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Research interests

Applied microeconomics, development economics, international economics, political economy

References

David Levine	Thomas Crossley	Saumitra Jha
European University Institute	European University Institute	Stanford GSB
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Education

European University Institute	2017 - PRESENT
Ph.D. in Economics	
Expected completion date: Spring 2023	
Stanford University	2022
Visiting scholar	
European University Institute	2017 - 2018
M.Res. in Economics	
VU University	2015 - 2016
M.Sc. in Economics	
Specialization: International and macroeconomic policy	
University of Amsterdam	2009 - 2012
B.Sc. in Communication Science	

Additional coursework & short visits

University of Lausanne	2021
Short visit to Prof. Dominic Rohner	
Max Planck Institute	2021
Summer School on the Political Economy of Conflict and Redistribution	
European University Institute	2019
Introduction to Teaching in Higher Education	
Leidse Onderwijs Instellingen	2016 - 2017
Mathematics and Statistics	
Stanford University	2014
Intensive program, International Management	

Teaching experience

New York University International Economics, Teaching Assistant for Prof. Giampiero Gallo	2019 - 2020
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Research and professional experience

Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies Academic Assistant for David Levine	2020
Dutch Central Bank Research Assistant for Iman van Lelyveld	2017
VU University Junior Researcher, Sociology department	2016 - 2017
VU University Research Assistant for Steven Poelhekke, Economics department	2016
LeasePlan Corporation Various corporate communication roles	2012 - 2015

Conference and seminar presentations

Stanford University Development Economics Seminar, Annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference (MPSA)	2022
University of Lausanne Public Economics and Policy Seminar, International Economics, Workshop of the Households in Conflict Network on Conflict, Migration, and Displacement, 3rd International Conference on Globalization and Development, XXIII Applied Economics Meeting (ALdE), Canadian Economic Association Conference, 69th Annual Meeting of the French Economic Association, 91st International Atlantic Economic Conference	2021
EUI Microeconometrics Working Group	2020

Academic service

Referee: European Economic Review

Grants and scholarships

Department Visiting Grant (EUI)	2021
Early Stage Research Grant (EUI)	2020
Ph.D. Completion Grant (EUI)	2020
Ph.D. Scholarship (Nuffic)	2017 - 2020

Other

Software: R, Stata, MATLAB, QGis, L^AT_EX.

Languages: Dutch (native), English (fluent), German (Advanced), Italian (basic), French (basic)

Education during conflict: the effect of territorial occupation by insurgents on schooling

This paper estimates short and long-run effects of exposure to territorial occupation by insurgents on behavioral change, using evidence from the temporary occupation of territory in Nigeria by Boko Haram. Exploiting the anti-educational rule the group imposed in their territory, behavior is measured through school participation among children. The effects are estimated using a difference-in-differences approach, comparing children exposed to the insurgency with children exposed to both the insurgency and occupation. The results show immediate and persistent changes in behavior following the occupation: children exposed to Boko Haram's occupation accumulate 0.96 fewer years of schooling during, and are 30 percent less likely to attend school after, the occupation. Those sharing a social identity with the insurgents, facing heightened social pressure to conform, or that are exposed to enforcement of the anti-educational rule are most affected. Well-documented mechanisms linking conflict to education do not explain the effects.

Publications

Estimating the Alliance Effect: a Synthetic Control Approach *Defence Studies*, 2022.

In a time of rising threat, recurring discussions about burden sharing within NATO and almost twenty years after the start of the 'war on terrorism', I explore a novel idea in the field of alliance and defense spending: the effect of alliance-membership on defense spending in response to a threat. This paper focuses on two types of states (small and large) and how alliance membership shapes their response to threat. Using the synthetic control method, I find that both types of states have stronger (positive) response to threat as NATO members, compared to if they would not have been part of the alliance.

Work in progress

- **Cultivation and competition in Colombia: disentangling the effects of coca price changes on violence.** *Under review. This research was supported by an Early Stage Research Grant.*

Evidence indicates that the presence of coca in Colombian municipalities increases violence, while changes to the price of coca products can have both negative and positive effects on conflict. Using novel data on local prices of coca products, production and supply chains, I disentangle returns to employment in the agricultural and in the criminal sector and examine the effects of changes to these returns. I find suggestive evidence that higher income for cultivators leads to higher school attendance rates; but increasing returns in the criminal sector leads to school dropout rates, more violence, and increased competition among armed groups.

- **The Olympic effect: fact or fiction?** (with Mustafa Kaba). *Under review.*

Hosting the Olympic Games implies tremendous costs and uncertain profits, yet countries historically have been striving to host this mega event and bidding decisively. More recently though, countries are withdrawing their bids from the election procedure. This puzzling historical interest in hosting the games and the recent trend of withdrawals cast doubt on the existence of the so-called Olympic effect: the positive impact of the Olympics on international trade. In this paper, we estimate the Olympic effect on long-term exports using the synthetic control method. We show that the Olympic effect is more pronounced for countries that stand to gain from an international publicity. The results also present the novel insight that a substantial positive Olympic effect is only associated with earlier games.

- **Reputation Signalling and Exports in Contract-Intensive Industries** (with Mustafa Kaba)
Reputation plays a crucial role in business and trade. In this paper, we argue that contract-intensive industries are more likely to suffer from a reputation trap due to their heavy reliance on relationship-specific inputs that are otherwise not sold on exchange. We then argue that a way out of this trap is to have a third-party organization signalling reputation on behalf of them. We test the effectiveness of this strategy using the Olympics Games as an instrument to signal reputation and to increase the export levels of contract-intensive industries. We find that hosting the Olympics lead to 20% increase in the exports of these industries compared to non-contract-intensive industries.

- **Shocks to international food prices: food security in sub-Saharan Africa**

Extreme poverty is increasingly concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected situations and linked to food insecurity. This project aims to exploit the international fluctuations in the prices of various food products to examine local effects on food security and violence.

- **It was better back in my day: heterogeneity in support for democracy** (with Tuuli Tähtinen)

This project focuses on explaining significant heterogeneity across age groups with respect to support for democracy and electoral participation, and considers to what extent (violent) protests and exposure to conflict can explain these differences.

- **Religious violence and the spread of ideology**

This project focuses on the question of whether being confronted with sets of ideas, convictions and ideologies – such as religion – through conflict leads to shifts in the (reported) religion of individuals. Such an alignment could be either due to a genuine shift in preferences or strategic, as individuals try to avoid potential retaliation. I compare violence carried out by self-representing religious militias to violence carried out by groups that do not align themselves with a religion.