

## Editorial

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# Introduction to the Proceedings of the 16th Jan Tinbergen European Peace Science Conference

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This special issue collects selected proceedings of the 16th Jan Tinbergen European Peace Science Conference, the annual meeting of the Network of European Peace Scientists (NEPS).<sup>1</sup> This year's meeting was held in Milan, June 20–22 2016 at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart.

The Jan Tinbergen conference offers scholars the opportunity to present discuss and exchange their work and ideas on peace, political violence and conflict to an international audience. The 13 short articles selected for this year's special issue reflect the conference's aim to incorporate works from various fields and with diverse theoretical and empirical approaches, providing the reader with an interesting overview of ongoing research projects on important research questions concerning, e.g. the roots and (re-)emergence of conflict, the role of ideology in political violence and political economy considerations related to military spending and international organizations.

We open this special issue with this year's NEPS honorary lecture given by Halvard Buhaug. He provides an overview of what we have to expect from climate change – one of the most pressing issues of this century – in terms of its potential effect on conflict. First, he makes clear that climate change is real and damaging. In fact it leads to more droughts, more crop failures, thus depressing economic activity. Second, he argues that climate change may lead to conflict rather indirectly. For instance, climate change may exacerbate food insecurity and (internal

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<sup>1</sup> For selected proceedings of previous Tinbergen conferences see Bove and Ruggeri (2012), Böhmelt and Sekeris (2013), Caruso and Gizelis (2014) and Haer and Kibris (2015).

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as well as international) migration, which in turn provides a breeding ground for conflict, where already conflict-prone societies – in contrast to relatively peaceful and rich (Western) societies – may be especially vulnerable. Halvard Buhaug's honorary lecture concludes by calling for more research efforts to better understand the potentially complex interaction between climate change, changing domestic (economic, political etc.) conditions and conflict.

The second paper is the laudation to honor the winner of the 2016 Lewis Fry Richardson Award, Paul Collier. The authors, Scott Gates, Kristian Gleditsch and Anja Shortland highlight the relevance of Collier's direct contribution to the study of civil war but also the wide influence on current scholarly research.

A first set of contributions presented at this year's conference is concerned with identifying conditions that are conducive to peace agreements or the durability of post-conflict peace. First, Jamie Levin and Dan Miodownik provide an overview of the role of disarmament in the prospects for peace. They discuss the potential negative as well as positive effects disarmaments may have, where their preliminary empirical analysis suggest that the inclusion of disarmament provisions improves negotiating outcomes and reduces the rate of war recurrence. Second, Margit Bussmann and Florian Ranft study how the distribution of military capabilities in the aftermath of civil wars affects the recurrence of conflict. They find that peace is more likely to endure following military victories and peace agreements as well as when conflict parties are not able to credibly signal their intents to commit laying down arms. Third, Carmela Lutmar and Lesley Terris study whether leadership changes on sides of rebels makes peace agreements more or less likely. Using a dataset of leadership changes and agreements ending civil wars in Africa for the 1975–2010 period, they find that leadership changes, especially when they take place on the side of the rebels, may discourage, rather than promote, peace.

While the previous contributions are concerned with studying the end of conflict or its recurrence, a second set of works in this year's special issue is interested in identifying those factors that prevent or promote the onset of conflict in the first place. Here, Domenico Rossignoli investigates the interaction between democracy, state capacity and the onset of civil conflict. He finds that state capacity prevents the outburst of conflict, thus counterbalancing the conflict-inducing effect of democracy. Another contribution by Jean-Pierre Tranchant examines whether giving regional autonomy to spatially concentrated minorities may prevent the onset of civil conflict. He finds evidence that regional autonomy may serve as a tool for conflict prevention and management.

While it is interesting – as the two studies above do – to uncover the structural determinants of civil wars and violence, it may also be promising to see how motivations of the perpetrators of violence (e.g. expressed by their respective

ideology) come into play. First, Thomas Gries and Claus-Jochen Haake present a theoretical contribution showing that ideological differences between rebels and governments may make conflict inevitable; also, they find that strong ideological beliefs combined with low time preference may motivate rebels to start a conflict even under very unfavorable conditions. Second, Sarah Brockhoff, Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierrieks examine empirically how terrorist groups with different ideological profiles are affected by structural country-level determinants. They find that left-wing and separatist terrorist groups in Western Europe were – in parts – influenced by different factors, so that accounting for ideological backgrounds of terrorist groups may lead to a more precise understanding of the root causes of terrorism. Finally, Jean-Paul Azam and Mario Ferrero examine another, rather non-ideological motivation for violence: the quest for fame. They use their theoretical model, in which some rational actors prefer to be known for their infamous crimes rather than remaining anonymous, to explain mass killings conducted by so-called lone-wolf terrorists.

Of course, peace economics and peace science is not only interested – rather narrowly – in understanding the causes, motivations and consequences of civil war, terrorism and other forms of (political) violence. Factors such as international law and organizations, military spending and the proper design of contracts between states may also influence (domestic and international) peace, thus warranting theoretical and empirical analyses as conducted by another set of contributions presented in this year's special issue. First, Catherine Langlois and Jean-Pierre Langlois show how to numerically analyze games between debtors and creditors and thus the rational design for a debtor-creditor agreement, providing insights into the analysis and potential design of contracts (e.g. between countries). Second, Charles Boehmer and Renato Corbetta explore the networks that intergovernmental organizations create in the international system and explore how states relate to each other in such networks. They show that institutional traits of intergovernmental organizations are important factors in capturing differences between individual organizations in terms of their ability to contribute to the creation of international law. Finally, Paschalis Arvanitidis and Christos Kollias empirically analyze, using data for the 1970–2015 period, whether there is (international) convergence in terms of defence spending. They find evidence in favor of convergence, suggesting that there also is a process of policy convergence with respect to military expenditures.

In sum, the papers collected in this special issue can be expected to deepen our understanding of the fundamental questions related to the origins of war and peace as well as of the role political action can play in the war-peace nexus. We hope that they encourage readers and scholars to get involved in answering these questions with their own considerations and analyses.

## References

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