

**CONNECTING EXPRESSIONS OF DISCONTENT:
THE PROCESSES OF ESCALATION, DE-ESCALATION, AND RECURRENCE
OF CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA AND SOUTH AFRICA**

Abstract

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Protest and armed conflict are typically conceived of as independent of each other and studied separately. However, the occurrence of protests before, during, and after armed conflict across the globe seems to contradict the idea that different expressions of conflict – both protest and armed conflict – are unrelated. This research proposes that different expressions of conflict can be studied as related. The contributions on protest and rebellion of T.R. Gurr (2011) and others (Skocpol, 1979; Tilly, 2006; Tarrow, 1993), and on armed conflict (Bartusevičius & Gleditsch, 2019; Goldstone, 2019; Shultziner & Goldberg, 2019) are re-evaluated to argue that “different” forms of conflict – namely, protests, protest campaigns, and armed conflict – can be understood and analysed as part of wider processes of collective action. Three such processes are explored: escalation towards armed conflict, de-escalation away from armed conflict, and recurrence of specific expressions of conflict across time. I argue that each one of these processes can be described in relation to country-specific changes in political freedoms, inequality, state strength, state legitimacy, and the provision of public services.

To illustrate the processes of escalation, de-escalation, and recurrence of expressions of conflict, this study focuses on the cases of South Africa and Colombia to examine the different patterns of interconnection and disconnection between protests, protest campaigns and armed conflict. Conflict is explored in Colombia between 1948 and 2016, and in South Africa between 1948 and 2008, via a mixed methodology.