

Editorial

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Introduction to the Proceedings of the 15th Jan Tinbergen European Peace Science Conference

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This special issue collects selected proceedings of the 15th Jan Tinbergen European Peace Science Conference, the annual meeting of the Network of European Peace Scientists (NEPS) held in Warwick, June 22–24 2015.¹ The Jan Tinbergen conference offers an international forum where scholars present, discuss, and exchange their works and ideas on peace and conflict. In line with the multi-disciplinary tradition of the conference this year's contributions came from a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches including qualitative studies, statistical and econometric models, as well as strictly theoretical work. The 15 short articles selected for this special issue reflect this diversity. All these letters aim at conveying theoretical discussions and empirical findings from ongoing research projects and as such are showcases of the various strands of current research in conflict and peace science literature.

We open this special issue with this year's NEPS honorary lecture given by Anja Shortland.² Shortland's article stands as a testimony of the diversity of research interests that meet each other under the roof of NEPS. She provides an excellent overview of the interesting economic literature on naval piracy, specifically piracy occurring around Somalia. She discusses the different strands of literature that analyzes the causes of piracy, the different counter-piracy measures and their effectiveness, the costs and consequences of piracy, and finally its sudden and unexpected demise while trying to understand its overall pattern.

1 For selected proceedings of previous Jan Tinbergen conferences see Bove and Ruggeri (2012), Böhmelt and Sekeris (2013), and Caruso and Gizelis (2014).

2 See for past honorary NEPS lectures, Dorussen (2014).

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The selected articles that follow Shortland's interesting piece tend to cluster around four major themes this year. The first theme is the causes and correlates of civil conflicts. The selected works which revolve around this theme refine our understanding of factors that are associated with the likelihood of intra-state conflict and offer alternative perspectives and methodologies for their in-depth analysis. Achim Ahrens exploits a novel data set of African sub-national areas in order to explore the role of economic growth shocks as a determinant of conflicts in Africa. He predicts economic growth using night-time light satellite data and identifies the causal effect of economic growth by employing rainfall and temperature as instrumental variables. His results suggest that climate variables have a significant impact on economic growth; however, they challenge the argument that economic growth has a causal effect on conflict. With this innovative, detailed and methodologically rich study, Ahrens became this year's recipient of the Stuart Bremer Graduate Travel Award which seeks to enhance the scientific exchange between young European and American peace scientists by awarding the best PhD student paper with travel funds to attend the North American conference of the Peace Science Society (International).

Another excellent contribution to the academic discussion on causes and correlates of civil conflicts comes from Eric Gartzke and Tobias Böhmelt who focus in their article on the impact of climate change on the likelihood of civil conflict. Their work refine our understanding of this factor by pointing out and dealing with an important endogeneity problem in the literature which has so far failed to account for the human origins of climate change. They argue that estimating the effect of climate change/variability on conflict onset alone ignores the direct and indirect effects of economic development caused by human activities, and consequently, over or under-predicts the impact of changing climate conditions on the likelihood of civil conflict. The third study along this line of research is conducted by Thomas Gries and Irene Palnau. They offer an alternative perspective on the issue and shift the focus from the *determinants of war* to the *preconditions to sustain peace* and concentrate on structural factors that may render a country secure. Finally, Oleg Polivin's work can also be classified under this theme. Polivin starts with the observation that attacking energy infrastructure is a commonly employed strategy among rebel groups. He then questions the motives behind such a strategy, leading to the interesting hypothesis that free media can protect energy infrastructure by offering peaceful channels to put pressure on governments.

The second theme in this special issue focuses on international organizations and their role on sustaining and maintaining world peace. Jakub Odehnal, for example, examines member behavior in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Specifically, he problematizes the disproportionality of defense burden

sharing among NATO members. Another contribution which also focuses on the behavior of NATO members comes from Du Bois, Buts and Raes. They examine in their article the direct link between casualties and the decision to deploy troops in foreign peacekeeping operations. Their analysis shows that the number of casualties in previous years negatively influence the probability of participation of NATO member states in peacekeeping operations in the current year. Shifting the focus from member behavior to the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, Han Dorussen analyzes whether and how the 2012 departure of the United Nations (UN) forces from Timor Leste, after 13 years of peacekeeping, impacts the security perceptions of Timorese citizens. To answer these questions, he refers to a very interesting survey study he conducted along with expert interviews in Timor-Leste. Finally, Arslan Rana's work bridges the first two themes. In his article "Trade and conflicts: Do Preferential Trade Agreements matter?" Rana investigates the ways through which the institutional dimensions of preferential trade agreements (PTAs) mitigate or eventually exacerbate latent conflicts.

Tania Masi's work ties the discussion on international organizations to our third theme: determinants of economic and political development. In her article "Non-governmental organization and democracy: An empirical analysis," Masi examines the impact of non-governmental organizations activities on the level of democracy. She carries out a cross-country analysis in order to evaluate whether and to which extent United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) funded projects are effective in improving the level of democracy of the recipient countries due to a positive effect on grassroots participation and government accountability. Vanesse Boese moves on to domestic political determinants and attempts to answer whether and how revolutions affect countries' democratic development. Employing cross country panel data, she concludes that revolutionary conflicts have a positive influence on a country's democratic path. The final contribution to this theme is written by Petros Sekeris who focuses on the role of the state in economic progress and problematizes the deterministic association between state power and state capacity. He argues that state power is a necessary condition for economic development, but that it only becomes a sufficient condition when the state has the incentive to invest in building capacity.

Our final theme in this special issue is about American foreign policy and its global implications. Richard Johnson examines in his article, the determinants of US arms transfers. He finds that the regime type of the recipient country and whether it has a defence pact with the US are important factors in the American decision to sell or donate arms. Similarly, in their article "Choosing to Intervene: US Domestic Politics & Moral," Haar and Krebs examine the determinants of American foreign policy and specifically the decision to deploy its military abroad for humanitarian reasons. They focus on investigating the domestic elements, in

particular the strength of the opposition in Congress and public opinion towards the crisis. They conclude that decision of the US to intervene is primarily driven by presidential popularity. Finally, Raul Caruso and Marco Di Domizio build up on the argument that there is an interdependence of military spending between US and European countries, and they analyse whether US military spending affected European sovereign debts in the last two decades.

Together, these articles present important conceptual advances and creative empirical approaches to the analysis of conflict and peace. Nonetheless, we would like to identify two potential interesting topics that have received only limited attention in this year's proceedings. First, while the contributions to this special issue have emphasized the influence of third-party actors like the UN, NATO on sustaining and maintaining world peace, the role of civil society organizations has largely been left unexplored. Second, most contributions to this special issue are driven by regional, national and international perspectives. The empirical evidence for their theoretical arguments come from the analysis of aggregate level data. While these studies offer us valuable insight on aggregate level dynamics, they tend to ignore that, at a fundamental level, conflict originates from individuals' behaviors and their interactions with their immediate surroundings, in other words, from micro-foundations (Verwimp, Justino, and Brück 2009, 307). A more disaggregated approach would advance our understanding of conflict by its ability to account for individual and group heterogeneity within one country or one conflict.

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