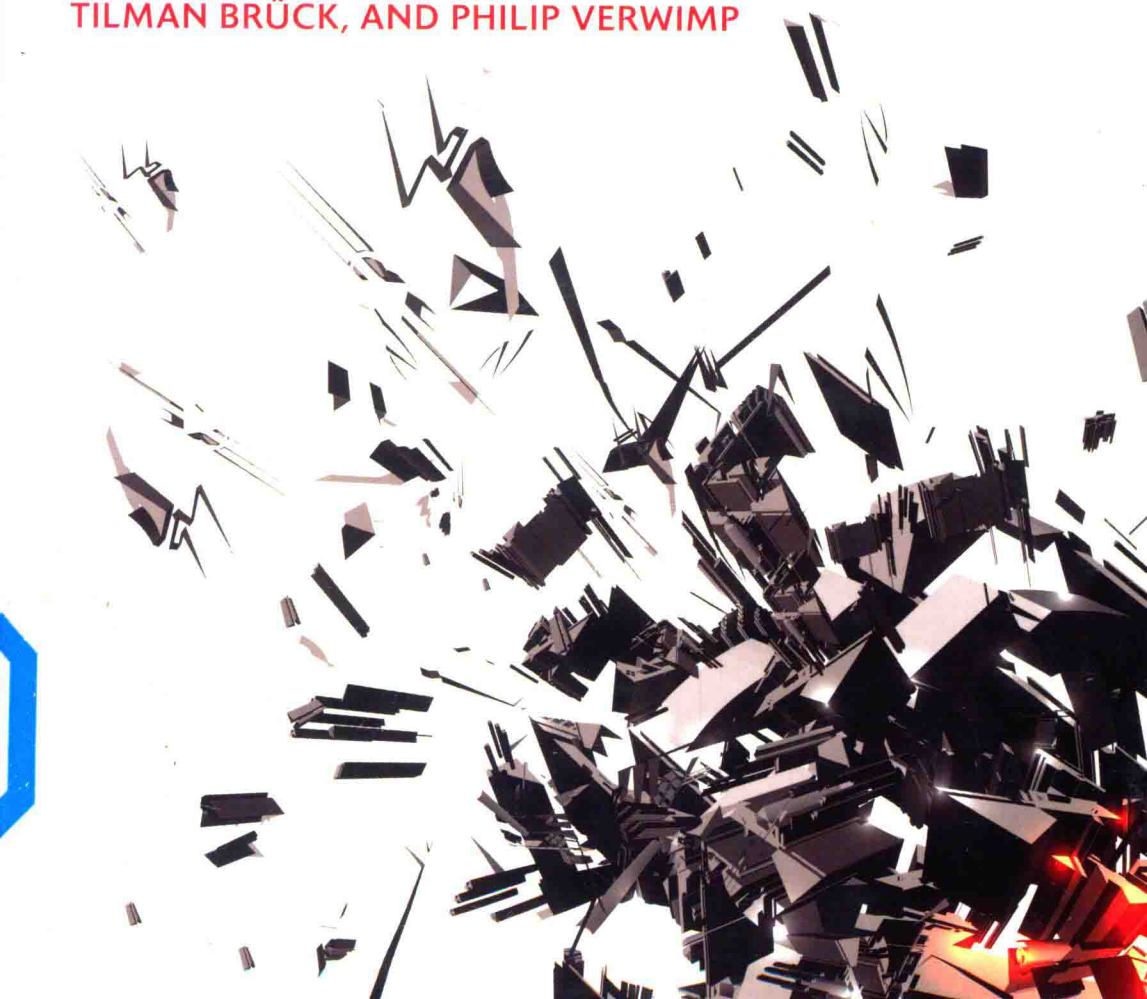


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A Micro-Level Perspective on the Dynamics of Conflict, Violence, and Development

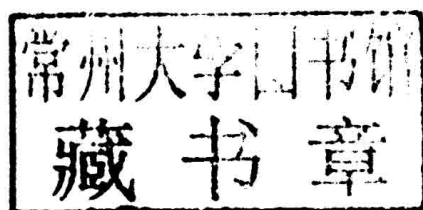
EDITED BY PATRICIA JUSTINO,
TILMAN BRÜCK, AND PHILIP VERWIMP



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and Philip Verwimp



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A Micro-Level Perspective on the Dynamics of Conflict, Violence, and Development

Foreword

This volume contains the findings of a remarkable research project, conducted by a consortium of twenty-four research institutes from around the world, supplying us with data on the dynamics and impact of violent conflict in over twenty conflict locations. Its main focus is on how conflict affects the behaviour of individuals and households and, reciprocally, how the behaviour of those individuals and households impacts on conflict. This volume does much to move an already thriving research programme on internal conflict forward.

The focus on individuals and households is important for a number of reasons. Traditionally, the study of conflict has focused on abstract, aggregate entities such as states and various collectivities, including ethnic groups and social classes. This focus is important, both because conflict is a collective process but also because it represents a useful intellectual shortcut, allowing us to formulate narratives that capture the main dynamics of the processes under study, without having to model all its complex aspects or collect hard-to-get data at the individual level. And yet, at the same time, this approach also suffers from some serious conceptual and empirical shortcomings. Conceptually, the aggregate categories which stand at the centre of the analysis may misrepresent a reality that is much more fluid than we wish to recognize; empirically, the preferences and choices of individuals making up these groups may not correspond to the choices and preferences of the aggregations that stand at the centre of that analysis. If anything, our understanding of the collective-action problem has made us apprehensive about whether individual preferences aggregate into collective action.

Until recently, such concerns were brushed aside since data about individuals was unavailable or too hard to generate, and the actual processes underlying individual choices and action were thought to be too complex. As a result, researchers either focused on a few select individuals (particularly, leaders) or created highly stylized individual preferences and choices, derived either from the proclamations of leaders or groups claiming to

represent large populations, or from arbitrary assumptions, unrelated to empirical reality.

Fortunately, the lack of data has ceased to be a problem, as this volume shows. We are now in a much better position to know how actual individuals and households operate during conflicts, as well as in times that precede and follow these conflicts. This knowledge is bound to shape not just our empirical understanding of conflict but also, and more fundamentally, our theories. For example, it will no longer be necessary to make indefensible or unsupported assumptions about why individuals join, say, an insurgent group. Instead, we will be able to map the entire range of behaviours (and perhaps even infer the motivations that are attached to them) that lead individuals to join organizations. More importantly, we will uncover quite a lot of variation both across and within conflicts, and across both time and space to generate new research questions and test them. Clearly, this is a tremendous achievement. But is it the whole story? As is often the case in every field of scientific endeavour—and even more in the social sciences—the answer is negative: the more we know, the more we realize we do not. Indeed, the data we have collected, while growing exponentially, constitutes a very small proportion of the actual population; more importantly, we can't yet infer from our sample to the general population, because ours is just a convenience sample. But even if we were flooded with data, it would be impossible simply to data-mine our way to a better understanding of human behaviour in conditions of conflict.

So, what are the steps that lie ahead of us? We obviously need more data—and from more conflict environments, both present and past ones. Data accumulation will help us to figure out what the distribution of behaviours looks like, in particular which types of behaviour tend to be common across conflicts and which ones are not, which ones display heterogeneity that is systematic, and which ones are merely idiosyncratic. Next, we should be able to produce new inductive generalizations to match this variation as well and deductive stylizations that explain puzzles and are used to infer unobserved or observationally equivalent behaviours. Let me offer an epistemological conjecture here. It is likely that the level of analysis where a lot of this work will be performed will be neither the macro nor the micro level per se, but the meso level, consisting of organizations that mobilize individual and collective actors and produce policy and strategy. Currently, this is a missing field since the macro level deals primarily with large or fuzzy entities (states, ethnic groups, or stylized groups) and the micro level with individuals and households, or local-level entities. However, organizations are neither creations of the larger entities nor aggregations of the individual ones; they have

their own identity and structure, operate with relative autonomy from both the macro and micro levels, but can shape outcomes at both the macro and the micro level. We are now at a point where we have strong theoretical priors about the macro level and excellent, emerging data and intuitions about the micro level, so the meso level is most probably where the two research agendas will meet.

Stathis N. Kalyvas

collective violence, led by Frances Stewart at the University of Oxford in the UK, (ii) social, economic, and political processes of collective violence grounded in the emergence of new group identities or the solidification and/or transformation of old group identities, directed by Michael Emerson at CEPS in Brussels, (iii) the differentiation between male and female perceptions of conflict, and ways in which they participate in conflict and in peace at community level, led by Colette Harris at the University of East Anglia in the UK, (iv) displacement processes in regions of origin and the societal position of forced migrants in the EU, led by Roger Zetter at the University of Oxford; (v) the mechanisms developed by individuals and households to deal with risk and forms of insecurity caused by violent conflicts, and how these coping strategies impact on the resolution of existing conflicts or the onset of new violence, directed by Philip Verwimp at ECARES in Belgium, (vi) the circular causal relationship between violent mass conflicts and the poverty, deprivation, and social exclusion of individuals and groups, directed by Julie Litchfield at the University of Sussex in the UK, (vii) the links between violent mass conflicts and individual health outcomes, led by Debby Guha-Sapir at the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters in Brussels and Olivier Degomme at the University of Ghent, and (viii) the relationship between institutional structures and violent conflict, including strategies of risk management at the grassroots level and the role of civil society organizations and traditional forms of leadership in conflict processes, led by Koen Vlassenroot at the University of Ghent in Belgium. These work packages were brought together in two policy work streams focusing on European and international policy-making processes directed, respectively, by Nathalie Tocci at the Institute of International Affairs in Rome and Tilman Brück currently at SIPRI in Stockholm. This volume discusses the main findings in these research sub-programmes.

MICROCON was the result of the efforts and collaboration of a team of over sixty researchers based in 24 different research institutions. In addition to the work-stream directors, other long-term researchers in MICROCON included Karel Arnaut at the University of Ghent, Sophia Bildhaeuser at UNU-EHS, Ingunn Bjørkhaug at Fafo, Janos Bogardi at Fafo, Amel Boubekur at CEPS, Carlos Bozzoli at DIW Berlin, Tom Bundervoet at ECARES in Brussels, Olivia D'Aoust at CRED, Adeline Delavande at the Nova University in Lisbon, Gyongyver Demeny at the University of Rouen, Elodie Douarin at the University of Sussex, Christian Geiselmann at DVV International in Bulgaria, Margarita Gafaro Gonzalez at the University of Los Andes in Colombia, Yvan Guichaoua at the University of Oxford, Jaideep Gupte at the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton, Ana Maria Ibáñez at the University of Los Andes in Colombia, Vanya Ivanova at DVV International, Silvia Jarauta at the University of Alicante in Spain, Kathleen Jennings at Fafo, Teodora

Karamelska at DVV International, Fredrick Immanuel Kindia at Makerere University in Uganda, Daliela Kovela at DVV International, Johanna Kramm at UNU-EHS, Moshe Lavie at the University of Cergy-Pontoise in France, Els Lecoutere at the University of Ghent, Anna Lindley at the University of Oxford, Nona Mikhelidze at the Institute of International Affairs in Rome, Roman Mikhelidze at the Centre for Economic and Social Research in Kyrgyzstan, Tony Muhumuza at DIW Berlin, Christophe Müller at the University of Alicante, Deborah Mulumba at Makerere University, Eleonora Nillesen at DIW Berlin, Eria Olowo Onyango at Makerere University, Timothy Raeymaekers at the University of Ghent, Marioara Rusu at the Institute of Agricultural Economics in Romania, Rachel Sabates-Wheeler at the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton, Sandip Sakar at the Institute of Human Development in India, Jeremy Seekings at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, Mark Taylor at Fao, Jean-Pierre Tranchant at the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton, Els Vanheusden at DIW Berlin, Puja Vasudeva Dutta at the Institute of Human Development in India, Ruth Vollmer at UNU-EHS, Marc Vothknecht at DIW Berlin, Nina Wald at DIW Berlin, and Lars Wirkus at UNU-EHS. We are extremely grateful for their participation in the programme, and their immense creativity, hard work, and commitment in generating the research findings discussed in this volume. We are also grateful to many others who have participated in the MICROCON programme through various short-term visits, research collaborations, the MICROCON summer schools and its various meetings, conferences, and workshops. We are in particular thankful for the work and support of MICROCON's Advisory Board. This was chaired by Lawrence Haddad, the director of the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton, and included Eddy Boutmans, former Secretary of State for Development Cooperation in the Belgian Government (1999–2003), Zoe Nielsen at Simon Fraser University in Canada, Peter Uvin at Tufts University, and Stathis Kalyvas, the director of the Program on Order, Conflict and Violence at Yale University.

MICROCON would not have been possible without the fantastic support provided by the European Commission. We are particularly grateful to Angela Liberatore for her incredibly encouraging support, constructive comments, close engagement, and most of all her belief in the project and unfaltering commitment to it throughout its five and half years.

And, last but not least, we would like to heartily thank the people who really made MICROCON happen, and sustained the programme every day for five and half years. Theresa Jennings supported the initial MICROCON proposal, set up the programme and organized all administrative structures during the first two years of MICROCON. Her fantastic work was taken over by Becky Mitchell, who has managed MICROCON until August 2012, relentlessly and with incredible commitment. The very successful dissemination

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and communication structures of MICROCON were set up and implemented by John Spall and taken over by Freida McComarck in the last year. We are very grateful to their work and dedication—we could not have done it without you!

Almost nine years have passed since we first conceived MICROCON and the research network that gave rise to it, the Households in Conflict Network. Numerous research collaborations and parallel research projects have enriched MICROCON, the Households in Conflict Network, and our own research work. However, we would not have managed without the support and patience of our partners, Bogdan, Marta, and Gilberte, through the preparation, inception, and development of MICROCON and HiCN, endless conference calls, meetings and mad uncertainty, at the same time that the three of us became parents for the first time to Xavi, Amália, Eliana, Lucas, and Tobias. This book is dedicated to them.

Patricia Justino
Tilman Brück
Philip Verwimp
13 February 2013

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List of Contributors

Chiara Altare was born in Italy and is currently research fellow at the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), at the Université catholique de Louvain. She trained in development economics at the Institute of Social Studies and in public health at the Université catholique de Louvain. She works on the impact of conflict and complex emergencies on population health, with focus on malnutrition and food security. She also provides technical assistance and capacity building to field agencies to improve health and nutrition data quality. She is acquiring her doctoral degree investigating the impact of humanitarian interventions on the health status of populations affected by complex emergencies.

Carlos Bozzoli is a development economist and is affiliated with Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His research focuses on the economic analysis of conflict and crime, and also on the interrelationship between health and economic development. Previously, he was a Senior Researcher at DIW Berlin from 2007 till 2011. He has participated as lead researcher for different international organizations. He holds a PhD in economics from Princeton University.

Tilman Brück is a development economist and the Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). His research interests include the interrelationship between security and development, the economics of post-war reconstruction, and the economics of terrorism and insecurity, especially as they concern the behaviour and well-being of individuals and households. Tilman Brück is also developing new tools for measuring conflict exposure in individual and household surveys in conflict-affected areas. He is a co-founder and co-director of the Households in Conflict Network and a founding member of the Global Young Academy. He has also worked as an advisor and consultant for numerous governments and international organizations.

José Cuesta is a Senior Economist at the World Bank and an Affiliated Professor at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University. Previously, he taught development economics at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, and worked as Research Economist for UNDP and the Inter-American Development Bank. He has advised numerous governments on social policies and has extensive operational experience from social development projects in Latin America. His research interests include development economics, poverty and social protection, crime and conflict, and the analytics of public policy. He has published numerous articles on those topics in international academic journals and is currently co-editor of the European Journal of Development Research.

Olivia D'Aoust is a research fellow of the National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS) and a PhD student in economics at the European Centre for Advanced Research in Economics and Statistics (ECARES), Université libre de Bruxelles, under the supervision of Professor Bram De Rock and Professor Philip Verwimp. She holds masters degrees in economics and in demography from the Université catholique de Louvain (2008 and 2012). She is writing her PhD on the economics of post-war reconstruction programmes in Burundi. Olivia is particularly interested in demography, public health, and development economics in conflict settings, and in the impact evaluation of public programmes.

Michael Emerson has since 1998 been Associate Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Brussels, where he has been programme director for European foreign, security, and neighbourhood policies. He is a graduate of Balliol College, Oxford. Michael worked first as an economist at OECD, Paris, from 1966–73. In 1973 he joined the European Commission, holding several positions including Economic Adviser to the President, Roy Jenkins, (1977–8), and of Head of Delegation/Ambassador to the USSR and Russia (1991–6). Upon leaving the Commission he was initially Senior Research Fellow at the London School of Economics (1996–8), before joining CEPS. He has published widely on EU economic and monetary integration, EU relations with the wider European neighbourhood, contemporary European conflict areas, and EU foreign and security policy.

Debarati Guha-Sapir was born in India and is currently full professor at the Université catholique de Louvain. She studied epidemiology at Johns Hopkins University and Université catholique de Louvain, from where she got her doctorate degree. She directs the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) specializing in the epidemiology of disasters and conflicts. Her research is largely field-based in disaster-prone areas. Her work has been a mix of academic publishing, policy, and field support. She founded the international reference disaster database EMDAT and is currently setting up a global system for civil conflicts data (CEDAT). She writes frequently in international newspapers and is actively engaged with national governments and major donors to change policy and improve the impact of humanitarian aid. She was recently elected a member of the Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique and received the Peter Safar Award from the World Association of Disaster and Emergency Medicine.

Yvan Guichaoua is a lecturer in politics and international development at the University of East Anglia. He was formerly a research fellow at the universities of Oxford and Yale. Yvan Guichaoua's main area of research is the analysis of irregular armed groups' dynamics in contemporary West Africa.

Colette Harris is a senior lecturer in conflict, governance, and development in the School of International Development, University of East Anglia. Her main research interests lie in the intersection between power, gender identities, violent conflict, and religion. However, she also designs and implements innovative community-based education programmes and studies their impact, particularly with the aim of producing post-conflict psycho-social rehabilitation. She has carried out research in all three continents of the global south, mainly in post-conflict settings, with special emphasis

on West and East Africa and Central Asia. She has published two monographs on gender issues in Central Asia—*Control and Subversion* (Pluto Press, 2004) and *Muslim Youth* (Westview Press, 2006)—as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters.

Ana María Ibáñez Londoño is an associate professor and the Chair of the Department of Economics at Universidad de los Andes. Ana María studied for a masters degree and PhD in agricultural and resource economics from the University of Maryland at College Park. Professor Ibáñez's research studies the economic consequences of internal conflict, in particular the costs of war and conflict upon the civil population. Her research has been published in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *Journal of Development Studies*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *International Regional Science Review*, *World Development*, *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, and *Economía*. In 2008, she published a book on the economic consequences of forced displacement in Colombia.

Patricia Justino is the director of MICROCON and co-founder and co-director of the Households in Conflict Network. Since June 2010, Patricia has convened the Conflict, Violence and Development cluster, part of the Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction Team at the Institute of Development Studies. She is a development economist specializing in applied microeconomics. Her current research work focuses on the impact of violence and conflict on household welfare and local institutional structures, the microfoundations of violent conflict, and the implications of violence for economic development. Other research interests include the measurement of multidimensional inequality and poverty and their effects on social development and economic growth, the measurement and modelling of poverty (static and dynamic), the role of social security and redistribution on economic growth and household welfare, and the impact of economic shocks on household income mobility. Patricia has led several research projects funded by the British Academy, DFID, the European Commission, the ESRC, FAO, the Leverhulme Trust, UNDP, UNESCO, UN Women, and the World Bank.

Julie Litchfield is a development economist and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Economics, University of Sussex. Her work focuses on poverty and inequality in developing and transition countries, mostly concerning agriculture, rural development, and migration, and more recently, tenure security and reform.

Syed Mansoob Murshed is Professor of the Economics of Conflict and Peace at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of the Erasmus University, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, and is also Professor of Economics at Coventry University in the UK. He is also affiliated with the Peace Research Institute at Oslo (PRIO). He was the first holder of the rotating Prince Claus Chair in Development and Equity in 2003. He was formerly at the World Institute of Development Economics Research (WIDER). He is the author of 7 books and over 120 refereed journal papers and book chapters. His latest book, published in 2010, is *Explaining Civil War* (Edward Elgar).

Andrea Purdekova is a senior teaching fellow at the Department of Development Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, where she convenes, lectures, and tutors on the course 'Introduction to Global Forced Migration'. Andrea holds a DPhil in Development Studies from Oxford (2011), an