**Con Case:**

We negate the resolution: The African Union should not grant diplomatic recognition to the Republic of Somaliland as an independent state.

Thus, Our sole contention: **Preventing A Civil War**

Conflicts have erupted in parts of Eastern Somaliland, where unionism is heavy, as pushes for recognition by the government creates such problems for these groups.

**Norman 23** proves, ‘consequences of greater international political and economic investment has had destabilising consequences for the unrecognised state.’

These destabilizing factors would be, unfortunately, exacerbated in two ways: **opposition of support for the government** and **opposition against recognition and independence**

The government has been opposed by many clan-based groups across the country, as tensions prove to rise in heated political mess. For example, when the elections were delayed for the standing government [The Waddani Party], who supported recognition and complete independence, these rebel groups resorted to violent means.

The leading militia, the Garhaji clan, has proved to be the main contender in these violent boils. **The Somalia Digest** says, ‘Garhajis militia, which launched its rebellion last month now comprises over 1,000 fully armed militiamen.’

This heavily armed group clashed with government forces in the small village of Dari Mara, the **Somalia Digest** proves once again, ‘Garhajis militia clashed with the Somaliland army near the Ga’an Libaah mountain. The Rapid Response Unit (RRU), were attacked by the rebel militia from several sides.’ These attacks caused the death of the Rapid Response Unit’s Commanding General.

Violent protests erupted as well because of the electional delay, **Crisis Group 22** explains, ‘Tensions already boiled over into violence, when government forces and opposition protesters clashed’

Unionism has also been a widespread opposition to the government’s complete push for independence. The Dhulbahante clan, launched a rebellion against the standing government for a push of unionism of Puntland, a Somali region. **Norman 23** states, “authorities in Las Anod claim they are fighting for a widespread desire to reunite with Somalia.”

Constant shelling and clashes between both sides have caused displacement and massive casualties, **Norman 23** mentions, ‘indiscriminate shelling has continued, damaging key infrastructure including hospitals, electricity and water supply. The ongoing conflict has resulted in at least 150 dead, approximately 600 wounded, and 185,000 displaced from the Dhulbahante population alone.’

Human rights abuse accusations have also spread because of the conflicts in Las Anood. Somaliland troops attacked water infrastructure in the region along with shellings of hospitals and oxygen plants according to **Norman 23** have, ‘made the number of displaced approach 200,000, as a humanitarian crisis is looming.’

The final decision of recognition by the AU would negatively exacerbate these issues, **Jethro 23** explains, ‘Accelerating international engagement has had destabilising consequences for Somaliland’

Firstly, humanitarian crises happen inadvertently because of degradation of health services and key infrastructures due to conflict. Impacts of weakening health services are a major problem, **Vesco 25** verifies, ‘Utilization of health services decreases with the number and intensity of conflict events, as access to healthcare is preempted or impaired. These aggravate cancers, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.’

These events according to **Vesco 25,** ‘are associated with higher infant mortality, malnutrition of children and increased risks of other respiratory diseases’

Militarily, civil conflicts, often cause heavy casualties and mass deaths. **Wagner 18** explains the impacts, ‘infant mortality rate of 67 deaths per 1,000 births, 968,444 armed conflict deaths, and 133,361 infant deaths from averaged empirical studies, cumulative increase in infant mortality 2-4 times higher than the contemporaneous increase.’

Water infrastructure can be damaged due to these conflicts. **Vesco 25** finds that, ‘the ICRC estimates a decline of up to 40% in drinking water in countries with war.’

Migration and displacement evenly occur during civil conflicts, **Vesco 25** reverberates, ‘one standard deviation increase in government violence is associated with shy of 40,000 additional refugees, while a similar increase in rebel violence leads to over 25,000 refugees.’ along with a ‘3% increase in internal displacement per battle-related death.’

Economic drawbacks are also substainstal, as GDP per capita growth declines, **Science Direct 25** states, ‘estimates based on panel data suggest that the damage caused by conflict ranges from 1.5 to 4.4% per year’ For annual GDP, we find a ‘average contraction of 15%–18%.’

Thus, for the negative impacts of a civil conflict due to diplomatic recognition and independence;

We firmly negate the resolution.

**1NC:**

**CIVIL WAR:**

**FRAMEWORK:**

The framework for this round is utilitarianism. Judge, to win this round, the affirmation and negation must prove that their side will increase the utmost welfare and happiness for the people.

Rebels in Somaliland are increasing as tension rise due to opposition of the standing government. Most of these encounters are non-diplomatically solvable leading to near or full-scale military conflicts.

[Mogadishu 24, Jul 30, 2023, *Armed Rebels Emerge in Somaliland, Challenging Government Amid Escalating Tensions*, <https://mogadishu24.com/armed-rebels-emerge-in-somaliland-challenging-government-amid-escalating-tensions/> ]

Hargeysa(Mogadishu24)-An **anti-government rebel group known as ‘Dulmi-Diid’ has initiated a new armed war front** in the Sahil region of northern Somaliland, **increasing tensions** in the Breakaway Republic of Somaliland, particularly in Las’Anod. The rebels, who refer to themselves **as freedom fighters**, are claiming to voice the opposition to the prolonged delays in elections and the extension of **President Musa Bihi’s term.**

Efforts to disarm them through military force or negotiations have been unsuccessful, prompting the **rebels to arrest leaders, peacekeepers, and traditional elders** who attempted to call for peace.

After their release from captivity in the mountains of Gar-Libaah, military officials have asserted that **the government will utilize its full force to eradicate this rebel group**. These officials, who chose to remain anonymous for security reasons, accused certain members of Parliament of being involved in orchestrating their arrests.

“We reached Adadle district, which was relatively safe at the time with no apparent tensions. During our stay in Adadle, some members of Parliament from the **Wadani Party visited us and advised against engaging in talks with the armed group.** Despite their warning, we insisted on pursuing negotiations. However, the forces we were waiting to engage in peaceful dialogue unexpectedly attacked us,” he recounted.

“We were then taken to the rebels’ cell at the Mountain area. After a few hours, the same members of parliament who had cautioned us earlier arrived. They claimed to have successfully negotiated with the leaders of the rebels group for our release from captivity. The parliamentarians instructed us not to request the return of any confiscated items, including our pistols. It appears that these parliamentarians are the ones managing and financing the rebel group,” he added.

However, the Somaliland **Opposition political parties have raised serious accusations against the government**, pointing out that the **massive increase in rebel groups** within the country is attributed to President Musa Bihi’s prolonged tenure in power.

The Wadani party strongly opposed the elections schedule released by the elections commission two weeks ago, contending that it favours Musa Bihi, given his prolonged stay in office.

Khadar Hussein Abdi, the Secretary General of WADDANI Party, **expressed concerns about ongoing conflicts,** particularly in Las Anod, and the challenging economic situation. He further **accused the government** of delays in elections and **committing extrajudicial killings, leading to escalation of conflicts to armed clan clashes.**

“The **government has been breaking the law**, committing extrajudicial killings, and delaying elections for so long until the clashes arise. The government of Musa Bihi does not want elections to happen. These delays have caused wars and the **formation of rebels and clan militias**,” he stated.

**Clashes between rebel groups and government militias** occur in these uprisings. Many are killed as the **Somaliland National Army is unable to secure obsolete victory** against these insurgencies.

[The Somalia Digest, August 3, 2023, *New rebel group has been announced in Somaliland, reached the outskirts of Erigavo*, <https://thesomalidigest.com/rebel-group-somaliland-erigavo/>]

A **new rebel group has emerged** in Somaliland’s Sanaag region. Referred to as a twin group to the earlier announced Garhajis militia from Ga’an Libaah mountain, the new group was **spotted on the outskirts of Erigavo** last night. Erigavo, also known as Ceerigaabo, is the **capital and largest city of the Sanaag** region of Somaliland.

The group, allegedly belonging to the Eastern Garhajis, has **threatened the Somaliland government with war**. In a video seen by the Somali Digest, one of the armed militiamen claims **they took up arms to save Somaliland** from a “dictatorship of Muse Bihi Abdi,” Somaliland’s President.

It is a different, yet **related group to** the earlier announced **Garhajis militia**, which **launched its rebellion** last month from the area around Ga’an Libaah mountain. The rebel group has been referred to as the Ga’an Libaah forces or the Garhajis militia due to its **affiliation with** the Garhajis sub-clan of **the larger Isaaq clan**. The group was allegedly organised and funded within less than four weeks and now **comprises over 1,000 fully armed militiamen**.

The militia claims it is **fighting for the liberation of Garhajis clan territories** and against Somaliland’s President Muse Bihi Abdi. They no longer hide **their intentions of taking over territory** within the self-proclaimed state of Somaliland, situated along the Garhajis-inhabited areas.z

##### Sunday clashes in Dari Mara

The **Garhajis militia clashed** on Sunday afternoon **with the Somaliland army** in Dari Mara, a village near the Ga’an Libaah mountain, which serves as the rebel base. Both sides had been close to each other for the past few days before the confrontation.

According to the rebel group’s spokesman, Ahmed Ali Haybe, the fighting lasted approximately one hour. When the Somaliland forces from the Rapid Response Unit (RRU), together with police officers deployed from Hargeisa, arrived at the scene, **they were attacked by the rebel militia from several sides. Some reports indicate that the RRU commanding general has been killed**, but this could not be independently confirmed.

Somaliland’s **democratic institute is a failure** leading to **rebellions and conflict** between **different clans** and **ethnic groups**. Reform of the political system is **needed before diplomatic recognition** can be given.

[International Crisis Group, November 10, 2022, *Overcoming Somaliland’s Worsening Political Crisis*, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/overcoming-somalilands-worsening-political-crisis>]

**Somaliland’s hard-earned stability is at risk.** November and December were supposed to bring two important elections: one to select the president, and the other to licence the three parties that will be allowed to participate in formal politics. But the first has **been delayed**, and both are mired **in schedule-related controversy**. The **ruling party and opposition both see the evolving electoral calendar** as **central to their political fortunes**, and both are **trying to control it**. Tensions already **boiled over into violence** in August, when **government forces and opposition protesters** frustrated with the electoral process **clashed, resulting in five deaths**. The opposition threatens to no longer recognise the government led by President Muse Bihi after 13 November, which was the scheduled date for the presidential election until the parliament’s upper house, the Guurti, agreed to extend Bihi’s mandate by two years. To defuse the risk of unrest, Somaliland’s international partners should push its political elites to chart a consensus path forward, offer to mediate if they fail and volunteer to serve as guarantors for whatever resolution emerges.

Since proclaiming independence from Somalia in 1991 after a years-long insurgency led primarily by members of its dominant Isaaq clan, Somaliland has developed many trappings of a state. It has pursued political, economic and social reconstruction that has helped it establish a largely stable and functional administration. No country recognises Somaliland’s independence, but its many international partners have encouraged the development of its democratic institutions.

Now, however, a **dispute over two delayed elections** is **threatening Somaliland’s stability**. The government and political opposition in the capital Hargeisa are locked in a bitter disagreement over the timing for both a forthcoming presidential poll and a vote to licence the three parties that will be allowed to participate in Somaliland’s politics for the next ten years. (This licencing process is a singular feature of Somaliland’s political architecture.) **Chronic delays** placed these polls within six weeks of each other, on 13 November and 26 December, respectively, **creating capacity issues** for election authorities and an unfortunate **confluence of logistical and sensitive political issues** that need to be resolved simultaneously.

**Tensions between the two sides have been simmering** since late 2021. The core of the dispute relates to timing: President Bihi and his Kulmiye party insist that the political parties election occur prior to the presidential vote. By contrast, the opposition Waddani and UCID parties want the presidential vote to be held first. Both sides invoke legal arguments, but political calculations likely explain their preferences regarding the electoral calendar. Bihi appears to believe that holding the presidential contest after the selection of new and **potentially less experienced political parties augments his chances of staying in office.** For the same reason, the opposition worries that the parties vote, if it comes first, could compromise its own bid for the presidency. Waddani bested Kulmiye in the May 2021 elections for parliament’s lower house before forging an alliance with UCID, the third party, to form a majority in the chamber. This result boosted Waddani’s confidence that it can win a presidential race.

Normally, the two votes would follow a set calendar, with some space between them, and the question of sequencing would not present itself. But a cascade of postponements and ad hoc scheduling decisions has led to the present situation. The presidential election, which takes place every five years, was slated for the present month because the last one slipped from June 2015 to November 2017. As for the party licencing vote, it is on schedule in one sense (it is supposed to occur every ten years and the last one was in 2012) but out of sync in another. Conventionally, it occurs with local council elections, but that coupling was severed because the latter, thanks to yet another set of delays, were held off cycle in May 2021.

**Somaliland’s system does not account for a scenario in which the political parties vote is organised separately from local council elections.** Rather than wait for the legislative process to complete enactment of a law that could overcome this conundrum, the government pushed the process forward, opening the registration for new associations bidding for licences in June. The government’s actions, coupled with the sense that its move tilts the system in favour of the ruling Kulmiye party, **angered the opposition and served as a catalyst for the August protests.**

Given the logistical challenges and political sensitivities, the prospect of having these two votes in such close proximity should have alarmed Somaliland’s elites long ago. Yet they failed to arrive at a consensus solution on timing and sequencing, even as the deadlines approached. In late September, the National Election Commission said it needed nine months to organise the presidential poll, which would cause it to slip into 2023. Rather than follow the commission’s guidance, the Guurti extended the government’s mandate by two years, pushing the presidential vote to November 2024. (The government has since said it nonetheless will strive to abide by the commission’s timeline, but it remains uncertain if this commitment is sincere.) The upper house also added five years to its own tenure, though its original six-year constitutional mandate expired in 2003. But it was quiet about the schedule for the political parties vote, which still is not set. There is no obvious legal mechanism for extending the soon-to-expire party licences beyond ten years.

**The status quo is thus marked by uncertainty and lack of consensus.** In October, the opposition rejected the Guurti’s extension on grounds that the body did not adhere to proper protocol and argued that the conditions under which the constitution permits it to extend the executive’s term in office, namely insecurity, are not present. But they stopped short of lodging a legal challenge. Instead, they say they will not recognise the government after 13 November, although they have not explained what they will do in practice to implement this posture. To resolve the dispute, Somaliland business leaders stepped in with a proposal back in August to hold the presidential and party licencing votes at the same time. Parliament’s lower house endorsed the idea, but the Guurti said no on ostensibly legal grounds. Bihi has also voiced his opposition to it

Election delays are a fixture of Somaliland politics, as are mediated solutions, but absent a course correction, prospects for compromise are dim this time around. The reasons are several. First, the **current crop of politicians shows little enthusiasm for the consensus-based problem** solving that has helped Somaliland navigate prior crises. Leaders on both sides have a winner-take-all mentality. The presidency appears less inclined to seek consensus, instead arguing that its positions are formally and legally correct, and that others should fall in line. Among the opposition, **many feel that they have benefited too little from backing down previously**, as they did after initially disputing the 2017 presidential election result. In parallel, Somaliland’s state institutions, like the Guurti, appear weaker and more deferential to the government than in the past, partly due to the individuals heading them and government efforts to bring them in line. They seem unwilling to put forth compromise solutions lest they antagonise the president and his circle. **Clan elders, influential businesspeople, religious leaders and civil society representatives have attempted to bridge the gap, with little success.**

Each **political party corresponds to an Isaaq sub-clan** or collection of sub-clans. Secondly, sub-clan rivalries are on the rise. The Garhajis, whose two main branches form the base of opposition parties Waddani and UCID, respectively, **argue that it is their turn to govern because the previous four Somaliland presidents have hailed from either the Isaaq sub-clans** Haber Awal and Haber Jeclo (whose jeegan, or “rainbow”, alliance secured the presidency in 2010 and 2017) or the Dir sub-clan Samaroon. The Garhajis appear to see Bihi’s determination to forge ahead with the political parties vote as part of a ploy by other Isaaq sub-clans to prevent the Garhajis from obtaining the presidency. As a manifestation of their discontent, Garhajis elders have vowed to obstruct elections in their areas unless the three political parties find consensus regarding the electoral schedule. Thirdly, an **influx of foreign investment** into Somaliland **has upped the stakes for political control**, and dampened appetites for compromise. The Emirati firm DP World has underwritten a multi-million-dollar expansion of the port at Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, while others including the UK have supported development of the Berbera corridor road connecting Somaliland to Ethiopia, bolstering the economy. A range of other external partners are interested in courting Somaliland, due to its strategic location along shipping lanes linking the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Some are also drawn to the anti-China stance it has developed after forging relations with its unrecognised counterpart, Taiwan, in recent years. (The latter has grown closer to Somaliland and now maintains a representative office in Hargeisa.) Somaliland’s heightened international standing has swelled the government’s confidence that it can chart its own course both abroad and at home, including by pursuing unilateral solutions in domestic affairs that override traditions of consensus.

A **great deal of uncertainty now hangs over Somaliland politics, and social unrest may grow** if the dispute drags on. The **clashes and heavy-handed government responses to opposition protests** in August were worrying signs. While elites in Hargeisa generally have an interest in avoiding a spiral into violence, communal **tensions are rising**, and **clan elders may take matters into their own hands** if they are not convinced that national politicians are sufficiently defending their interests. Additionally, a protracted **political or social conflict** could **create recruiting** and **safe haven opportunities** **for** the Islamist insurgency **Al-Shabaab**, which has made subtle inroads in Somaliland in recent years – particularly in the eastern Sanaag region. A distracted **Hargeisa may tempt some Al-Shabaab** members, on the run following a fresh government offensive in central Somalia, **to seek refuge** in Somaliland.

The immediate priority is for Somaliland’s government and opposition parties to chart a consensus way forward on the scheduling and sequencing of the two elections. In the process, they should consult the approved political associations waiting for the opportunity to seek licencing in the political parties vote, though these associations should not be placed on an equal footing with the three existing parties. Though time is short, ideally, the parties and government should reach an agreement before 13 November. A logical resolution would be to resurrect the business leaders’ proposal for a joint election, within the timeframes outlined by the electoral commission.

If the stalemate persists, international partners should be prepared to mediate. **External involvement is not ideal.** But foreign powers have stepped in during previous Somaliland disputes to jump-start talks, and their combined pressure could well calm tempers in Hargeisa. These partners – both Western states (in particular the U.S., UK and European Union) and others like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Taiwan – should closely coordinate messages and actions to press the government and opposition to resume dialogue. They should also get ready to choose a representative from among their ranks to mediate if the situation in Somaliland deteriorates. Few appear keen to take on this task at present, but the UAE, which has already demonstrated an interest in mediation in the Horn of Africa, may be the best positioned.

Partners need to stress to Somaliland’s leadership that the relationships it has developed to buttress its goal of attaining recognition as an independent state, and the investment environment it offers, are predicated on internal stability, which the current dispute undermines. They could send a coordinated message that if 13 November passes without an agreement, and the parties fail to find a stopgap arrangement to keep the situation from unravelling while they search for a solution, they will suspend aspects of their cooperation with Somaliland. These might include assessments to explore economic or security collaboration, defence assistance programming and invitations for high-level Somaliland government visits. (This suspension, of course, should not affect humanitarian relief efforts amid a historic drought in the Horn of Africa.)

Somaliland has also cultivated supporters in places like the U.S. Congress and UK parliament, in addition to influential advocates outside government. These interlocutors should make clear that they will be hard-pressed to continue their efforts to promote increased government contact with Somaliland if its stability is at risk.

Even if the three parties reach an agreement without foreign mediation, international partners should be prepared to serve as guarantors of any electoral roadmap – monitoring implementation and applying political pressure if tasks slip. This step may be unusual, but it is probably the most reliable way to help ensure that the government and opposition will stick to their commitments, given **the high levels of mutual distrust and the declining independence of Somaliland’s institutions.**

The current dispute also illustrates the need to reinvigorate Somaliland’s political system through reforms that close gaps in electoral legislation, shore up its institutions (eg, by establishing an independent constitutional court) and begin to **address structural problems such as increasing clan dominance at the expense of broader inclusivity in politics**. A good first step toward reform would be determining the mechanics and fixing a date for the long-overdue selection of the next Guurti well before the five additional years the body has given itself come to an end in 2027.

The **political dispute in Somaliland** is veering **close to the point of spinning out of control**, but there is still time to avert a worst-case scenario. Urgent action by Somaliland’s international partners is necessary to convince domestic actors to uphold the tradition of consensus-based politics, rather than rely on unilateral solutions. **Somaliland’s precious stability**, bolstered by the real but fragile political and economic progress the country has made over the past 30 years, **may well be at stake.**

#### Successful rebellions like the SSC-Khaatumo, who have went against the Somaliland separationism for decades have claimed legion to Somalia, creating tensions and conflict, which leads to multiple deaths and casualties. Impacts of continuation and new conflicts would create instability for terrorism, dictatorship regimes, and Chinese neo-colonialism.

[African Arguments, Jethro Norman, March 3, 2023, *Conflict in Las Anod and Crisis in Somaliland: External Investment, Intensifying Internal Competition, and the Struggle for Narrative*, <https://africanarguments.org/2023/03/conflict-in-las-anod-and-crisis-in-somaliland-external-investment-intensifying-internal-competition-and-the-struggle-for-narrative/>]

The de facto state of Somaliland has **earned the reputation of an island of peace, democracy and stability** in an otherwise tumultuous Horn of Africa region. Yet this narrative, carefully curated over more than three decades, threatens to come crashing down with every shell that lands in the town of Las Anod. The recent conflict in the northern Somali city has been defined by increasingly polarised and irreconcilable narratives about the causes of the fighting. The Somaliland administration blames ‘terror groups’ for instigating the violence, whilst traditional authorities in Las Anod claim they are defending their community from rising insecurity and fighting for self-determination, legitimated by a widespread desire to reunite with Somalia. Yet if we want to understand the structural causes that undergird the current conflict, we need to first look to the evolving character of the Somaliland state and the **consequences of greater international political and economic investment. An influx of international support in the last five years has had destabilising consequences for the unrecognised state.** It has raised the stakes, intensifying internal competition amongst political elites in the centre, whilst heightening perceptions of marginalisation in peripheral regions. **From this perspective, the asymmetrical violence unfolding in Las Anod is not an exercise in counterterrorism (or defence against covertly deployed forces from Somalia) as the government in Hargeisa claims, but state suppression at least partially fuelled by international support.** At the core of this conflict, therefore, is the changing relationship between clan and state in the context of a recent flurry of international investment. This insight is crucial not only for ending the conflict in Las Anod, but also for reflecting on the kind of political institutions that are currently being created across the Somali territories. The article draws on fieldwork in Somaliland, including in Las Anod in summer 2021, and conversations with residents in Las Anod and across many of Somaliland’s regions during the course of the conflict.

On the evening of 26 December 2022, Abdifatah Abdullahi Abdi ‘Hadrawi’, a popular young politician in Somaliland’s opposition party, was killed by armed gunmen as he left a mosque in the town of Las Anod. Spontaneous protests erupted, directed mostly at Somaliland officials and forces stationed in the town. As tensions grew, Somaliland forces responded to Las Anod youth throwing stones by firing live ammunition, reportedly killing as many as **20 demonstrators**. Then, on 3 January 2023, the anti-government demonstrations escalated into armed conflict following the police killing of Mohamud Ali Saadle, the bodyguard of an influential local businessman. **The Somaliland forces withdrew from Las Anod to defuse the situation, whilst a committee composed of town leaders and traditional elders was appointed to deliberate on the political future of the region.** On 6 February, the committee attempted to publicly announce the intention to reject Somaliland and form a federal state under Somalia, to be called SSC-Khaatumo. However, the Somaliland forces, which had taken up positions outside of Las Anod, disrupted the announcement by shelling the town.

Despite promises of a ceasefire, indiscriminate shelling has continued, damaging key infrastructure including hospitals, electricity and water supply. **By some estimates, the ongoing conflict has resulted in at least 150 dead, approximately 600 wounded, and 185,000 displaced from the Dhulbahante population alone (data concerning Somaliland casualties is pending).** The fighting in Las Anod has drawn widespread international condemnation and raised fears that the conflict may escalate into a regional war.

The public killing of Hadrawi was not an isolated incident, but the latest in a string of unresolved assassinations in Las Anod that are linked to decades of simmering tensions. Las Anod is the capital of Sool, a region caught between two colliding state building projects: Somaliland to the west and Puntland to the east (Hoehne 2015). Somaliland was borne out of the Somali National Movement (SNM), a predominantly Isaaq clan guerrilla resistance that fought, in coalition with other rebel movements, against the Somali dictatorship under President Mohamed Siad Barre. In 1988 the indiscriminate bombing of major Isaaq inhabited cities of Hargeisa and Burco under Siad Barre resulted in the systematic massacre of tens of thousands of civilians. **This brutal episode of violence, and the notion of a state-sponsored Isaaq genocide, is central to the narrative of Somaliland independence, which was declared in 1991 following the collapse of the Somali state** (Bradbury 2008).

Over 30 years later, Somaliland remains strongly associated with the Isaaq clan. Whilst the Isaaq mostly inhabit the central regions of Somaliland, Somaliland claims the territorial border of the former British Somaliland protectorate, that also includes other clans. This is the basis for Puntland’s claim to Sool, which rests on a genealogical logic: the region is predominantly inhabited by the Dhulbahante clan, who are part of the larger Harti clan family that are the majority in Puntland. Whilst being suspended between two colliding state building trajectories can confer advantages to certain Dhulbahante elites (Hoehne 2015) it has also led to an enduring perception of political and economic marginalisation and insecurity.

As fighting between Somaliland forces and clan militias on the outskirts of Las Anod continue, a contested and intensely polarised struggle around the dominant narrative has emerged. Fought largely through social media, **this parallel war has drawn in participants from across the world, including diasporas, journalists, academics, and even rival US lobbying firms.** This maelstrom of competing discourses tends towards explaining the drivers of the conflict in radically different and largely irreconcilable ways.

To make sense of this, we need to understand that the success of Somaliland rests in no small part on the efforts of an influential Hargeisa-centred elite and Somali-landers in the diaspora who have successfully produced and sustained a powerful narrative of statehood, inclusivity and peace in juxtaposition to (and in part because of) prevailing international understandings of chaos and violence in Somalia. **Somaliland has – quite rightly – been lauded for its (relatively) democratic elections and largely successful attempts to keep the peace.** For example, as Somaliland celebrated its 30 year anniversary two years ago, a steady stream of journalistic and academic pieces heaped praise upon the de facto state, describing it as ‘a miracle on the Horn of Africa’, and ‘a beacon of democracy’.

Clearly Somaliland’s shelling of its own citizens in Las Anod fits uneasily with this carefully curated image of peace and stability. That this narrative crisis for Somaliland might now be existential is reflected in the increasingly strained attempts to explain the conflict to the wider world. The Somaliland administration has consistently sought to frame itself as engaged in a counterterror operation. The President, Muse Bixi, repeatedly called the protesters terrorists, strongly implying Al-Shabaab was behind the unrest and downplaying the scale of popular support. Then, forces from Somalia and Puntland were alleged to be involved. Recently, a new bogeyman has been evoked: China, we are told, might be fomenting the unrest. This discourse has found some purchase within the international media. For example, one widely shared analysis oscillates between baseless allegations of Chinese involvement, and a highly reductionist claim that the current fighting can be explained by Darood/Dhulbahante power loss in 1991. These confused narratives disregard legitimate Dhulbahante grievances and obscure the underlying issues around resource sharing and decades of perceived marginalisation.

To be clear: there is no doubt that some **Dhulbahante figures are playing on these tensions and inciting violence. There is also a real threat that, in the future, Al-Shabaab, who have operatives across the Somali territories and thrive in contexts of instability, might try to exploit the situation.** Yet none of this means that there are not legitimate grievances in Sool that remain unaddressed and often unacknowledged. Nor does it mean that the solution is to shell the city into submission.

If we want to actually understand the Dhulbahante position, we could do worse than to look at the Las Anod declaration released on 6 February by the 33-member committee and 13 traditional elders appointed to represent the different Dhulbahante subclans.[1] **The Las Anod declaration rejected Somaliland’s claim to independence and announced the intention to form a federal state under Somalia, to be called SSC-Khaatumo. The document appeals to principles of self-determination and international law, and effectively announces Dhulbahante self-government.** Thus far, most of the discussion of these demands has focused on this political desire to reunite with Somalia, and debate over the right to self-determination in the context of the legal status of Somaliland’s breakaway from Somalia in 1991. However, the declaration also highlights two very specific grievances related to the position of Las Anod within the Somaliland state building project: insecurity and economic underdevelopment.

The first concerns a string of unresolved assassinations that have targeted prominent intellectuals, businessmen and high-ranking officials. By some accounts, the killing of Hadrawi was the latest in over **100 killings which began in 2009** but have increased in recent years. A lot of rumour surrounds these killings, and it is unclear whether one group or multiple groups are involved. However, there is a widespread perception within the Dhulbahante community that the **Somaliland administration is either directly behind or implicitly enabling the killings.** They argue that Somaliland has a large military and police presence in Las Anod, yet there have been no meaningful arrests for the assassinations. **The second grievance concerns what the declaration calls an ‘economic embargo’ imposed by Somaliland designed to restrict the presence of international development agencies in the east and concentrate resources in Somaliland’s central, Isaaq inhabited regions.** This has led some to argue that the assassinations were part of the strategy to divide the Dhulbahante and maintain a perception of insecurity in the east.

It is important to stress these are only rumours. **There have been long-standing divisions within the Dhulbahante, and a significant number of those assassinated were from a largely pro-Somaliland subclan**. Yet whilst the veracity of these claims remains unclear, what ultimately matters for understanding the present crisis is the narrative. Economic underdevelopment and insecurity are inherently interlinked issues that are the key to understanding the current conflict, and its resolution. These twin issues have intensified in recent years in tandem with an influx of international economic and political assistance to Somaliland.

In its three-decade search for international recognition, Somaliland has long lamented a lack of international funding. Indeed, a lack of international investment is central to Somaliland’s narrative as a standout example of self-governance that has succeeded against the odds. Academics have also suggested that, contra the conventional wisdom of the World Bank, the absence of international aid at the crucial moment of Somaliland’s political formation may paradoxically be a key reason for its success. Whilst this may have been true for Somaliland’s early years, it is no longer the case. Buoyed by promises of peace and stability, international partners including the US, the United Kingdom, the EU, the UAE and Taiwan have all announced various infrastructure, trade and military cooperation initiatives and increased their diplomatic presence in Hargeisa.

**From 2018–2024 (overlapping largely with the term of the current President of Somaliland, Muse Bihi) the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway pledged $38 million for infrastructure projects in Somaliland.** The multi-million-dollar investment by UAE’s DP World is transforming Berbera port into a 1 million container trade hub, and by linking it to Ethiopia (via Hargeisa) with a 250 km motorway is anticipated to reshape the regional economy. The number of nations setting up diplomatic missions within Somaliland has grown, whilst Somaliland has generated a noticeable presence in Washington through certain conservative think tanks and lobby groups. The United Kingdom has funded and trained an elite police unit, the Rapid Response Unit (RRU), whilst Washington is reportedly also interested in using Berbera port as a new military base. Finally, in early January 2023 oil was discovered in Somaliland’s central Maroodi Jeex region, further raising expectations of a lucrative new revenue stream for the fledgling Somaliland state.

**This accelerating international engagement has had destabilising consequences for Somaliland that have come to a head under the current administration.** **Firstly, the recent influx of foreign investment and political engagement has renewed hopes of international recognition for the de facto state.** This has raised the stakes, and intensified competition over the state and amongst powerful local business actors. In the flagship Berbera port deal, for example, the Somaliland government contentiously overrode the concerns of local non-state actors (Musa and Horst 2019). This has political consequences, too. Somaliland’s democratic elections are often heralded by international partners as stand-out examples in a wider region defined by authoritarianism. Yet a political crisis emerged in 2022 over delayed elections, highlighting increasingly fractious internal competition within the Isaaq sub-clans over the state. There were arbitrary detentions of traditional leaders, and in anti-government demonstrations in Hargeisa in August 2022, five civilians were killed in clashes with security forces. The British funded RRU was implicated in these killings as well as in the shooting of protesters in Las Anod at the end of 2022. Much like in Las Anod, Muse Bixi has branded these protesters in Hargeisa as terrorists too. The net result is that politics has become far more of a zero-sum game. Commentators have been correct to observe that customary clan law known as xeer has been key to the peace making process that rendered Somaliland a viable political settlement. **Yet one effect of increasing international investment is to undermine this system by further eroding the tradition of consensus building that was the foundation of the 1991 peace pact.** Indeed, it is telling that the Garhajis, an Isaaq sub-clan who form the basis of Somaliland’s two opposition parties, publicly condemned the violence in Las Anod.

Shops in Las Anod tell a story of self-governance initiatives. Peripheral discontent If the increased stakes of statehood have resulted in intra-Isaaq divisions in the centre, then it has done the opposite in the peripheries: uniting previously divided groups against Somaliland. **It seems that the suddenly realisable prospect of recognition has infused a sense of urgency amongst those who viewed the project as a useful way of keeping the peace, but never seriously considered that it might become an independent nation.**

The Dhulbahante are a case in point. The idea of a counter-administration has been around for a long while, and the Dhulbahante effectively governed themselves for much of the 1990s and early 2000s (Hoehne 2015: 54). This was formalised with the establishment of the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn (SSC) administration in 2009, followed by the short-lived Khaatumo administration in 2015. In recent years, support for a counter-administration has waxed and waned. An agreement reached with Somaliland in 2017 seemed to cement the integration of the region into Somaliland. **Yet since the escalation of the crisis in Las Anod over the past six weeks, every Dhulbahante I have spoken to, whether in Las Anod or the diaspora, insists that support for SSC-Khaatumo is now uniform.** This includes several individuals who were not previously supporters of Khaatumo. There is a growing perception not only within the east but also in the western regions, that the state is becoming more Isaaq dominated. Awdal region, where Isse and Gadabursi clans predominate, is represented by only 13 MPs, compared to 56 in the Hargeisa region. There are currently no MPs elected from the Warsangeli subclan, who live mostly in eastern Sanaag, members of whom recently joined the Dhulbahante forces fighting in Las Anod.

Much of the recent infrastructural development is also concentrated in the centre. The Berbera corridor, for example, cuts a neat line of economic opportunity from Berbera, through Hargeisa, and into Ethiopia (see Hagmann and Stepputat 2023). Travel west from Berbera 120km down the coast to Lughaya and Zeila, and the Berbera corridor is met with indifference, or outright hostility. Infrastructure here is almost non-existent, with much travelling taking place along dry riverbeds. Somaliland’s claim to sovereignty rests on a territorial logic, derived from the borders of the former British colonial protectorate. Yet in economic terms, it increasingly appears more like a city state (Hargeisa) with an appended port (Berbera).[2] **Finally, recent oil discoveries have further raised the stakes. From 2013 to 2015 sporadic oil exploration in eastern Somaliland’s Nugaal valley faltered due to fears of insecurity and the risk of violent conflict.** Yet now, the discovery of oil proximate to Hargeisa threatens to further entrench the economic power of the centre at the expense of the margins.

**The present-day conflict in Las Anod must be understood within the context of intensifying clan competition over state resources as a consequence of accelerated international engagement.** The ‘economic embargo’ and assassinations that are front and centre to the Khaatumo declaration reflect a widespread narrative that Somaliland has an interest in creating insecurity in the region to keep diaspora investors and international development actors out of the region. As previously mentioned, it is impossible to verify the truth of these claims, and it is beyond the scope of this article to do so. Rather, this article will show how this narrative of manufactured insecurity and economic marginalisation has intensified following the expansion of the Somaliland state through increasing international investment.

When NGOs do manage to travel to Las Anod, they are officially advised to stay in Aynabo, a nearby Isaaq town, and to only travel into Las Anod during the day.[3] Locals argue this reinforces perceptions of insecurity and takes business away from Dhulbahante. This charge is not entirely fair as the situation is also a consequence of the UN and aid agencies’ own increasingly stringent security policies. Moreover, beginning under the former presidency of Silanyo (2010–17) there were some efforts to develop Las Anod through government funded projects and international aid agencies. Notably, this has included the rehabilitation of Nugaal university, the general hospital, several roads, and a hybrid solar power plant. Nonetheless, this investment is still perceived to be a fraction of that invested in Somaliland’s central heartlands. Moreover, the alleged ‘economic embargo’ on the east goes beyond development projects. For example, in 2022 there were 97 scholarships available for Somaliland students to study abroad at Ethiopian universities. Only one was awarded to a student from Sool region.

Strategically situated at the mouth of the Nugaal valley, Las Anod has the potential to become a major trading hub. In the last few years the city has enjoyed a spurt of economic growth, driven in large part by increasing diaspora investment. Important infrastructure such as the water supply, a number of hospitals, the electric company, and even roads leading to and from Las Anod have been spearheaded by the local Dhulbahante community and their relatives in the diaspora.[4] This includes a large real estate project modelled on US-style gated communities, as well as several new high-end hotels. Land prices have soared, and each summer more diaspora members return to Las Anod. **Yet an economically growing Las Anod has been interpreted as a threat to Hargeisa, both economically and in terms of leading towards greater Dhulbahante demands for autonomy.** Thus, the narrative goes, Somaliland enables the assassinations in Las Anod (mentioned above) to continue. The assassinations have been a feature of the town for over a decade, but in the last five years have been increasing during the current (2017–) administration.

In October 2021, the Somaliland administration expelled en masse an important group of several hundred traders from Las Anod. The traders were from a clan that mostly lives in southern Somalia called the Rahanweyn, who have in the past been vilified as Al-Shabaab collaborators. Again, whilst evidence is scarce, rumour is plentiful. The Rahanweyn were an important business community in Las Anod and some Dhulbahante interpreted their expulsion as an attempt by Somaliland to undermine the growing economic power of Las Anod and scapegoat them for the killings. This is consistent with the narrative that the assassinations were also intended to scare off diaspora investors and prevent the town becoming a rising business hub. **However, there is another narrative that Dhulbahante traders were being outcompeted, and themselves orchestrated the deportations.**

Another example of how economic competition was intensifying in the run up to the conflict in Las Anod concerns the **lucrative khat business.** In Las Anod, every morning you can watch the daily khat delivery flying in from Kenya, landing at the airport just outside of town. Until recently, the khat business was monopolised by a prominent Dhulbahante/Jama Siyad businessman, Mohammed Abdirahman Arale ‘Jabutawi’. Yet in October 2022, Somaliland apparently revoked Jabutawi’s licence to import Khat, reportedly awarding sole licence to import Kenyan khat to a company controlled by members of Somaliland’s president’s subclan. Jabutawi is an important figure in Las Anod. Whilst khat is his main business, he has also invested in other industries, including a prominent electricity company and a huge hotel. His business ventures are a direct source of employment for hundreds of families in Las Anod. It is significant therefore that Jabutawi was an important factor in the immediate escalation from the anti-government demonstrations into a wider conflict. **The protests that began on 26 December remained largely spontaneous civilian protest until the evening of 3 January when Somaliland forces stopped and killed one of Jabutawi’s bodyguards in the centre of town. In retaliation, forces loyal to Jabutawi took up arms against the Somaliland troops and pushed them out of the city.**

**The current conflict continues to bear the hallmarks of this economic struggle.** Notably, Somaliland forces have targeted infrastructure that has not been built by Somaliland, but by the Dhulbahante diaspora. In 2021 I visited the water supply system built by Dhulbahante diaspora that provides clean water to much of the town. I also witnessed the Las Anod community fundraising $120,000 for an oxygen plant during the Covid-19 crisis. **As the conflict escalated, Somaliland troops attacked the water system, whilst shelling of the general hospital also destroyed the oxygen plant.** Most recently, Sool electric plant owned by Jabutawi and Dhulbahante diaspora investors was attacked, with one worker killed and seven captured. Aside from the immediate health consequences for those still living in Las Anod, these attacks on infrastructure funded and built primarily by the Dhulbahante community clearly have an extra symbolic importance.

**As the number of displaced approaches 200,000, in the midst of the dry season, a humanitarian crisis is looming.** Yet communities across Sool have refused to accept any humanitarian aid that comes from Hargeisa, whether it comes from the Somaliland business community or international NGOs. They have raised concerns that aid sent through Somaliland would be diverted. Yet these communities also want to send a political message that they do not want to receive aid coming via Hargeisa anymore. **This again highlights how the issue of aid and development is highly political and at the centre of grievances driving the conflict.**

**Following six weeks of fighting in Las Anod, the narrative of peace and stability that Somaliland has carefully built over three decades is rapidly unravelling.** To understand the recent violence in Somaliland we need to look at the relationship between clan and state in the context of a recent influx of international investment, and address the core interrelated grievances of insecurity and economic underdevelopment. Somaliland has functioned remarkably well if we understand it for what it is to most Somalis within its borders: **a social pact amongst clans to keep the peace. However, once it becomes a serious exercise in state-building – that is, through the construction of a centralised administration and institutionalisation of political and economic hierarchy – the more repressive aspects of the state inevitably come into view.** This is an insight that is crucial not only for solving the conflict in Las Anod, but also for reflecting on the kind of political order and institutions currently being created across the Somali territories.

Conflicts in the Somali territories are often explained in terms of clan. This is unquestionably an important factor in Las Anod. **But focusing solely on the clan ignores how the conflict is also an issue of a rapidly expanding state structure and concomitant political instability.** The central unresolved contradiction at the heart of the Somaliland project is that it is an attempt to create a multi-clan national identity in the midst of a social reality where the clan remains the dominant social structure for many people. Las Anod is not simply about Dhulbahante resistance to Isaaq domination. It is part of a generalised pattern of resistance to an encroaching state apparatus increasingly aligned with a particular clan. Over the last decade, other counter-administrations have been announced, including Awdalland State in Somaliland’s western region of Awdal, and Maakhir state in eastern Sanaag region. **These have been diaspora driven initiatives, and thus far failed to galvanise popular support on the ground, but they share the same basic grievances as SSC-Khatumo, and the same aim – to form a federal member state of Somalia.**

At present, there is dangerous deadlock in Las Anod. Somaliland appears unwilling to back down and leave their base at Goojacade outside of the city, whilst Dhulbahante traditional leaders will not negotiate until the troops withdraw to Oog. Trust between the two sides has almost completely broken down. **Despite – or perhaps also because of – the hyperconnectivity of the conflict (the whirlwind of videos, images and WhatsApp messages through which most people come to understand the conflict) at present there remains a degree of opacity around what is actually happening on the ground in Las Anod.** There are shifting geopolitical layers to the unfolding crisis, not least the alleged role of Djibouti, and speculation over how Mogadishu, specifically the recently re-elected president Hassan Sheik Mohamoud, might respond. Make no mistake: there are also global dimensions to the conflict in Somaliland too. But it is not the spectre of transnational terrorism or China that international partners should be most concerned about. Rather, it is their own skewed investment strategies, buoyed by Western imaginaries of a romanticised ‘state that does not exist’, and blind to the plurality of political voices on the ground.

[PMC Central, Feb 9, 2002, *Root causes of violent conflict in developing countries*, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#:~:text=Wars%20in%20developing%20countries%20have,of%20the%20country's%201990%20population>.]

Poverty and political, social, and economic inequalities between groups predispose to conflict; policies to tackle them will reduce this risk. **Eight out of 10** of the world's poorest countries are suffering, or **have recently suffered**, from **large scale violent conflict**. **Wars in developing countries** have **heavy human, economic, and social costs and are a major cause of poverty and underdevelopment.** The extra infant deaths caused by the **war in Cambodia**, for example, were **estimated to be 3% of the country's 1990 population**.Most current conflicts, such as in the Sudan or the Congo, are within states, although there is often considerable outside intervention, as in Afghanistan. In the past 30 years Africa has been especially badly affected by war

Many groups of people who fight together perceive themselves as belonging to a common culture (ethnic or religious), and **part of the reason that they are fighting may be to maintain their cultural autonomy**. For this reason, there is a tendency to attribute wars to “primordial” ethnic passions, which makes them seem intractable. This view is not correct, however, and diverts attention from important underlying economic and political factors.

Although a person's culture is partly inherited it is also constructed and chosen, and many people have multiple identities.[2](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B2) **Many of the ethnic identities in Africa that today seem to be so strong were** “invented” by the **colonial powers for administrative purposes** and have only weak origins in precolonial Africa.[3](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B3) Their boundaries are generally fluid, and they have rightly been described as “fuzzy sets.”[4](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B4)

In wars political leaders may deliberately “rework historical memories” to engender or strengthen this identity in the competition for power and resources. For example, in the conflict in Matebeland in post-independence Zimbabwe, Ndebele identity was used to advance political objectives.[5](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B5) Other well known examples include the Nazis in Germany, the **Hutus in Rwanda** (fig [2](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#F2)), and, today, **the emphasis on Muslim consciousness by the Taliban and others.**

Four economic hypotheses have been put forward to explain intra-state wars, based on factors related to group motivation, **private motivation, failure of the social contract, and environmental degradation**.

Group motivation hypothesis—Since intra-state wars mainly consist of fighting between groups, group motives, resentments, and ambitions provide motivation for war.[4](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B4),[6](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B6),[7](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B7) **Groups may be divided along cultural or religious lines**, by geography, or by class. Group differences only become worth fighting for, however, if there are other important differences between groups, particularly in the distribution and **exercise of political and economic power**.[8](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B8) In this situation relatively deprived groups are likely to seek (or be persuaded by their leaders to seek) redress. Where political redress is not possible they may resort to war. Resentments inspired by group differences, termed horizontal inequalities, are a major cause of war. These group differences have many dimensions—economic, political, and social (see table ). **Relatively privileged groups may also be motivated to fight to protect their privileges against attack from relatively deprived group**s.[6](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B6)

Private motivation hypothesis—War confers benefits on individuals as well as costs which can motivate people to fight.[9](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B9),[10](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B10) Young uneducated men, in particular, may gain employment as soldiers. War also generates opportunities to loot, profiteer from shortages and from aid, trade arms, and **carry out illicit production and trade in drugs, diamonds, timber, and other commodities**. Where alternative opportunities are few, because of low incomes and poor employment, and the possibilities of enrichment by war are considerable, the incidence and duration of wars are likely to be greater. This “greed hypothesis” has its base in rational choice economics.[10](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B10),[11](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B11)

Failure of the social contract—This derives from the view that social stability is based on a hypothetical social contract between the people and the government. People accept state authority so long as the state delivers services and provides reasonable economic conditions (employment and incomes). With economic stagnation or decline, and worsening state services, the social contract breaks down, and violence results. Hence high and rising levels of poverty and a decline in state services would be expected to cause conflict.[12](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B12)

Green war hypothesis—This points to environmental degradation as a source of poverty and cause of conflict.[13](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B13),[14](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B14) For example, **rising population pressure and falling agricultural productivity may lead to land disputes.** Growing scarcity of water may provoke conflict.[15](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B15) This hypothesis contradicts the view that people fight to secure control over environmental riches.[10](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B10),[16](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B16)

The four hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. For example, the conflict in the Sudan is an example of **both horizontal inequality** (with people in the south being heavily deprived) **and powerful private gains that perpetuate the struggle.**[9](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B9) While environmental poverty has plausibly been an important factor in the conflict in Rwanda, it does not seem to have been in the former Yugoslavia

Evidence from case studies and statistical analyses suggest that each hypothesis has something to contribute to explaining conflict.

Group inequality—There is consistent evidence of sharp horizontal inequalities between groups in conflict.[17](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B17) **Group inequalities in political access are invariably observed—hence the resort to violence** rather than seeking to resolve differences through political negotiation. Group inequalities in economic dimensions are common, although not invariably large (such as in Bosnia[18](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B18)).

Horizontal inequalities are most likely to lead to conflict where they are substantial, consistent, and increasing over time. Although systematic cross country evidence is rare, **one study classified 233 politicised communal groups in 93 countries according to political, economic, and ecological differences and found that most groups suffering horizontal inequalities had taken some action to assert group interests, ranging from non-violent protest to rebellion**.[4](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B4)

Private motivation—The view that private motivation plays an important role in prolonging, if not causing, conflict in some countries is well supported by work in the Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.[9](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B9),[19](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B19),[20](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B20) Collier and Hoeffler tested the greed hypothesis (albeit with a rather crude measure of resource riches) and found a significant association with conflict, although this has been challenged.[21](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B21) They also found that greater male education to higher secondary level reduced the risk of war. They concluded that “greed” outperforms grievance in explaining conflict.

Failure of the social contract—Econometric studies show that the incidence of conflict is higher among countries with low per capita incomes, life expectancy, and economic growth.[10](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B10),[12](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B12),[22](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B22) However, many statistical investigations of the **association between vertical income distribution and conflict produce differing results**.[10](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B10),[12](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B12),[23](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B23) **It has been suggested that funding programmes from the International Monetary Fund—usually associated with cuts in government services—cause conflicts**, but neither statistical nor case study evidence supports this, perhaps because countries on the verge of conflict do not generally qualify for such programmes.[12](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B12),[24](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B24)

Green war hypothesis—Here the evidence is contradictory. It seems that both **environmental poverty and resource riches can be associated with conflict**.[13](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B13),[16](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B16),[25](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1122271/#B25) Environmental stress tends to make people prone to violence as they seek alternatives to desperate situations (as in Rwanda), while resource riches give strong motivation to particular groups to gain control over such resources (as in Sierra Leone).

Although none of the four hypotheses solely explains all conflicts, they do identify factors likely to predispose groups to conflict. Clearly some explanations hold in some situations and not in others, but one factor that all studies have found to be important is a history of conflict. This is because the same structural factors that predisposed to war initially often continue, and because mobilising people by calling on group memories is more effective if there is a history of conflict.

[UNU-WIDER, July, 2002, Mansoob Murshed, *Civil War in Developing Countries*,

<https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/civil-war-developing-countries>]

Previous UNU-WIDER research has shown that the risk of **internal conflict is high in low-income societies rich in natural resources** and **characterised by ethnic fragmentation.** Yet for each country in conflict there are many others with similar characteristics that are at peace. Understanding why some countries avoid conflict while others fail is critical. Key causes of **conflict are inequality (along ethnic, religious, social, and regional dimensions).** Therefore, **policies that exclude** some **groups** from the fruits **of growth and public spending** (both social and economic provisions as well as public employment) may cause conflict. The project will focus in particular on the impact of different patterns of public expenditure (by region, sector, groups of beneficiaries, etc.), **the distribution of government jobs and the overall benefits of government operations in social stability and integration.**

Examples of effect due to civil conflicts like Sudan are major examples of the negative implements of recognition. Humanitarian crises and political chaos are just a few of the harmful impacts of such a situation.

[Crisis Group, April 17, 2023, Fahmo Muhammed, *Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help*, <https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-sudan-what-happening-and-how-help>]

Each year, the International Rescue Committee’s (IRC) Emergency Watchlist analyzes which countries are most likely to experience a new or worsening humanitarian crisis. For the second consecutive year, Sudan tops the list as the country’s collapse accelerates amidst a brutal civil war that is devastating civilians.

Before the war erupted in April 2023, Sudan was already experiencing a **severe humanitarian crisis that left 15.8 million people in need of humanitarian aid**. The conflict has greatly exacerbated these conditions, **surging displacement figures to 14.6 million and leaving 30.4 million people**—more than half of Sudan’s population—**in need of humanitarian support.**

Sudan now represents the largest and fastest displacement crisis in the world. It is also the largest humanitarian crisis on record.

Learn more about this ongoing crisis below.

Nearly two years of civil war has decimated Sudan. Civilians are subject to frequent attacks and **human rights violations while the country’s health care system has collapsed** and life-threatening famine sets in. Attacks on humanitarian aid workers have made it difficult to deliver lifesaving aid to some of the most fragile and vulnerable communities in the world.

Sudan’s civil war, waged between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), erupted on April 15, 2023, plunging the country into chaos. Civilians bear the brunt of the conflict; s**exual violence is widespread, fighters on both sides regularly target civilians and infrastructure, and child soldier recruitment is common**. Human rights groups have accused fighters in Darfur of ethnic cleansing.

Rather than advancing diplomacy, outside powers are fueling the conflict by funneling weapons to their allies. SAF and RSF leaders appear to believe that continued fighting best serves their interests, leaving Sudan on a trajectory toward catastrophic humanitarian collapse.

The war in Sudan has created extreme levels of displacement, both internally and across Sudan’s borders. More than **11.4 million people are now displaced within the country and over 3 million people—mostly women and children—have fled** Sudan to neighboring countries.

Compounding the crisis, **heavy rains and flooding from June to September have affected nearly 600,000 people, displacing over 172,500 individuals** and causing severe destruction of homes and infrastructure, and contributing to a resurging outbreak of cholera. The worst-hit areas, including Red Sea and North Darfur, face heightened risks of famine, further exacerbating the challenges for residents already grappling with conflict and instability.

While neighboring countries—like Chad and South Sudan—have welcomed Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict, they do not have the resources to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of those arriving across the border without international support.

Food security experts confirmed the existence of famine in the Zamzam camp for internally displaced people. During the 2024 lean season, **750,000 people across Sudan faced catastrophic food insecurity** (IPC 5), meaning that death by starvation was a daily occurrence. A hunger crisis of major proportions is not a future concern, it is already a present reality in certain parts of the country.

“An immediate ceasefire is now more critical than ever to prevent mass deaths resulting from a hunger crisis that is rapidly spreading across Sudan,” says IRC country director for Sudan, Eatizaz Yousif.

The war in Sudan has destroyed the country’s public infrastructure, including the health system. The World Health Organization (WHO) verified at least 119 attacks on health care between April 2023 and October 2024, but the true figure is likely much higher.

Sudan’s health care system is suffering from an acute lack of staff, funding and medical supplies in addition to repeated attacks, looting and occupation of medical facilities and hospitals. Treatable diseases are taking a deadly toll—cholera death rates in Sudan are now triple the global average.

**With high rates of malnutrition, a debilitated health system and low levels of immunization, disease outbreaks will continue** to have catastrophic impacts, particularly for children.

The ongoing crisis in Sudan is taking a devastating toll on women and girls. The collapse of critical healthcare services has put new mothers at risk of losing their lives in the months ahead as it has become nearly impossible to access essential reproductive care.

Gender-based violence is escalating. Reports of intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking are widespread, while survivors struggle to access support. **Economic hardship has stripped countless women of their livelihoods**, forcing many into desperate and exploitative situations, and increasing their vulnerability.

In Darfur, the crisis has deepened amidst ongoing fighting that targets civilians, continued displacement and the declaration of famine. Alarming reports of sexual violence underscore the immense suffering endured by those in dire conditions, revealing the exceptional vulnerability of women and children. Urgent action is needed to address these atrocities and provide support to those affected.

In response to increasing needs, the IRC has scaled up its humanitarian efforts despite immense challenges, including office closures and suspensions due to security concerns.

Shortly after conflict broke out in April 2023, the IRC established a presence in Wad Madani, Al Jazirah state where we delivered health and nutrition services to IDPs fleeing Khartoum until we were forced to close the office and relocate our staff. We are currently operational in Blue Nile, Khartoum, Gedaref, River Nile, South Kordofan and White Nile states, and have an office in Port Sudan.

We are delivering direct support to clients in accessible areas of Khartoum, as well as indirect support through our locally-based community partners.

More than **3 million asylum seekers have sought refuge** in neighboring countries since April 2023. In response, the IRC has scaled up our critical services to support Sudanese refugees, including in Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Chad—**which already hosted 400,000 Sudanese refugees** prior to the war.

More than **ninety percent of the 700,000 Sudanese refugees who have arrived in Chad since April 2023 are women and children**. **One-fifth of young children who arrive are experiencing acute malnutrition.**

“The fact that women and children make up such a large proportion of the new arrivals in Chad is particularly worrying because they are often the most vulnerable groups in conflict situations,” explains IRC Chad Country Director, Aleksandra Roulet-Cimpric. “Women and children are at greater risk of violence, exploitation and abuse, and they may also face difficulties accessing basic necessities such as food, water and healthcare.”

In Chad, the IRC is providing drinking water and running mobile health clinics to attend to the vast health needs of the arriving population. In addition to providing immediate relief, the IRC has scaled up its support in the areas of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), health, and protection. This includes providing access to safe water and sanitation facilities to prevent the spread of disease.

#### Internal conflicts can also have socio-humanitarian implements, effecting health, infrastructure, women, education, and disease outbreak. Such examples are catastrophic and harmful to the entire country, leaving it in ruins.

[Science Direct, March, 2025, Paola Vesco, *The impacts of armed conflict on human development: A review of the literature*, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766>]

Destruction induced by war has immediate detrimental effects on people’s health and lives, resulting in deaths, injuries and disabilities. Studies find that armed conflict is positively associated with maternal, **child and all-cause mortality, with the intensity of conflict, rather than the actors involved, being the most important determinant of mortality**

The deterioration and disruption of healthcare infrastructure and service, as well as the diversion of funds away from healthcare, are other important causes of morbidity and mortality ([Garry and Checchi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b153), [Kadir et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b207)). In a study of Africa, [Wagner et al. (2019)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b369) **show that 10% of all conflict-attributable deaths among women are due to maternal mortality, likely resulting from deteriorated health infrastructure.**

Conflict affects health by disrupting the provision of and access to healthcare and treatments. Utilization of health services decreases with the number and intensity of conflict events, as access to healthcare is preempted or impaired ([Ekzayez et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b138), [Price and Bohara, 2013](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b283)). The disruption of antenatal and maternal services increases the risk of adverse outcomes during pregnancy, including the risk of death for mother and child. Several studies find a decrease in utilization of delivery, antenatal care, and child heath services ([Amberg et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b24), [Chukwuma and Ekhator-Mobayode, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b100), [Leone et al., 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b231), [Sato, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b312)). However, other studies find that in locations where health services are poor prior to the conflict, antenatal care improves during and after the conflict — likely driven by the success of international health interventions ([Price & Bohara, 2013](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b283)).

Disrupted treatments and delayed diagnoses in conflict settings aggravate cancers, diabetes, and other chronic diseases ([Caglevic et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b82), [Jawad et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b202)). Locations exposed to conflict are associated with an increase in mortality from chronic or non-communicable diseases ([Aebischer Perone et al., 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b10)), as wars ‘raise the exposure of the civilian population to conditions that increase the risk of disease, injury, and death’ ([Ghobarah et al., 2003](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b161) p. 192). Other health protecting factors are further disrupted, including access to safe water, electricity, financial stability, and routine vaccination services ([Bendavid et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b55), [Garry and Checchi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b153)). For example, the incidence and prevalence of active tuberculosis is doubled in crisis-affected populations relative to the reference population ([Kimbrough, Saliba, Dahab, Haskew, & Checchi, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b216)). R**elatedly, some studies report an increase in the incidence and prevalence of active tuberculosis, while others show a decrease, likely due to missing notifications from disrupted health services** ([Gebreyohannes, Wolde, Akalu, Clements, & Alene, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b156)).

The impacts are aggravated by the diversion of public funds away from healthcare. For example, healthcare provision in Tigray has decreased to a minimum, leaving large parts of the population without access ([Gesesew et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b160)). I**n conflict settings, the diversion of funds away from basic services leads to reduced healthcare quality and availability, and increased malnutrition, which in turn are associated with higher infant mortality** ([Tapsoba, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b344)).

Access to healthcare and management of public health are further hampered by dissaving, as capital is expatriated and individuals migrate. Medical staff often move away from conflict-affected locations, reducing the provision of services, while conflict simultaneously impedes their education and training ([Bdaiwi et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b52)).

Health-related impacts of conflict extend beyond directly exposed individuals and persist after violence ends. For example, neighbouring armed conflict significantly increases the probability of death for women of childbearing age and infants before reaching the age of one in Africa ([Wagner et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b369)). **From 1995 to 2015 the number of indirectly conflict related infant deaths was 3.2–3.6 times higher than deaths directly linked to violence** ([Wagner et al., 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b368)). Conflicts have long-term impacts on children’s health and developments: [Wagner et al. (2019)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b369) find that neonatal mortality increases even when the conflict occurred the year before birth, while exposure to conflict in the first trimester of pregnancy increases the incidence of low birth weight ([Le & Nguyen, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b227)). Similarly, **violence exposure between conception and the first year increases infant mortality by around 1% in Ivory Coast and Uganda** ([Tapsoba, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b344)). Research shows that armed conflict exposure of mothers and children is associated with increased malnutrition of infants and children and delayed early childhood development ([Bendavid et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b55), [Dahab et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b115), [Goto et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b167), [Makinde et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b239)).

As these studies illustrate, women and children are particularly vulnerable to health-related impacts of conflict. Broadly, individuals that were vulnerable pre-conflict are even more vulnerable during and after conflicts ([Garry and Checchi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b153), [Wagner et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b369)). People living with disabilities, children, and pregnant and lactating women are particularly likely to suffer heightened health risks from conflict exposure ([Garry and Checchi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b153), [Rodríguez Caicedo et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b298), [Wagner et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b369)). Mothers exposed to a high risk of violence during their pregnancy are highly vulnerable due to their limited access to basic healthcare ([Tapsoba, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b344)). **Women and children also face high risks of rape and sexual exploitation, which are prevalent in conflict settings and frequently used as weapons of war** ([Kadir et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b207), [Nordås and Cohen, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b274)).

**Children under 5 years of age are also at higher risks of severe and moderate underweight and stunting** ([Bendavid et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b55), [Dahab et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b115), [Goto et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b167), [Makinde et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b239)), as conflicts decrease food security and lower dietary diversity. Conflicts may further deteriorate populations’ health through its indirect impacts on other dimensions of development. Poorer access to water and sanitation increases the risk of disease outbreaks and infection spreading ([Chirgwin, Cairncross, Zehra, & Waddington, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b98)). Conflict-induced displacement and migration increase exposure to disease outbreaks, as crowded living conditions with poor sanitation lead to increased risks of diarrhoeal incidence, respiratory infections, measles and tuberculosis ([Garry & Checchi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b153)). Exposure to violence is associated with stress-related behavioural responses that are conducive of poorer health status, such as higher consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Increased consumption of alcohol and tobacco may contribute to the observed increases in systolic blood pressure in conflict settings ([Jawad, Vamos, Najim, Roberts, & Millett, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b203)) as well as the heightened mortality from other diseases including ischemic heart disease ([Aebischer Perone et al., 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b10), [Jawad et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b203)).

**Decreased economic growth and investments and lower state capacity due to political instability may also contribute to poorer health outcomes.** Conflict impacts on societies lower their capacity to manage disease outbreaks, as demonstrated by cholera outbreaks in Yemen and Somalia, the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), or COVID-19 and conflict affected areas of Libya, Syria and Yemen ([Bendavid et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b55), [Blackburn et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b62), [Daw, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b121), [Rohan and McKay, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b299), [Wells et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b371)). In turn, increased exposure to disease outbreaks, together with poorer living conditions, displacement of conflict-exposed populations, and decreased access to food and clean water may exacerbate malnutrition and mental health conditions akin anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Yet, these cross-sectoral impacts of conflict remain poorly understood. More research and better data on health conditions in conflict settings are needed to disentangle these impacts. Present gaps in our collective knowledge are exacerbated by poor health monitoring in conflict areas. Populations affected by conflict are inadequately covered by demographic surveillance ([Dahab et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b115)), such that obtaining crisis-wide estimation of population morbidity and mortality remains a challenge. National health surveys can give important information of trends over time ([Boerma et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b65)), and initiatives such as the early warning system for disease outbreaks (EWARN) established in the late 1990s can partially fill the surveillance gap ([Asghar, Abubakar, Buliva, Tayyab, & Elnossery, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b35)).

## 4. Impacts of conflict on schooling and education

Conflict has devastating impacts on a range of educational outcomes. Studies find that violent conflict reduces school enrollment ([Bertoni, Di Maio, Molini, & Nistico, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b57)), literacy, attendance ([Bharati, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b61)), and educational achievement ([Brück, Di Maio, & Miaari, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b77)). Studying the impacts of the Sri Lankan civil war, [Ito, Li, Usoof-Thowfeek, and Yamazaki (2024)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b198) find that **household exposure to intense violence when a child is school-aged reduces educational attainment by 3.49 years.** Exposure to conflict also decreases the probability of passing final academic year examinations and university admittance ([Brück, Di Maio, & Miaari, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b77)).

Several studies highlight that the destruction of school facilities and damages to households’ property caused by war diminish educational outcomes ([Ito et al., 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b198), [Michaelsen and Salardi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b252)). By contrast, a study of the Bosnian war finds a limited effect of violence on education via direct destruction of school infrastructure ([Swee, 2015](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b340)). Even if school facilities are not destroyed, however, school infrastructure and provision of education deteriorate. In the West Bank, exposure to conflict decreased the average number of students per square meter in a classroom, **thus decreasing the probability of passing examinations, and accounting for 23% of the total effect of conflict intensity on education** ([Brück, Di Maio, & Miaari, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b77)).

Additionally, conflict disrupts children’s ability to attend school, as educational activities are interrupted and impaired. Conflict lowers educational achievement by reducing the number of school days and increasing student and teacher absenteeism — although severe data limitations invite caution when interpreting this evidence ([Brück, Di Maio, & Miaari, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b77)). The deterioration of pupils’ psychological wellbeing also impedes education ([Brück, Di Maio, & Miaari, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b77)). Acute psychological stress disrupts capacities to consolidate learning objectives and may explain the short-term effects of conflict on education, and especially on exam performance ([Michaelsen & Salardi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b252)). The expectation of violence affects education through devaluation, i.e. by decreasing the perceived value of schooling: individuals’ shift in the perception of risks after exposure to conflict may alter their educational demands. For example, studies find that uncertainty and fear associated with terrorism increase school absenteeism ([Alfano & Görlach, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b23)), which is partly transmitted by media coverage ([Alfano & Görlach, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b22)). At the household level, conflict forces children out of school and into child labour, thereby reducing lifetime earning, as happened in Rwanda ([Chin, Cunningham, & Van, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b97)). At the macro-level, the out-migration of teachers may negatively affect learning through dissaving, although [Swee (2015)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b340) finds little support for this mechanism in the context of Bosnia.

Overall, conflict has short and long-term impacts on education. In the short-term, **violence reduces educational outcome:** the effect of **direct exposure to armed conflict on exam pass rates is highest for conflict events occurring shortly before the exam date** ([Brück, Di Maio, & Miaari, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b77)). These short-term impacts increase with geographic proximity to and intensity of violence ([Ito et al., 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b198), [Michaelsen and Salardi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b252)), and vary depending on the type of conflict event and the timing of exposure ([Ajogbeje and Sylwester, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b16), [Swee, 2015](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b340)). Beyond short-term effects, conflict may also have long-lasting impacts on educational achievements. These long-term impacts may begin with in utero conflict exposure, which reduces the human capital of children born after the war ([Aizer et al., 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b15), [Akresh et al., 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b17)) and even of their children ([Akresh, Bhalotra, Leone, & Osili, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b18)). While these effects are well documented for other domains like health, sometimes the timing of violence (for example during school holidays) may prevent these enduring impacts ([Gutiérrez-Romero, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b175)) and some evidence points to the possibility that such adverse effects are overcome during a lifetime ([La Mattina, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b224)). Some studies also find that the incidence or expectation of violence may have a positive effect on education in the long-term: the risk of conflict may rise the supply of education, especially in democracies ([Aghion, Jaravel, Persson, & Rouzet, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b11)), and can yield an educational peace dividend at the end of hostilities ([Prem, Vargas, & Namen, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b282)).

The impacts of violence on education differ depending on the vulnerability of children and households in (and close to) conflict areas. [Shemyakina (2011)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b324) finds that violent conflict impacted girls but not boys in Tajikistan. [Guariso and Verpoorten (2019)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b171) report that **girls’ school attendance is more negatively affected by conflict compared to boys’, and that children from poorer households and with less-educated parents are more likely to be kept out of school during conflict.** Similar variations by gender and poverty status are found for Colombia ([Grueso, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b170)). By contrast, a study of the Bosnian war finds that the impact of violence on the likelihood of school completion is stronger for males than for females due to the effect of military draft ([Swee, 2015](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b340)). Conflict impacts on education also vary according to contextual factors such as political regime, with weak states exhibiting higher risk of negative impacts ([Unfried & Kis-Katos, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b358)). Lastly, the effects of violence differ across education levels: [Swee (2015)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b340) finds that war impacts secondary but not primary school likelihood of completion.

Education impacts may be exacerbated through other dimensions of development. In a study of Mexican drug-related conflict, [Padilla-Romo and Peluffo (2023)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b276) show that **violence generates spillover effects beyond direct exposure, via out-migration from violence-affected areas and peer exposure to violence.** Conflict increases stress levels of parents and children, indirectly affecting educational achievements ([Michaelsen & Salardi, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b252)). [Swee (2015)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b340) finds that the impact of conflict on school completion is driven by a substantial deterioration of mental and physical health induced by violence. Political institutions also shape impacts; for example, [Unfried and Kis-Katos (2023)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b358) find that high-intensity conflicts on average reduce local educational attainment, but this effect is not significant in strong autocracies. Human capital loss due to conflict is mostly felt in weak states, highlighting the mediating effect of state capacity ([Unfried & Kis-Katos, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b358)). In turn, the education losses driven by conflict – as children are forced out of school and into child labour ([Büttner, Grimm, & Soubeiga, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b81)) – may have long-term implications on their income and livelihood ([Chin et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b97), [Shemyakina, 2015](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b325)). Lower educational outcomes contribute to war-induced losses in human capital, with long-term impacts on the productive capacity of an economy ([Égert & De la Maisonneuve, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b134)). Conflict impacts on education are also likely to be correlated with health-related impacts: for example, rebels targeting schools may also be likely to target healthcare infrastructure. Although disentangling the relative contributions of such partial pathways is hard due to methodological issues including endogeneity and data limitations, disregarding their interrelations may affect estimates of total conflict impact.

## 5. Impacts of conflict on income and livelihood

Violent conflict destructs capital stock and livelihood, as businesses are destroyed or looted during fighting ([Naudé, Amorós, & Brück, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b271)). **Attacks on property, such as theft or destruction of assets and livestock, are detrimental to properties and livelihood** ([Kaila & Azad, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b209)). This effect is short-lived and tends to cease after the fighting stops.

Simultaneously, conflict affects productivity through deterioration and devaluation, as firms lack access to the necessary financial, economic, and material resources for production, while investments cease or shrink. By combining data on firms and conflict events from Libya, [Del Prete, Di Maio, and Rahman (2023)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b124) show that **10 additional conflict events decrease revenues of firms located within a 10 km radius by 1.4%**. This effect is driven by conflict-induced reduction in the availability as well as in the value of inputs used by firms in productive processes ([Del Prete et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b124)). As productivity and revenues decline, unemployment soars and households’ income plummets.

Dissaving and disruption affect livelihood and income, as entrepreneurs move capital and businesses out of conflict areas ([Naudé et al., 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b271)), and the labour force is sub-optimally re-allocated or displaced. In conflict settings, the total labour force participation decreases and the structure of the labour force changes: **female employment grows relatively to male labour, forcing a gendered reallocation of informal workers from rural and conflict affected areas** – where men are largely employed in farming – to safer urban areas, where women work in domestic services ([Bozzoli, Brück, & Wald, 2013](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b71)). Disruptions of labour markets obstruct structural transformations, with long-term implications for households’ income. Evidence from Colombia shows that exposure to conflict disrupts labour markets long after the fighting stops, as violence restricts the transition of labour to more productive sectors ([Fergusson, Ibáñez, & Riano, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b147)).

At the household level, violence exposure forces to divert income away from peaceful activities. In protracted and desperate conflict situations, **households can adopt risky livelihood strategies to cope, including borrowing or buying food on credit, selling their assets, accepting risky jobs, or enforcing child labour** ([Churchill, Smyth, & Trinh, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b101)).

The impacts of these changes are long-lasting and vary according to the vulnerability of exposed populations. A study from Cambodia shows that exposure to conflict in early childhood leads to lower labour productivity at a later stage ([Islam, Ouch, Smyth, & Wang, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b197)). Exposure to and intensity of bombing in Vietnam increase inter-generational child labour outcome ([Churchill et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b101)) with detrimental impact on wages, particularly for women ([Shimizutani & Yamada, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b328)). Rural areas are particularly vulnerable to these impacts as violence lowers agricultural production ([Adejala and George, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b6), [George et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b157)). However, [Abay, Tafere, Berhane, Chamberlin, and Abay (2023)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b2) show that farming activities remain resilient in the short-term.

Moreover, violence can have indirect impacts on livelihood and income through other developmental dimensions. **For example, violence shifts individual risk preferences and triggers behavioural changes:** [Callen, Isaqzadeh, Long, and Sprenger (2014)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b84) and [Jakiela and Ozier (2019)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b200) find that conflict increases risk aversion, even though the effect is not permanent ([Moya, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b261)). Households exposed to violence thus become more likely to engage in risk-averse behaviours ([Brück, Justino, Verwimp, Avdeenko, & Tedesco, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b78)), such as saving more, diversifying income sources, conducting informal activities or subsistence farming ([Brück, d’Errico, & Pietrelli, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b76)). As a result, conflicts increase discount rates ([Voors et al., 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b367)) and depress investments, with long-term consequences on economic output and productivity beyond directly affected areas ([Arias, Ibáñez, & Zambrano, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b30)). Conflict exposure and economic hardships can in turn foster privately violent behaviours, including intimate partner violence ([Brück & Stojetz, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b79)) and forced child marriage ([Bartels et al., 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b47)), and precipitate vulnerable households into a conflict-driven poverty trap with inter-generational impacts ([Efendic et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b133), [Mercier et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b250), [Moya and Carter, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b262)).

Overall, the literature on micro-economic impacts of violent conflict has grown rapidly in the past ten years, propelled by the increasing availability of survey data from conflict areas, improved measurements of micro-level conflict exposure ([Brück et al., 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b78)), and an increase in the assessment of peacebuilding, development and humanitarian intervention in conflict settings ([Puri, Aladysheva, Iversen, Ghorpade, & Brück, 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b288)). However, the ability to rigorously estimate the causal impacts of conflict on micro-level economic behaviour and welfare remains hard, due to methodological challenges including reverse causality (e.g. poorer communities are at higher risk of violence), selection bias (e.g. wealthier households are able to leave), and attribution bias (e.g. difficulty to isolate confounding effects of conflict such as climatic and economic shocks).

## 6. Impacts of conflict on economic growth and investments

Conflict destroys human and physical capital, reducing the current and future growth potential of countries and regions. Looking at GDP per capita growth – a good proxy for reductions in poverty levels ([Moyer, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b263)) – **estimates based on panel data suggest that the damage caused by conflict ranges from 1.5 (**[**Costalli et al., 2017**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b111)**,** [**Petrova et al., 2023**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b277)**) to 4.4% per year** ([Mueller, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b266)). One possible reason for this variation comes from the use of different battle-related deaths thresholds to define conflict, and the choice of the spatial unit of analysis. Further, these estimates are attributed to experiencing one year of conflict; however, conflict duration can vary substantially, such that damages can accumulate over longer time horizons. Considering duration as well, [Bove, Elia, and Smith (2017)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b69) find that the **direct effects of civil war lead to an average drop in GDP levels by 9.1%, whereas** [**Gates et al., 2012**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b155)**,** [**Mueller, 2012**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b265) **find average contractions of 15%–18%**. These largely inconsistent macro-economic contractions remain a puzzle. A main driver of GDP collapse is the destruction of physical infrastructure and means of production caused by conflicts. However, the destruction of infrastructure does not seem to have long-lasting effects (see for instance [Miguel & Roland, 2011](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b254)’s study of US bombings in Vietnam).

The mechanism linking conflict to a decline in economic growth is therefore likely to be more subtle. In their review, [Rohner and Thoenig (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b300) discuss three channels: the impact of war on institutions and the social fabric, the destruction of human capital, and the impact on health and behaviour. Here, we focus on complementary mechanisms which could explain the differing magnitudes of conflict-related impacts on growth and investments: disruption of production networks and asset prices, devaluation and diversion induced by the expectation of violence, and uncertainty-driven dissaving.

Studies find that disruption in production networks play a key role in micro- and macro-economic conflict impacts. [Amodio and Di Maio (2018)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b25) **show that 70% of the fall in output value of Palestinian firms in high conflict districts during the Second Intifada can be accounted for by import substitution.** Export markets suffer from declines in production and loss of workers, as in the case of Kenyan post-electoral violence ([Ksoll, Macchiavello, & Morjaria, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b223)). Supply networks lead to a diffusion of conflicts’ effects outside the conflict zone: t**he Maoist insurgency resulted in an average aggregate output loss of 1.9%, of which 73% is explained by the disruption of production network and its propagation** ([Couttenier, Monnet, & Piemontese, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b112)).

Armed conflicts also disrupt markets by destabilizing asset prices. Studies find that asset and house prices react to critical junctures like battles or ceasefires, but also to changes in expectations beyond violence itself ([Besley and Mueller, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b58), [Willard et al., 1996](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b375), [Zussman and Zussman, 2006](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b386)). Recent work on macro forecasting by [Diakonova, Molina, Mueller, Perez, and Rauh (2022)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b127) suggests that violence expectations and resulting asset price disruptions are useful when predicting GDP. T**his implies that the disruption caused by the expectations of violence on asset prices and GDP may linger long after the war is over: the economy will fully recover only when peace is regarded as stable.** The expectation of violence further amplifies macro-economic costs of conflict through diversion of investments and currency devaluation. [De Roux and Martinez (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b123) document that the supply of credit to farmers in Colombia was suppressed even before the government and the FARC rebels entered the peace agreement. A study of the Russian–Ukraine war ([Xu, Khan, & Cao, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b380)) finds that the conflict negatively impacted the exchange rate and led to a rapid currency depreciation. [Michail (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b253) shows that civil wars are particularly detrimental to exchange rates and that this effect is driven by conflict induced macro-economic deterioration and a tendency of investors to over-discount war impacts. In turn, fluctuations of the exchange rate can affect the country’s trade balance, triggering negative feedback mechanisms with long repercussions for developing economies ([Michail, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b253)).

The negative impacts of violence and its expectation are amplified by the dissaving effect induced by uncertainty and fear. The role of uncertainty for decision-making of economic actors is largely stressed in the economic literature ([Bloom, 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b64), [Collier, 1999](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b103)): armed conflict fosters uncertainty, leading actors to postpone investment decisions, and further exacerbating damages on growth and investments ([Baker, Bloom, & Davis, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b38)). As the fear of violence spreads, uncertainty leads to a diffusion of armed conflict impacts which can last long after the conflict ends. In a study of Ivory Coast and Uganda, [Tapsoba (2022)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b344) shows that the effect of fear on economic agents and their behaviours is so strong that cohorts of children exposed to high risk of violence suffer major health setbacks even when this risk does not directly materialize.

Moreover, the effects of war spread beyond national borders through trade, food, and energy markets: [Liadze, Macchiarelli, Mortimer-Lee, and Sanchez Juanino (2023)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b233) estimated that **the Russian–Ukrainian war would lead to a 1% decrease in global GDP. The magnitude of these effects, however, depends on countries’ vulnerability**. European countries are more vulnerable than the US to the impacts of the Russian–Ukrainian war due to their higher dependence on energy imports ([Cui, Yue, Nghiem, & Duan, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b113)). Additionally, bordering countries and those that severely sanctioned Russia’s invasion are particularly affected ([Boungou & Yatié, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b68)).

As the above example illustrates, the impacts of conflict on growth and investments have important implications on other dimensions of development. Economic shocks disrupt healthcare ([Tapsoba, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b344)), increase malnutrition ([George et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b158)), and deteriorate water availability ([Schillinger and Özerol, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b316), [Zeitoun and Talhami, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b384)), by diverting resources away from peaceful activities. Low macroeconomic income and unstable governments decrease the incentives to invest in state capacity, thereby deteriorating health and education services ([Besley & Persson, 2011](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b60)). Dissaving and devaluation deteriorate micro-economic outputs and productivity, lowering households’ livelihood. L**ack of economic opportunities spur migration and displacement, while lower economic growth and development may indirectly affect political institutions**. Conversely, the effect of conflict on health, water, food and education may exacerbate the economic growth declines associated with violence, generating long-term impacts after the fighting ceases. However, these cross-sectoral impacts induced by conflict remain under-researched. One challenge in empirically testing these mechanisms is that not all costs of conflict on growth and investments might be observable by standard econometric tools. The effect of conditions such as state-capacity, expectations and the existence of conflict traps is now well-established, yet the repercussions for macro-economic cost estimates through these cross-channels are still not well understood ([Rohner & Thoenig, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b300)).

## 7. Impacts of conflict on political institutions

War represents severe challenges to state authority and political order. A well-established literature explicates how political institutions influence the risk of armed conflict (for reviews, see [Fjelde et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b148), [Hegre, 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b188)). However, quantitative research on the consequences of conflict on political institutions remains limited. Although some specific questions – such as how war endings and international interventions shape post-conflict political trajectories – have received attention (e.g. [Fortna & Huang, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b150)), others remain understudied. Here, we consider the impacts of conflicts on two main political institutional concepts: state capacity and democracy.

War, or the threat thereof, impacts state formation and strength by deteriorating tax revenues and fiscal capacity. The material destruction, deterioration of infrastructure and resources, and disruption induced by war all contribute to weaker fiscal capacity. While interstate wars, under certain conditions, may incentivize state building ([Goenaga and von Hagen-Jamar, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b166), [Queralt, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b290), [Tilly, 1990](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b352)), civil wars have different effects, as both actors prey on the same (declining) revenue base. **Studies find a strong negative correlation between civil war and state capacity (**[**Sobek, 2010**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b334)**,** [**Thies, 2010**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b348)**), mostly driven by a diminished fiscal capacity due to the deterioration of tax revenues**, as economic activity declines and state control over territory is weakened. Studying Latin American countries, [Thies (2005)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b347) identifies a negative effect of civil war on fiscal capacity, especially during the 20th century. [Babajide, Ahmad, and Coleman (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b37) study 49 sub-Saharan African countries from 2000–2015, and find that civil war has a clear negative effect on fiscal capacity.

Uncertainty about the future distribution of power brought about by conflicts leads to devaluation and dissaving, reducing incentives for investment in state capacity (e.g., [Besley & Persson, 2010](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b59)). The devaluation induced by the expectation of violence can also shape the type and duration of political regimes. For instance, [Eibl, Hertog, and Slater (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b135) find evidence that regional rebellions increase the likelihood of military rule. Devaluation affects citizens’ incentives to defer to autocrats. Individuals’ desire to mitigate perceived insecurity shape their evaluation of costs and benefits, making them more willing to accept curtailment of civil and political rights, and providing popular underpinnings of autocratization (e.g. [Godefroidt, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b165), [von Borzyskowski et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b366)). **Consistently, studying autocracies across 1900–2015,** [**Lachapelle, Levitsky, Way, and Casey (2020)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b225) **propose that autocracies emerging from violent social revolutions are more likely to form strong and cohesive regime parties** (and loyal security apparatuses), which contributes to making them more durable. In Southeast Asia, the threat of violent internal contention has served to forge broad elite coalitions around the tightening of centralized control and enhancement of the state’s infrastructural power, thus underpinning more durable authoritarian rule ([Slater, 2010](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b332)).

Armed conflict may affect political regimes through the diversion of public resources into military activities and coercive institutions. [Armey and McNab (2019)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b32) find that civil war is associated with increased levels of military spending in the short-term and post-war. Such processes may lead to a centralization of power and a build-up of garrison states, with increased reliance on repression ([Gurr, 1988](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b173)). Consistently, armed challenges to the state are associated with increases in state violation of civil rights ([Chen et al., 2008](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b96), [Davenport and Inman, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b118)). [Armey and McNab (2015)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b31) **examine 96 countries from 1970 to 2004, and find indications that civil wars hamper subsequent democratization**. Similarly, [Aguirre (2016)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b13) finds that the risk of conflict leads to a weakening of executive constraints. Generally, cross-national evidence suggests that whereas non-violent mass mobilization may promote democracy in the short and long-term, violent uprisings do not ([Celestino and Gleditsch, 2013](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b91), [Garcia-Ponce and Wantchekon, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b152)), and that violence during democratic transitions leaves long-lasting negative effects on the institutional qualities of these regimes ([Cervellati & Sunde, 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b92)).

Whereas this literature highlights negative impacts on democracy from conflict, both in the immediate and the long term, some theorization and evidence suggest that armed conflict, under certain conditions, can enhance democracy. S**tudying inter-state wars,** [**Knutsen et al. (2019)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b220) **assess relationships between ongoing war or past war participation and changes in democracy in a global sample across 1817–2006. They find that electoral aspects of democracy are positively related to having experienced war in the past five years.** This echoes findings from the literature on the violent origins of voting rights, where suffrage expansions have been linked to mass mobilization in large-scale interstate wars or violent revolutions abroad and related domestic revolutionary threats ([Aidt and Jensen, 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b14), [Przeworski, 2009](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b285), [Rasmussen and Knutsen, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b293), [Scheve and Stasavage, 2010](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b314)). Intrastate conflict may also sometimes be associated with democratization: South African and Mozambican experiences show how the mobilization of economically and politically excluded and marginalized groups can push authoritarian institutions towards liberalization ([Wood, 2001](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b377)). Similarly, [Leonard (2004)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b230) notes how civil war stalemates might provide a democratic window of opportunity. Yet, in quantitative analysis, aggregate effects of civil war on institutional changes related to democratization are mixed, depending on the time window used ([Fortna & Huang, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b150)), as well as conflict size, duration, or outcome. Some studies indicate that settled solutions may be more conducive to post-conflict democratization, at least in the short term (e.g., [Fortna and Huang, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b150), [Gurses and Mason, 2008](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b174)). However, effects do not persist in the long term and negotiated settlements might also be associated with more regime repression ([Keels, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b213)). Still, war endings have been associated with different power-sharing arrangements, often under the auspices of the international community, leaving formerly excluded population groups with greater access to political power ([Cederman, Hug, & Wucherpfennig, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b90)). Moreover, a growing body of research brings attention to the lasting legacies of war-time governance on the rebel side. [Huang (2016)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b192), for example, finds that armed conflict where rebel groups rely on broad-based civilian mobilization see enhanced democratic standings post-conflict.

Given the mixed patterns and contingent relationships, it is unsurprising that sensitivity analyses assessing the aggregate relationship between conflict and regime change find non-robust results: in their sensitivity analysis covering 171 countries from 1960–2015, [Rød, Knutsen, and Hegre (2020)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b297) find few robust results for democratizing transitions and even less robust results for the relationship between conflict and democratic breakdowns.

We speculate that such results may underestimate the adverse effects of civil war on democracy, as researchers typically control for factors such as GDP per capita that represent potential mediators, thereby blocking off relevant indirect effects. Insofar as good macroeconomic outcomes help stabilize democracies (e.g., [Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b286)), conflict may indirectly destabilize democratic regimes through deteriorating economic performance. **Likewise, conflict may destabilize regimes or reduce chances of democratization via the adverse effects on health and education. In turn, the impacts of conflict on political stability and state capacity can indirectly affect economic growth and investments.** [Kešeljević and Spruk (2024)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b214) study the effect of the Syrian civil war on economic growth and suggest that the erosion of rule of law, rise of corruption, and deterioration of political stability induced by the war create an environment that stifles economic investment and growth. The weakening of regulatory institutions and government effectiveness further impedes economic progress. Unfortunately, we lack empirical analyses that explicitly consider the broad cross-sectoral impacts of conflict on and through institutions, although there are studies documenting the different parts of these potential causal chains (on the various economic developmental and other determinants of democracy, see, e.g., [Coppedge et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b109), [Rød et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b297)).[2](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#fn2)

## 8. Impacts of conflict on migration and displacement

Conflict severely impacts the mobility patterns of individuals and households. Focusing on conflict induced-migration,[3](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#fn3) the impacts of violence are most commonly quantified in terms of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people (IDPs).[4](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#fn4)[5](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#fn5)

The destruction caused by war directly affects peoples’ decisions to migrate or relocate. Displacement and migration are driven by the exposure to killing, injury, or abduction ([Fearon & Shaver, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b146)). **Examining refugees and asylum seeker out-flows between 1990 and 2017,** [**Fearon and Shaver (2021)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b146) **estimate an average of 31 refugees per battle-related death. These estimates vary widely within and across conflicts, ranging from 6 refugees per death at the 25th percentile to 41 refugees per death at the 75th percentile.**

Violence also affects migration by deteriorating livelihood ([Fearon & Shaver, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b146)). In the context of Nigeria, [Sani Ibrahim, Ozdeser, Cavusoglu, and Abdullahi Shagali (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b310) find that increased migration to rural areas takes place due to livestock loss resulting from cattle raids. Similarly, loss of land and property is an important driver of displacement in Colombia ([Engel & Ibáñez, 2007](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b139)).

Conflict impacts migration decisions by disrupting the provision of and access to community-level services. [Engel and Ibáñez (2007)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b139) find that households with access to education and health and connection to public utilities are less likely to relocate. The diversion of funds away from these services can thus increase the propensity of individuals to migrate. The provision of services in the host country also influence the decision to migrate. **A study of the Syrian civil war finds that the provision of healthcare and security in Turkey increases the decision of Syrians to relocate amidst conflict, and decreases their propensity to return to their homeland** ([Balcilar & Nugent, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b40)).

Most studies of migration emphasize the role of direct exposure to violence at the individual, family or community level. However, the perceived security threat is a sufficient driver to relocate ([Melander & Öberg, 2007](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b249)), independently of the actor directing these threats ([Davenport, Moore, & Poe, 2003](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b119)). Fear and perceived insecurity induce devaluation, as the costs of staying increase relative to the costs of leaving. [Schon (2019)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b320) finds that conflicts trigger ‘narrative ruptures’ that change the exposed individuals’ perceptions of the cost versus benefits of leaving their homes. Consistently, fear of reprisals was a major driver of migration in the Spanish and Colombian civil wars ([Balcells & Steele, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b39)). Similarly, the fear induced by the death of a family member is a more significant driver of migration out of Syria during the war than the direct destruction of houses ([Balcilar & Nugent, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b40)). In the context of the Lebanese civil war, while direct violence exposure such as torture and sexual violence pushes victims to flee the country, the terror induced by shelling is sufficient to increase the likelihood of relocating within the country ([Braithwaite, Cox, & Ghosn, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b72)).

The effects of violence on the decision to relocate depend crucially on the distance to violence, both over space and time, as well as on the type of violence and the conflict actors (see also [Steele, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b338)). In the context of Afghanistan, [Tai, Mehra, and Blumenstock (2022)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b342) find that the odds of leaving a district are highest ten days after violence occurs. **Similarly,** [**Zens and Thalheimer (2024)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b385) **observe a maximum average 3% increase in internal displacement per battle-related death within the same week when studying the conflict in Somalia.** [Schutte, Vestby, Carling, and Buhaug (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b321) find that the influence of armed conflict on the predicted number of asylum seekers is dependent on the number of fatalities**,** **and increases substantially after crossing a threshold of 500 deaths.** [**Melander and Öberg (2007)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b249) **estimate 9 times more forced migrants when ethnic conflicts spread from 10% to more than 50% of the country area** (see also [Echevarria-Coco and Gardeazabal, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b132), [Schon, 2015](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b319)). The geography of violence can further influence decisions on whether to move internally or cross-border. [Turkoglu (2022)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b356) finds that **one standard deviation increase in government violence is associated with shy of 40,000 additional refugees, while a similar increase in rebel violence leads to over 25,000 refugees.** However, there is no significant effect of government violence on IDPs. [Esparza et al. (2020)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b142) point towards varying effects stemming from the involvement of different types of conflict actors – such as paramilitaries, rebel groups or the state – on the number of people fleeing during the Colombian civil war, and to paramilitaries’ involvement as a particularly strong predictor of IDPs.

Decisions to migrate may also be affected by war through socio-economic and political impacts in conflict-affected areas. Replicating empirical studies of migration, [Shaver et al. (2024)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b323) find support for the major role of state repression in driving international displacement. [Schutte et al. (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b321) similarly show that the deterioration of basic civil rights is a strong predictor of asylum migration. The impacts of violence on migration depends on its psychological other than material effects: violence triggers terror and trauma responses and it decreases trust, thereby influencing the decision and timing of migration ([Schon, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b320)). Decisions to migrate also depend on a number of ‘pull’ factors in potential host countries, such as the economic opportunities and the socio-political institutions that the receiving countries offer (see for example [Conte and Migali, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b107), [Turkoglu, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b356)). Although more research is needed on estimating the cross-sectoral impacts of conflict on mobility, micro-level studies propose that economic capital and opportunities influence the decision-making process of conflict-exposed individuals and households in multiple ways. Economic and social capital can change the cost-and-benefit analyses of staying versus leaving ([Adhikari, 2013](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b8), [Bohra-mishra and Massey, 2011](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b66), [Engel and Ibáñez, 2007](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b139)), and make it easier to translate motivations to leave into opportunities to do so ([Schon, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b320)). The extent to which there is room for human agency building on such decision-making processes varies largely depending on the type of conflict and the vulnerability of exposed individuals and groups ([Carling and Schewel, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b88), [Erdal and Oeppen, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b140)).

Gender and age can influence the timing of migration, whereby women and children are often more likely to flee first. Women are also likely to experience different types of violence than men, which may impact their decisions to become mobile ([Ghosn et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b162)). [Hagen-Zanker, Rubio, and Erdal (2024)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b177) find, however, that young women in Afghanistan and Nigeria are less likely to consider migrating in the first place. **Migration aspirations and decisions to leave can also be informed by group-level vulnerability: in the context of low-level violence during the 2017 presidential elections in Kenya,** [**Ruhe (2021)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b304) **finds that migration aspirations and decisions are partly formed as anticipatory responses to potential risks of violence based on affiliations with specific ethnic group**s. Similarly, [Balcells and Steele (2016)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b39) show that group affiliations affect levels of displacement not only in ethnic but also in ideological civil wars. Vulnerability to migration-related impacts also changes along a rural–urban continuum: [Tai et al. (2022)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b342) find that rural, non-capital areas of Afghanistan are more vulnerable to the impacts of violence on migration than urban or peri-urban districts.

Further attention needs to focus on how the impacts of conflict on health and wellbeing, access to water and food, or economic growth and institutions, affect decisions and opportunities to migrate. Research on the relationship between conflict and migration has advanced by relying on better data and a broader understanding of the complexity of migration decisions in the context of conflict. However, this complexity, as well as differences in the conceptualization and operationalization of displacement, make comparison and interpretation of substantive effects of conflict impacts challenging.

## 9. Impacts of conflict on socio-psychological wellbeing and social capital

The detrimental impacts of armed conflict go beyond physical health, affecting socio-psychological outcomes such as social capital, cooperative behaviours, and pro-sociality. Early research suggests that war may pervasively deteriorate social capital — the trust, norms, networks, and interpersonal relations that facilitate coordinated action ([Collier et al., 2003](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b104), [Putnam et al., 1994](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b289)).

War impacts socio-psychological wellbeing and social capital by deteriorating mental health. War exposure is associated with disproportionately high rates of depression, anxiety, stress-related mental illness, and severe psychiatric disorders ([Charlson et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b95), [Hoppen and Morina, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b191), [Priebe et al., 2013](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b284)). The negative impact of mental health conditions on psychosocial functioning in the general population is well documented, with typical symptoms including social withdrawal, apathy, mistrust, and irritability ([Clayborne et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b102), [Maercker et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b235), [Yang et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b381)). However, only a limited number of studies have investigated mental illness as a mechanism linking war exposure to social outcomes in conflict settings.

Early research finds that PTSD is associated with reduced desire for reconciliation and interdependence in Rwanda ([Pham, Weinstein, &](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b279)

[Longman, 2004](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b279)), and with increased feelings of revenge and lower support for reconciliation among former Congolese and Ugandan child soldiers ([Bayer, Klasen, & Adam, 2007](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b51)). More recently, [Haer, Scharpf, and Hecker (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b176) show that war-related deterioration of mental health negatively affected social capital and community participation among Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Among refugees from Syria and Iraq residing in Turkey, **PTSD was found to disrupt prosocial behaviour, increasing ingroup bias and reducing altruism (**[**Canevello, Hall, & Walsh, 2022**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b87)**), as well as to devalue trust in political institutions** ([Hall & Werner, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b181)). However, traumatic experiences can sometimes promote ‘posttraumatic growth’ ([Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b346)), leading to personal development and improved relations with others. Research in Sri Lanka suggests that the relational component of posttraumatic growth is associated with increased political tolerance ([Rapp, Kijewski, & Freitag, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b292)). Refugees from Iraq and Syria reporting higher levels of posttraumatic growth displayed more altruism, although primarily towards their ingroup ([Canevello et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b87)).

War exposure also affects social capital by disrupting inter-group relations, cementing prejudices and grievances that lie at the conflict’s root ([Bar-Tal & Avrahamzon, 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b43)) and thereby reducing support for peaceful compromise in the long term ([Canetti, Elad-Strenger, Lavi, Guy, & Bar-Tal, 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b86)).

**Conflicts impact socio-psychological wellbeing and social capital by changing individual perceptions of their peers, and diverting cooperative, prosocial behaviour away from perceived threatening groups while preserving or amplifying it towards more vulnerable outgroups and ingroup members**. The experience of war enhances in-group or “parochial” norms and preferences (see [Bauer et al., 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b48)), as exposure to violence increases pro-sociality within social groups rather than between them (e.g., [Bauer et al., 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b49), [Cecchi et al., 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b89), [Mironova and Whitt, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b256), [Whitt et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b373)). A recent study of Syrians living in Turkey shows that war exposure decreased empathy and altruism towards rival outgroups, but not towards outgroups that are perceived as non-rival ([Hall & Kahn, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b178)).

Violence thus leads to a devaluation of threatening/rival outgroup members relative to the ingroup. Exposure to war activates a coalitional psychology, contributing to the emergence of a conflict ethos centred around security concerns. Individuals more exposed to violence tend to express greater endorsement of such ethos of conflict, which in turn decreases support for reconciliation ([Canetti et al., 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b86)). The ethos of conflict shifts individuals’ priorities and pushes for a devaluation of the adversarial outgroup as opposed to the ingroup where they belong ([Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Halperin, & Zafran, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b45)). Prolonged conflicts may exacerbate this devaluation of outgroup members, as they become increasingly associated with threat, further disrupting social cohesion and amplifying ingroup favouritism.

War exposure may increase outgroup prosociality due to ‘altruism born of suffering’ ([Staub and Vollhardt, 2008](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b337), [Vollhardt and Staub, 2011](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b365)), if outgroup members are portrayed as vulnerable and non-threatening. For example, Liberians exposed to greater war violence were more likely to host Ivorian refugees belonging to ethnic outgroups ([Hartman & Morse, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b182)), and Syrians with greater war exposure were more willing to host internally displaced persons from the Kurdish minority ([Hartman, Morse, & Weber, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b183)). In both studies, outgroup members were portrayed as particularly vulnerable and non-threatening, potentially eliciting greater empathy. [Hall, Kahn, Skoog, and Öberg (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b179) find that, in a sample of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Turkey, elderly people, women, and ingroup members were perceived as less threatening and shown more altruism compared to young people, men, and members of a rival outgroup.

**The impacts of war on socio-psychological wellbeing and social capital are long-lasting: even after the war ends, individuals with greater violence exposure exhibit more retributive attitudes, particularly in ethnically segregated settings** ([Hall, Kovras, Stefanovic, & Loizides, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b180)). On the other hand, exposure to war has also been found to erode political tolerance ([Kijewski & Rapp, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b215)) and amplify negative bias towards ethnic outgroups ([Mironova & Whitt, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b257)), and these attitudes can be transmitted to future generations, perpetuating the cycle of conflict ([Bar-Tal et al., 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b44), [Medjedovic and Petrovic, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b248), [Štambuk et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b336)).

The indirect impacts of conflict on social capital can also affect other domains relevant for post-war development, such as economic stability and educational outcomes. For instance, mental health issues can lead to the deterioration of productivity and economic growth ([Christensen et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b99)), disrupt educational attainment ([Wickersham et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b374)), and impair post-war community resilience ([Haer et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b176), [Yigzaw et al., 2023-03-16](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b382)). Research gaps remain in understanding these interactive and indirect impacts, highlighting the need for further studies to explore how conflict-induced changes in one domain may reverberate across others. Overall, the available evidence points to the risk of societies entering ‘loss spirals’ ([Heath, Hall, Russ, Canetti, & Hobfoll, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b187)) in which the deterioration of mental health, disruption of social capital, and intergroup conflict feed and magnify each other.

## 10. Impacts of conflict on water

War impacts water access and provision both directly and indirectly ([Schillinger et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b317), [Zeitoun and Talhami, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b384)).

War has immediate effects on water quality, quantity, access, and provision via the deliberate targeting and destruction of water infrastructure during armed conflict ([Francis, 2011](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b151), [Schillinger et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b318), [Sowers and Weinthal, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b335), [Tabor et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b341), [Talhami and Zeitoun, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b343), [Weinthal and Sowers, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b370)). For instance, the most targeted water infrastructures in the current war in Ukraine are dams, reservoirs, urban water supplies and wastewater treatment facilities ([Shumilova et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b329)). This occurs despite multiple international declarations, including International Humanitarian Law, establishing water as a basic human right and prohibiting the disruption of access to water services or destruction of infrastructure ([Grech-Madin, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b168), [Tignino, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b350), [Tignino and Irmakkesen, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b351)). **Wars similarly impair water quality by destroying and deteriorating water pipes and pumping, causing water treatment plant deterioration** or failure due to disruptions and maintenance issues, and contaminating surface and groundwater bodies through explosives or military equipment. Even outside of combat zones, damaged water pipes or dysfunctional waste-water treatments pose critical dangers ([Zeitoun & Talhami, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b384)). **Water services are also disrupted by damages to the grid supply: in Southern Syria, access to piped water supply decreased from more than 90% to about 15% within one year** ([Sikder, Daraz, Lantagne, & Saltori, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b331)). Power outages can lead to siltation and increased contamination from industrial facilities or treatment structures ([Sowers & Weinthal, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b335)), which undermine water quantity and quality. Yet, post-war water management, such as institutionalized cooperative solutions, might explain positive conflict impacts ([Bernauer and Böhmelt, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b56), [Döring, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b128), [Owsiak and Mitchell, 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b275)).

Conflicts heighten water scarcity by diverting resources away from infrastructure maintenance and reducing resource management efficiency, which increase salination and pollution. Especially in protracted conflicts, the destruction and disruption of water infrastructure can take decades to be restored. **For example, 65% of the population in conflict-ridden Sudan and Somalia remain without access to safe water and sanitation** ([ESCWA, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b141)). In Syria, the ICRC estimates a decline of up to 40% in drinking water a decade after the war started ([ICRC, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b196)). Warfare further harms water supply systems through disruption and dissaving, by impacting the personnel who maintain services, decreasing the availability of consumables such as fuel for pumping, and deteriorating water infrastructure ([Schillinger and Özerol, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b316), [Zeitoun and Talhami, 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b384)). Dissaving can manifest in the form of deregulated water use, and disinvestment in water infrastructure and maintenance. The decline in water supplies induced by war leaves a vacuum likely to be filled by unregulated, informal water provision businesses, which can lead to over-exploitation of available water resources and potentially increase water pollution. In Yemen and Syria, informal tanker markets have been linked to falling groundwater tables ([Abu-Lohom et al., 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b3), [Aw-Hassan et al., 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b36)). In long-lasting conflicts, military construction projects often neglect guidelines on environmental protection, with impacts on water-catchment areas ([Chan et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b94), [Francis, 2011](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b151)). These impacts can be long-lasting. While lakes or rivers can be directly polluted, groundwater is mostly affected through contaminated soil ([Rawtani, Gupta, Khatri, Rao, & Hussain, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b294)). Pollution can have lingering impacts on aquifers and can severely endanger ecosystems, as observed in the Iraqi peatlands ([Lawler, 2005](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b226)). An increased amount of toxins and other pollutants was also found in Ukrainian freshwater reservoirs ([Rawtani et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b294)).

Several groups are especially vulnerable to the impact of war on water. Displaced persons in protracted conflicts particularly suffer from water-related illness, parasites, and respiratory problems as a result of water scarcity ([Behnke et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b53)). **A recent study on the impact of the war in the Ethiopian Tigray region found armed conflict to diminish access to water for washing by 24% in rural areas (**[**Abay et al., 2022**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b1)**). Reviews of refugee camps find that the available water quantities can range from 1 to 40 liters/person/day (lpd), far below the minimum needs of about 2 lpd for drinking water alone or 40–60 lpd for hygiene** ([Behnke et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b53), [Cooper et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b108)). Falling below these thresholds for prolonged periods is defined as extreme water scarcity. Women and girls face a disproportionate burden from water scarcity ([Blanchet et al., 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b63), [Kadir et al., 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b207)), not only because 80% of global households rely on them to fetch their water ([UNICEF-WHO, 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b360)), but also because of societal taboos that may make women reluctant to bring attention to sanitation issues ([Mafuta, Zuwarimwe, & Mwale, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b236)). In areas affected by armed conflict, women with long distances to obtain water may also be subject to gender-based violence ([Mafuta et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b236), [Pommells et al., 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b280)).

Deterioration of water quality and quantity in turn affects agricultural output, and can damage entire ecosystems with potential ripple effects on other economic and societal sectors. Poor water access in conflict settings can have detrimental impacts on health and wellbeing ([Kangmennaang and Elliott, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b210), [White et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b372)). Direct consequences from lack of water are particularly evident in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector (WASH). Deficient access to WASH increases the risk of several diseases and preventable infections ([Chirgwin et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b98), [Connolly et al., 2004](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b106), [Cooper et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b108), [Tabor et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b341), [Tarnas et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b345)): for example, handwashing with soap has been shown to decrease diarrhoea episodes by 27% ([Connolly et al., 2004](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b106)). Some health studies provide estimates of water quality in conflict settings, including measuring the levels of coliform bacteria as proxies for various outcomes ([Blanchet et al., 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b63)). **Warfare can deprive households from access to safe water sources or significantly increase the distance to fetch water, which is shown to increase mental-health burdens** ([Slekiene & Mosler, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b333)). Extended time to fetch water can also increase disputes both within households and between communities ([MacDonald, 2005](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b234)), potentially feeding a vicious cycle of conflict-induced water scarcity and increased risk of tensions.

Work within humanitarian actions highlights the importance of safeguarding water access in conflict zones, but there is still little systematic research on conflict impact on water resources, especially for longer-term societal outcomes ([Schillinger et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b317)). Even the magnitude of impacts on water remains largely unknown. Remote sensing data can be one valuable tool for analysing land cover changes ([Eklund et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b137), [Mohamed et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b258)): for example, the normalized difference water index (NDWI) has been used to identify conflict-induced surface water change ([Hasan, Moody, Benninger, & Hedlund, 2018](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b184)). Particularly for the study of WASH outcomes, surveys have been widely used, including in-situ sampling for water quality. Yet, inconsistencies in survey design and data reporting often hamper cross-study comparison ([Ricau, Lacan, Ihemezue, Lantagne, & String, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b295)).

## 11. Impacts of conflict on agricultural production and food security

The relationship between armed conflict and food insecurity has been widely studied. Previous research suggests a negative impact of violence on food access and availability.[6](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#fn6) According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) ([FAO, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b144)), **around half of people who are undernourished and 80% of stunted children reside in countries experiencing armed conflict or widespread violence.**[**7**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#fn7)

Violence can undermine food security by reducing food production and output. Armed conflict destructs and deteriorates human and physical capital, infrastructure, livestock, and crops, and is associated with theft and the destruction of land properties ([Adejala and George, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b6), [Verpoorten, 2009](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b362)). [Appau, Churchill, Smyth, and Trinh (2021)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b27) **find that a 10% increase in bombing during the Vietnam War decreased agricultural productivity by 3%, with households closer to violence experiencing a reduction of cassava and sorghum production respectively by 21% and 28% relative to the sample mean.** In a study on conflict risk and agricultural portfolios in Northern Uganda, [Rockmore (2020)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b296) **finds that holdings of cattle and sheep fell by roughly 80% when comparing those with highest versus those with lowest risk of violence.**

Farming production, livelihood, and income are constrained by violence-induced disruptions to the supply of inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, and tools ([Baliki, Brück, Al Daccache, & Weiffen, 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b41)). The inability to access land and other natural resources additionally impact agricultural production ([Jaafar, Zurayk, King, Ahmad, & Al-Outa, 2015](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b199)). Changes to labour force participation, driven by the destruction and deterioration of infrastructure and resources in addition to the displacement of workers induced by violence, further reduce agricultural output and employment (see, for example, [Baumann, Radeloff, Avedian, & Kuemmerle, 2014](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b50)).

Conflicts not only destruct and disrupt agricultural production, they also introduce logistical challenges for producers to deliver food to markets, and restrict opportunities for consumers to travel to purchase food. **This disruption increases food prices, leading to poorer diets and higher undernourishment**. Examining the effect of armed conflict on food insecurity in Afghanistan, [D’Souza and Jolliffe (2013)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b130) find that households in provinces with higher levels of war exposure experience food insecurity via increasing food prices, likely due to reduced access to food markets (see also [Adong, Kornher, Kirui, & von Braun, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b9) and [Tranchant, Gelli, Bliznashka, Diallo, Sacko, Assima, Siegel, Aurino, & Masset, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b353)) .

Comparing pre-war and post-war household data in Cote d’Ivoire, [Dabalen and Paul (2014)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b114) find that households in the most war exposed areas and individuals who were direct victims of violence had lower dietary diversity. [Gates et al. (2012)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b155) show that battle deaths increase the share of people below the level of minimum recommended dietary consumption, and **that a conflict with 2500 battle deaths is estimated to increase undernourishment by an additional 3.3%**. The disruption induced by conflict operates beyond direct exposure to violence. In a study of the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, [Rudolfsen, Bartusevičius, van Leeuwen, and Østby (2024)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b303) find that both direct exposure to violence by military troops and indirect attacks (on family members, acquaintances, and municipality of residence) predict lower levels of food consumption among civilians.

Wars affect food production by diverting resources to non-agricultural or less agriculturally intense activities, as land becomes more challenging and hazardous to cultivate. Studying Colombia, [Arias et al. (2019)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b30) find that violent shocks influence agricultural production preferences, as farmers lack the resources to invest in crops that would lead to greater yields and reallocate income to less productive farming with short-term yields. Armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria are associated with the expansion of cropland into previously uncultivated areas, abandonment of existing cropland, and reduction in high-intensity cropland use ([Eklund, Degerald, Brandt, Prishchepov, & Pilesjö, 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b136)). Cropland abandonment and reallocation can have long-lasting repercussions on food production. In their study of civil conflict in Rwanda, [Serneels and Verpoorten (2015)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b322) find that returns to factors of production after the war depend on past conflict experience, and that returns to land are lower in conflict intense areas.

Food security is also impacted via dissaving — the movement of capital and labour out of the country. Studies suggest that food insecurity increases due to forced displacement, reducing the quantity and quality of the food consumed ([Kondylis, 2010](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b221), [Marchesi and Rockmore, 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b243)). [Verwimp and Muñoz-Mora (2018)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b364) find that internally displaced persons who returned home after **the Burundian civil war had 6% less calorie intake and 5% less food expenses than the average Burundian.**

Reduced food consumption and poor dietary variation have a detrimental effect on the nutritional status of the population, whose intensity and duration depends on the vulnerability of affected groups. Children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable ([Corley, 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b110)). Studies of the effect of conflict exposure on child nutritional status often apply anthropometric indicators, including wasting, stunting and underweight, and largely find an association between conflict exposure and malnutrition ([Acharya et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b5), [Akresh, Lucchetti, and Thirumurthy, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b20), [Arcand et al., 2015](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b28), [Brown et al., 2021](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b74), [Dahab et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b115), [Kinyoki et al., 2017](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b218), [Tranchant et al., 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b354)). Studying the armed conflict in Côte d’Ivoire, [Minoiu and Shemyakina (2014)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b255) find large health setbacks for children exposed to conflict, **with height-for-age z-scores on average between 0.2 and 0.4 standard deviations lower for children living in conflict regions compared to same-age children living outside conflict regions.** [Akresh, Caruso, and Thirumurthy (2022)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b19) investigate the link between war exposure and child health in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and find that conflict-exposed children have significantly lower height-for-age. Children that live nearest to conflict bear the brunt of impacts, experiencing a decrease in **the height-for-age ratio that vary from 0.72 (in Ethiopia) to 1.37 standard deviation (in Eritrea). In a study of 56 developing countries,** [**Le and Nguyen (2022)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b228) **find that children exposed to conflicts are on average 6.6% shorter for their age, 11% thinner for their height, and 9% thinner for their age compared to unexposed children.**

The impacts of conflict on children’s food security persist after the conflict end, with long-term physical and mental consequences ([Alderman, Hoddinott, & Kinsey, 2006](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b21)). Focusing on the Nigerian civil war, [Akresh et al. (2012)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b17) identify long-term impacts four decades after the war. They find that individuals exposed to war in early life have reduced stature in adulthood, reduced life expectancy and lower earnings compared to those not exposed to conflict early in life. Studies show that maternal stress and health is an important pathway linking armed conflict to negative health impacts on children that were exposed to war in utero or in early childhood ([Camacho, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b85), [Mansour and Rees, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b242)). Also, there is robust support for the negative impacts of nutritional inefficiencies on both short and long-term physical and cognitive development, influencing factors such as height and schooling ([Akresh et al., 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b17), [Akresh et al., 2022](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b19)).

As these examples illustrate, conflict impacts on food security may be amplified by interactions across multiple developmental dimensions. For example, armed conflicts lead to the destruction of farmland and loss of livelihoods ([Kafando & Sakurai, 2024](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b208)). This, in turn, can lower income and increase poverty, as farming becomes less efficient or impossible, while transactional costs of maintaining land and selling agricultural products increase ([Adejala & George, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b6)). Loss of livelihoods heightens barriers to produce food and earn an income to buy it ([d’Hôtel et al., 2023](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b126)). Loss of income opportunities may force households to sell assets as a short-term coping strategy, but also leads to long-term impoverishment and reduces households’ ability to purchase food in the future ([Rockmore, 2020](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b296)). Armed conflict are also conducive of lower investments, market closures and reduced trade, which cause spikes in food prices. Lack of available goods leads to inflation, making food unaffordable for many ([Brück, d’Errico, & Pietrelli, 2019](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b76)).

Violence can lead to large-scale displacement, creating refugee populations who are dependent on humanitarian aid, and whose ability to produce or access food in a new environment is limited ([Bozzoli et al., 2016](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b70), [Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2013](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b305)). Displacement also has long-term impacts on consumption. **Studying calorie intake among Burundian refugees,** [**Verwimp and Muñoz-Mora (2018)**](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b364) **find that it would take 8–10 years for the gap between displaced and non-displaced households to close.** Lastly, conflicts erode state institutions, which in turn disrupts agricultural policies, food security programmes, and social safety nets designed to support food-insecure populations ([Justino, 2012](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X24002766#b205)).

Over the past years, quantitative research on food and conflict has expanded rapidly across disciplines. However, there is considerable theoretical and empirical room for a better understanding of multiple underlying and context-specific mechanisms linking conflict to food insecurity. Causally identifying these processes is vital to better inform policy making and to tackle the mounting challenges of increasing food insecurity levels on a global scale.

[PMC, Sep 8, 2018, Wagner, *Armed Conflict and Morality in Africa*, [NIH PMC](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6338336/)]

We analyzed 15,441 armed conflict events that led to 968,444 armed conflict deaths, 1.99 million births, and 133,361 infant deaths (infant mortality rate of 67 deaths per 1,000 births). A child born within 50km of an armed conflict had a risk of dying before reaching age one of 5.2 per 1,000 births higher than being born *in the same region* during periods without conflict (95% CI 3.7-6.7; a 7.7% increase above baseline). This ranged from 3.0% increase for armed conflicts with 1-4 deaths to 26.7% increase for armed conflicts with >1,000 deaths. We find evidence of increased mortality risk from an armed conflict up to 100 km away, and for 8 years after conflicts, with cumulative increase in infant mortality 2-4 times higher than the contemporaneous increase. In the entire continent, the number of infant deaths related to conflict from 1995 to 2015 were between 3.2 and 3.6 times the number of direct deaths from armed conflicts.