

13. Nov. 2014

von gast

in Außenpolitik,
Bürgerkriege, Militär,
Zivilgesellschaft

Kommentare (0)

Eastern Ukraine: A War Against Civilians

by *Cornelius Friesendorf*

Civilians are the main victims of the war in Eastern Ukraine. This tends to be glossed over in public debates over the war as well as the media coverage, which focuses on international diplomatic efforts to end the war and the role of leaders, in particular Vladimir Putin. But the people suffering the consequences of the war deserve more attention.

The war began in spring 2014, after Russian-backed rebels opposed to the new Ukrainian government occupied government buildings in several towns in Eastern Ukraine. In summer, government forces pushed the rebels back. Despite a cease-fire agreement negotiated in September 2014, fighting continues, especially around the airport of the city of Donetsk. The separatists control two entities, the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic, which together comprise a population of around 5 million people.

Since spring, over 4,000 people have been killed, many of them civilians, and nearly half a million have been internally displaced. One NGO in Kyiv supporting displaced persons in November 2014 received 200 requests for assistance daily. Ukrainian state institutions are underfunded and inefficient after years of neglect and nepotism. NGOs and individual citizens, more than the state, therefore provide shelter, food, and clothing to victims of the war.



Apartment building in Lysychansk which was destroyed during War in Donbass. (Source: [Wikimedia](#))

International organizations and human rights groups accuse both sides of

SOCIAL MEDIA



SUCHE

TWITTER FEED

Ben Kamis: The concept of #cyberpeace is linguistic trolling. Cyberpeace: post-war is war, only more so <http://t.co/fkaHhcgekK> #cyberwar
ungefähr 2 Stunden her von &s

Wer wissen will was #cyberpeace ist, sollte wissen was dieser sog. #cyberkrieg ist: Matthias Schulze dazu bei uns <http://t.co/LyvFdE29dN>
8. Dezember 2014, 11:08 von &s

Neue #Jobs für Politikwissenschaftler_innen!
<http://t.co/f3vSzfJpMG>
5. Dezember 2014, 9:03 von &s

TAGS

being responsible for civilian casualties. Some attacks may even amount to war crimes. International humanitarian law obliges conflict parties to adhere to the principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity. In Eastern Ukraine, these principles have often been violated. In many cases, troops have indiscriminately fired shells and rockets into populated areas. Additionally, military targets have been placed in residential areas, further endangering civilians.

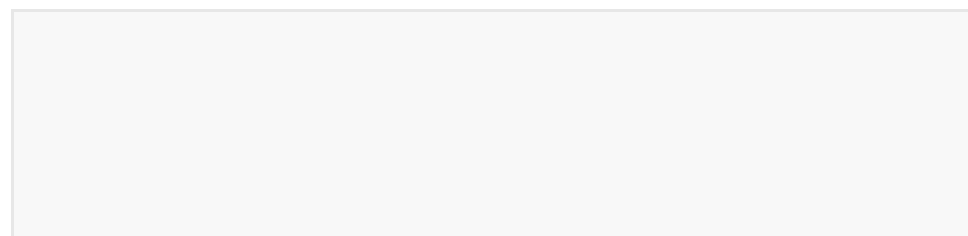
Many civilian casualties have been caused inadvertently. However, parties to the conflict have also deliberately attacked civilians. In fact, the war in Eastern Ukraine has characteristics of a “new war”. Mary Kaldor coined this term in the 1990s, based on her observations of the war in Bosnia. She argues that new wars feature the collapse of state institutions and disciplines armed forces, are fought over identity and profit rather than territory, and that in new wars, fighters pick soft targets, the softest of which are civilians.

Many scholars contest the new war paradigm. They argue that new wars are not new, or that new wars resemble traditional inter-state wars in important ways, such as the aim to control territory. Yet, there are also many scholars whose works support the claim that the nature of war has changed. Retired British General Rupert Smith stresses that modern wars are fought “amongst the people”. Professor John Mueller argues that internal wars are primarily fought by “remnants of war” such as criminals, weekend paramilitaries, and hooligans. These have neither an interest nor the courage to fight disciplines soldiers, and instead prey on civilians.

The war in Eastern Ukraine does not perfectly fit the new war paradigm. In comparison to Bosnia, the front lines are clearer and combat is more conventional. Russia also plays a more dominant role in Eastern Ukraine than Serbia did in Bosnia.

But there are parallels with regard to effects on civilians. The parallels lie not in the number of lives lost, as the war in Bosnia cost an estimated 100,000 lives compared to the estimated 4000 dead in Ukraine, but in quality: Many civilians who, in summer 2014, tried to leave the combat zones through “humanitarian corridors” were killed through shelling and rockets. Those who stayed behind and now live in combat zones are at high risk.

Moreover, there are numerous reports of torture, murder, and disappearances committed especially by the separatists. Many of the victims supported or were involved in the Euromaidan demonstrations, which toppled the government of Russian-backed Viktor Yanukovytsch in February 2014.



BELIEBT KOMMENTARE NEU

Hell yeah, it's Political Science!
Wissenschaftliche Podcasts

Das Internet darf ein cyberfreier
Raum sein

Deutschlands Irak-Politik –
Verantwortung nach außen,
Intransparenz nach innen.

Wir haben Geburtstag!

„Mit Sicherheit nicht!“ Sexuelle
Gewalt als politisches Mittel

KATEGORIEN

Außenpolitik (59)

Bürgerkriege (16)

Cyber Security (42)

Demokratisierung (9)

Drohnen (15)

Humanitäre Interventionen (15)

Innere Sicherheit (24)

Interviews (10)

Katastrophen (4)

Konferenz (20)

Militär (28)

Pandemien (2)

Podcast (7)

Popkultur (21)

Sanktionen (8)

Security Culture (14)



Ukrainian troops in front of the ruins of Donetsk International Airport. (Source: [Wikimedia](#))

In many cases, political affiliation was not necessary for people to be threatened and attacked: especially in areas under rebel control, people espousing liberal values are in danger. To be targeted, it is often enough to ask critical questions, run a cultural center, or belong to the wrong church. Presenting this war as one of Eastern versus Western Ukraine, and Russians versus Ukrainians, would therefore be a misrepresentation. This war also pitches those with a liberal, cosmopolitan vision of state and society against those espousing ethnic, linguistic, and religious homogeneity.

In addition to the local civilian population, journalists, humanitarian agencies, and international monitors operating in the combat zones of Eastern Ukraine also run high risks, in some cases higher than was the case in the Bosnian war. This is not least because of a lack of a unified command on the rebel side. Troops controlled by Russian professional soldiers seem fairly disciplined, but there are also militias, mercenaries, and criminals who prey on soft targets and who want to make money – the “remnants of war”. For example, according to one NGO representative interviewed in Kramatorsk in early November 2014, during the three-months reign of the separatists around 250 cars were stolen in the town.

In government-controlled territory, there are problems, too. For instance, international observers claim that defendants in Kharkiv accused of supporting the rebels do not receive fair trials and that their medial treatment is insufficient.

Even if international efforts to stop the war succeed, violence will linger on. A main feature of new wars is that such wars do not suddenly end. Rather, they peter out, with former adversaries settling old scores and with former combatants who had profited from war preying on the local population. New wars also leave a criminal legacy affecting state institutions: some former combatants, especially those considered war heroes, morph into politicians and pursue their private economic interests under an official banner. The Ukrainian state, which has been marred by corruption and neglect since the collapse of the Soviet Union, provides fertile ground for such metamorphoses.

While the world is waiting for peace in the Ukraine, it should keep in mind

[Sicherheits-Kommunikation \(14\)](#)

[Sicherheitskultur \(205\)](#)

[Sozialwissenschaft Online \(57\)](#)

[Stellenangebote \(42\)](#)

[Strategie \(10\)](#)

[Terrorismus \(14\)](#)

[Theorie \(2\)](#)

[Umwelt \(1\)](#)

[Versicherheitlichung \(22\)](#)

[Visualisierung \(5\)](#)

[Whistleblowing \(8\)](#)

[WikiLeaks \(17\)](#)

[WMD \(10\)](#)

[Zivilgesellschaft \(48\)](#)

BLOGROLL

[Arbeitskreis soziale Bewegungen](#)

[AG Augen geradaus](#)

[Dan Drezner](#)

[Dart-Throwing Chimp](#)

[David Campbell](#)

[de.hypotheses.org](#)

[Demokratieforschung Göttingen](#)

[Duck Of Minerva](#)

[Future and Politics](#)

[Hylaeon Flow](#)

[Internet und Politik](#)

[IR Blog](#)

[Just Security Blog](#)

that any peace, if it comes, will be an unstable one.



Our guest author **Dr Cornelius Friesendorf** is lecturer at Goethe University Frankfurt and researcher at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (HSFK/PRIF). In his research he focuses on police reform and on the impact of war on local populations. Over recent years he conducted fieldwork primarily in Afghanistan.

Tags: [Casualties](#), [Civilians](#), [Donetsk](#), [europe](#), [Luhansk](#), [russia](#), [Ukraine](#), [USA](#)

[« Wir haben Geburtstag!](#)

[Stellenanzeigen November 1/2 »](#)



[justsecurity.org](#)

[Killer Apps](#)

[Kings Of War](#)

[netzpolitik.org](#)

[percepticon](#)

[shabka.org](#)

[Terrorismus in Deutschland](#)

[theorieblog.de](#)

[Verfassungsblog](#)

[Vom Bohren harter Bretter](#)

[whistleblower-net.de](#)

ARCHIV

Wähle den Monat

Bislang keine Kommentare

Einen Kommentar hinterlassen

Name

Email

Webseite

Kommentar

Geben Sie den Text ein.





⌂ 🔊

Datenschutz - Nutzungsbedingungen

Benachrichtige mich über nachfolgende Kommentare per E-Mail.



Impressum | 

Dieses Werk bzw. Inhalt steht unter einer Creative Commons Namensnennung-NichtKommerziell-KeineBearbeitung 3.0 Unported Lizenz.
Über diese Lizenz hinausgehende Erlaubnisse können Sie unter redaktion@sicherheitspolitik-blog.de erhalten