaders on both sides to commit to this risky strategy persuades others that they are sincere in desiring peace and can be trusted on other difficult issues.
2. The new force provides security for the elites (and perhaps the masses), allowing them to resolve other issues.
3. The new force employs substantial numbers of veterans who might otherwise be available for recruitment by spoilers planning to restart the war.
4. It is a powerful symbol of legitimacy and integration for the new regime—if people who have been killing one another can work together, surely civilians should be able to as well.
5. The successful negotiation of military integration would build trust among members of the different groups, making it easier to resolve other issues.

Cases and Authors

Sudan 1972-1983—Matthew LeRiche

Rhodesia to Zimbabwe—Paul Jackson

Lebanon—Florence Gaub

Rwanda—Stephen Burgess

Philippines—Rosalie Arcala Hall

South Africa—Roy Licklider

Democratic Republic of the Congo—Judith Verweijen

Mozambique—Andrea Bartoli and Martha Mutisi

Bosnia-Herzegovina—Rohan Maxwell

Sierra Leone—Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs

Burundi 2000-2006—Cyrus Samii

In lieu of more sophisticated methodologies, case authors were asked whether they had observed these mechanisms in their cases. The only one which received even a few assents was increased legitimacy of integration in other functional areas, perhaps the most difficult to observe.

None of our cases collapsed from violence among the new recruits but even successful integrations could not withstand the actions of civilian politicians which created new violence in places like Zimbabwe and Sudan. Moreover, creating a strong security sector in a weak government is a recipe for military domination and less democracy in places like Rwanda. So why do combatants adopt this policy after civil wars so often? The single best predictor that a civil war would end with military integration was international mediation of the conflict ([Hartzell 2014](#)).

Conclusion

Ronald Krebs and I [concluded](#) that this suggests an ethical problem for peacemakers. Military integration is relatively easy for outsiders to implement;

we have substantial numbers of unemployed military to do the work, and it requires much less adaption in the target society than other actions like creating a working justice or taxation system.

Moreover, in some wars the nature of the postwar military is a critical issue (Burundi is a good example) and in such cases, when the locals have decided they want military integration, internationals can give useful assistance. But military integration is expensive to implement and support over time and may have regrettable political consequences so outsiders should not actively advocate it. At this point, the evidence does not support the assumption that military integration will make renewed civil war less likely.

Image credit: [US Army Africa/Wikimedia](#)

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