

Research examines organization of militaries and its effects on society

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New research out of the University of Cincinnati is a rare examination of the social impact of armed conflict and militarization. Steve Carlton-Ford, a UC associate professor of sociology, presented the findings Aug. 11 at the 104th annual meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in San Francisco.

Carlton-Ford's study used the "War and Children's Life Chances" data set to conduct a cross-national panel study from 1985 through 2004, examining the impact of armed conflict and militarization on life chances. The data set holds information from 179 countries with populations larger than 200,000.

He examined the impact of militarization on the [child mortality](#) rate (the number of children per thousand births who were expected to die before age five) as an indicator of civilian mortality. Carlton-Ford cites previous research that explains that death at this young age is highly unlikely to result from combat; instead, children die because of indirect effects on health. Mortality at this age has been used to reflect the general well-being of national populations.

The study defined three approaches to militarization in exploring these effects:

- Economic Militarization - Military spending as a portion of overall national economic activity.

- Social Militarization - Maintaining armed forces, the proportion of the population that is in the military, which was initially believed to promote the well-being of the civilian population.
- Praetorian Militarization - These forces are not controlled by a democratic society, but rather have direct or indirect control over the government in power. These are typically small militaries that are highly funded, operating in coup-prone countries.

In contrast to previous research, Carlton-Ford discovered that major armed conflict appears to have little consistent effect on child mortality, suggesting that more recent conflicts around the world have had a weaker effect on populations compared with previous civil wars.

However, he found that social militarization appeared to "significantly and substantially increase the child mortality rate," regardless of whether the country was engaged in armed conflict, and that "increases in social militarization produce particularly adverse effects during years in which internationalized internal conflicts are active."

In addition, as expected, child mortality rates were higher in countries with praetorian militaries - which focus more on the preservation of the military rather than the well-being of the civilian population.

"Consistent with previous research, there appears to be little impact of economic militarization on child mortality rates," writes Carlton-Ford, "though a significant beneficial effect does emerge once economic activity, regime type and their interaction are controlled."

"In short, this study indicates that both social militarization and praetorian militarization - direct or indirect control of the government by the military, as indicated by high levels of spending on relatively small

militaries - adversely affect civilian populations," concludes Carton-Ford.

Source: University of Cincinnati ([news](#) : [web](#))

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