

motivations to start participating, do not say much about the factors that either cause escalation or rebel retirement. It would be interesting to probe this finding further by enlarging the case material on which it is based. Moreover, this message has very practical implications. Although the reasons to become engaged in conflict tend to say very little about why conflict de-escalates or why individuals withdraw, these motivations deserve to be recognized more in the policy debates. Identifying and actively offering pathways out of conflict could and should more strongly influence realistic policy choices. Sen's book offers very concrete starting points for this discussion.

Second, the evidence from the detailed case material helps us significantly to understand these conflict dynamics. Sen's book takes this to a new level by talking to terrorists and proposing that we do this more. She also suggests this approach would provide a way forward to research escalation and de-escalation. Although I largely agree with her proposition, there are important considerations that need to be highlighted. For instance, I engaged a figurehead of an important Asian rebel movement, who lived in exile in Europe, in discussion with my students. I wanted them to talk to this person and gain a deeper understanding of individual pathways into violence and justifications for its continuation. After the event, I received scathing criticism from some of my colleagues for offering a platform to an individual with blood on his hands. This is a dilemma, and we need obviously to give serious consideration to these ethical issues.

Third, the books share a core idea that the prevalence of norms matters in explaining retirement and de-escalation. Sen stresses that entrepreneurs, who facilitate the social acceptance of retired rebels, play a key role in the transition out of violence. I argue that norm convergence holds important explanatory power in assessing de-escalation. We can clearly see new and exciting research questions emerging in this area, and I hope very much that scholars will take them up. Moreover, the perspective on norms offers alternative ways for thinking about policy options. Instead of a focus on economic incentives or degrading rebel capabilities, working toward common understandings and perceptions is likely far more productive.

Although we agree on these points, there are also areas where the books diverge. Sen focuses on the conflict in India, which was fought based on the principles of Mao and fits into the classification of an insurgency in my book. The lack of social embeddedness of terrorist groups, she argues, can explain their problematic pathways out of violence; Sen clearly explains the why and how. My book discusses a possible counter-case: Italy in the early 1980s. The social embeddedness of the Brigade Rosse was in decline after the murder of Aldo Moro, and the Italian penitence laws are credited with facilitating rebel exit. We do not see any entrepreneurs or stewards, but still this was seen as a successful example of conflict de-escalation and

termination on the individual level. This highlights, I think, again the potential multiplicity of pathways out of violence, which deserve our scholarly and policy attention.

Farewell to Arms: How Rebels Retire Without Getting Killed. By Rumela Sen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

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How do fighters leave rebel groups and live to see another day? This is the main puzzle of Rumela Sen's book, *Farewell to Arms*. In six concise and focused thematic chapters, she outlines her case for rebel retirement as a complex process focused on social embeddedness and reintegration agency. Her argument ties in with important theoretical debates about deradicalization, disengagement, and countering violent extremism. Using a mixed-methods approach of analysis of quantified data, as well as fieldwork in India in areas affected by Maoist rebel groups since the late 1960s, she details the social process that explains the peaceful exit of rebels. The author deserves high praise for breaking barriers by actually talking to rebels, which is done insufficiently in the field of conflict studies. Moreover, her conflict ethnography has yielded wonderfully detailed stories of the Maoist fighters, also called Naxalites, after their place of origin.

The book makes two important contributions. First, it offers a rethinking of the concept of rebel disengagement. Sen convincingly argues that the process of saying goodbye to life as a rebel cannot be captured by the terms, definitions, and conceptualizations so far offered in the literature. The book masterfully unpacks these pathways out of rebel groups and makes clear that they are distinct from surrender, disengagement, disarmament, and deradicalization. She introduces the term "retirement," which focuses on the larger social processes of transition out of violence. The author shows that retiring by no means signals a lessening of the degree of radicalization nor a disassociation with the rebel group: rebels can retire without deradicalizing. Retiring focuses not only on the exit but also on reintegration into the general population and civil society, gaining employment, and acquiring a livelihood. The process is thus far broader than has yet been recognized. This is a very valuable contribution.

Second, the book offers a theoretical model of retirement from violence, one in which the social structure and embeddedness of rebels take center stage. The case material presents an interesting paradox that departure occurred during the height of the struggle and differed across the affected regions in India, with larger numbers in the south compared to the north, even though both areas were subject to the same set of government

countermeasures. Exit in the north of India occurred after apprehension and detention. In the south, retirement was a voluntary and willful process. The model that explains this paradox is based on both structural determinants and agency.

The structure of Indian society displayed a high degree of continuity between colonial times and post-independence. The handover of power in 1949 led to the emergence of a powerful and dominant elite and the persistence of semi-feudalism in the countryside, the focus of the Maoist struggle. This continuation of oppression facilitated the call for a Protracted People's War. The structural factors that explain the retirement from revolutionary war include both vertical ties within the rebel organization and horizontal ties to the wider social environment. Agency can be found in two ideal-type participants in the wider social environment who facilitated this retirement: movement entrepreneurs and exit stewards. The entrepreneurs, individuals who are half in and half out of the rebel group, facilitate exit on a macro level by contributing to debates about the social acceptance of rebels in society. The stewards are individuals who facilitate reintegration on a personal level by helping rebels, in a very concrete manner, make the transition. In the south of India, these entrepreneurs and stewards were present and played an active role; in the north they were absent, which explains the divergent pattern.

If pressed for shortcomings in the argument, more elaboration on the preexisting social structure in India would have been welcome. Specifically, the use of the concept of "caste" triggers questions. Has this not been officially abandoned and outlawed? When the author refers to "backward castes," it is not clear what this backwardness refers to—whether socially in their participation in society or economically in their degree of development. When the social fabric is the main explanation, the non-expert reader could have benefited from more elaboration.

The study has very important and noteworthy findings and speaks to more academic debates than is recognized. On this score, there are several areas where the author appears to undersell herself. First, the study ties in with the debate about the motivations and drivers of rebel violence. Some scholars emphasize that ideas and ideology matter in explaining rebel behavior; other scholars, most notably Max Abrahms, argue that ideology matters very little. Rebels should be more accurately seen as primarily motivated by personal ties and as "social solidarity seekers," rather than hardened ideologues. This study can be clearly situated in this second school of thought, because the ideology of Maoism does not feature in the retirement process. It is here where the author could have been more explicit about the significance of her contribution; it would have been very worthwhile to place the findings in this wider debate in a more structured manner.

Second, the author could have showcased her contribution in the arena of postcolonial studies. Her argument, for example, that the common binaries of war/peace, legitimate/illegitimate, and state/rebel do not apply finds wider resonance in these debates. Chapter 3 makes a very forceful case against the idea that confrontations between the state and the insurgency group are zero-sum affairs. This builds on the literature about rebel governance and rebel-state collusion for which there is more and more evidence. These issues highlight that common conceptual categories for analysis in the field of conflict and security studies, writ large, are in pressing need of reconsideration.

Third, the interesting role of public performances in the retirement process that the study highlights echoes practices in other conflicts where confrontations between perpetrators and victims have facilitated transitions. A notable example would be the *gacacas* in Rwanda after the genocide in 1994. In these public ceremonies, communal justice was sought by public confessions of guilt and public forgiveness. A discussion about transitional justice is missing in the argument, apart from a mention in passing. The book could also have addressed the transitional justice literature in more detail and discussed Indigenous peacebuilding practices.

Fourth, the conclusion asks an interesting question about the links between the state, the insurgents, and societal actors that facilitate or inhibit state-building. This is indeed the wider context in which the Maoist struggle has to be understood. The incomplete state-building and decolonization processes in India make these larger questions very urgent. Although the author refers to the important contribution by Charles Tilly (who focused on state-building in early modern Europe), she does not make the larger connections. Not only do we lack a deeper understanding of state-building theory beyond post-medieval Europe, but also Tilly's observation that early state-building endeavors were actually protection rackets, which was also visible in the cases in the north of India, could have taken this debate further. Future contributions by the author to these debates and lines of argument would be the logical next steps. Moreover, a testing of these ideas against other case material from other conflict zones and regions of the world would provide an interesting path forward.

The book's findings have clear ramifications for policy. In contrast to the dominant disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) perspective, it masterfully demonstrates that it is not economic nor monetary incentives that drive the transition to a life outside of violence; instead, concerns about personal safety are primary. The preoccupation with the giving up of arms as a core feature of DDR, therefore, misses the point and may explain the problematic record of DDR initiatives. The safeguarding of personal concerns of safety holds the key to understanding the peaceful retirement in the case of the Indian

Maoists and should lead to questioning fundamental presumptions in the DDR perspective.

One puzzle remains after reading the book, which is the reference in the title to Ernest Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms*. That novel is set against the background of the Italian battlefield in World War I: it revolves around the love story of an ambulance driver and a nurse. Obviously, the reader can see the relevance of love as a social necessity that connects the novel to this book. Still, legend has it that Hemingway had 47 drafts for the ending of the novel (see Julie Bosman, "To Use and Use Not," *New York Times*, July 4, 2012). Ultimately the nurse dies in the arms of the ambulance driver in the published version. This legend, however, could have offered us more food for thought about the multiplicity of pathways in the process of saying farewell to armed conflict.

Response to Isabelle Duyvesteyn's Review of *Farewell to Arms: How Rebels Retire Without Getting Killed*

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— Rumela Sen

I am thankful to Isabelle Duyvesteyn for her thoughtful review of my book, which provides constructive criticism and highlights avenues for future research. Her primary criticism is that I "undersell" my contribution to various research programs, from postcolonial theory to transitional justice and state-making. As an author, it is perhaps a happier place to be in than to be critiqued for making exaggerated claims unwarranted by the evidence presented. Duyvesteyn correctly points out that the concept of a gray zone of state–insurgency overlap discussed in chapter 3 of my book would find wider resonance in the literature on postcolonial theory and subaltern studies. Following this genre's influential critique of Eurocentrism in social science, I emphasize the need to examine rebel retirement from the perspective of rebels, rather than through the DDR/SSR lens of global policy establishment. However, I do not subscribe to subaltern studies' conviction of the fundamental incommensurability of western and nonwestern categories, which questions the possibility of empirical and comparative political science. It also makes it impossible to apply any theoretical category developed in the West to an understanding of the Global South.

In the rest of this response, I delve into Duyvesteyn's questions about how the evidence presented in my book contributes to the argument that "rebels are social solidarity seekers rather than hardened ideologues." I did not directly comment on the debate on motivations for joining an insurgency because I was more interested in how rebels left an insurgency than in why they joined one: my emphasis is on "how" (process) rebels quit rather than "why" (motivations) they join. However, I considered this question of rebel motivations to join or quit because my open-ended life history format interviews with current and former Maoist rebels often veered in this direction. My respondents would reminisce about episodes of extreme personal tragedy, including expropriation, disfigurement, and the rape and murder of loved ones, which prompted them to take up arms. Propelled by personal tragedy, apprentice rebels followed someone they knew, either family members or neighbors, into the insurgency. But before doing that, they also considered various alternative paths to their goals of personal vendetta or social change, which ranged from doing nothing to joining either criminal groups, police forces, or even political parties. Those who ultimately joined the rebel group did so because they found the rebel ideology the most credible blueprint for vengeance and social change. Therefore, the either/or account of ideology versus social solidarity did not offer a holistic understanding of rebel motivations and recruitment in my research, and the reality is most likely somewhere in between.

In the case of retirement, however, rebels depended on locally embedded informal exit networks to quit, and they did not necessarily deradicalize even after retirement. In other words, the predominance of social solidarity over ideology as a driving factor is more clearly evident in rebel retirement than in recruitment. Therefore, policy debates need to recognize that retirement/conflict de-escalation is not necessarily a mirror image of recruitment/escalation: if structural conditions like inequality or unemployment, for example, drove men and women to rebellion, offering those incentives would not necessarily wean them away from violence. Based on my reading of Duyvesteyn's book, I think she would agree. If we want to end conflicts, policies need to recognize how exit pathways are locally and socially embedded. The logical next step would be to calibrate retirement policies and incentives according to the degree of social embeddedness of rebel groups.