

HiCN Households in Conflict Network

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Identifying Conflict and its Effects Using Micro-Level Surveys

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⇒ **all also at the Households in Conflict Network**

Select Bibliography

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Aim and Motivation

Aim of my presentation

- to discuss how the collection of micro-level surveys can be augmented to account better for mass violent conflict

Why bother?

- either study “conflict” as a topic in its own right
- or control for “conflict” in the analysis to avoid bias
- ⇒ either way, data is needed to account for conflict

To measure or to identify?

- conflict traditionally has been unobservable
- hence measure effects of conflict (eg battle deaths)
- but, to truly open black box, we should identify conflict itself
- ⇒ hence measure conflict and its direct and indirect effects

Definition of War and Conflict

War

=

Mass violent conflict

=

Systematic challenge to right and ability of the state to define and implement property rights (“institutions”)

Use terms war, mass violent conflict and conflict interchangeably

Identifying Conflict: Concepts (1)

Economic analysis in times of peace

- exogenous factors and endowments
 - ⇒ behavior by agents
 - ⇒ outcomes, eg welfare
- assume that property rights are well defined and protected

Economic analysis in times of conflict

- exogenous factors and endowments
 - ⇒ mass violent conflict
 - ⇒ behavior by agents
 - (perhaps: ⇒ mass violent conflict)
 - ⇒ outcomes, eg welfare

What are we trying to measure here?

- conflict? conflict-affected behavior? conflict-affected outcomes?

Identifying Conflict: Concepts (2)

Conflict analysis 1.0

	Conflict Zone	Not Conflict Zone
Households Affected by Conflict	direct victims, incl. civilian casualties	indirect victims, eg returned IDPs
Households Not Affected by Conflict	indirect victims, eg farmers	reference group

Conflict analysis 2.0

- differentiate causes, nature and effects of conflict across groups, space and time - including by victims and perpetrators
- much more data-intensive

Identifying Conflict: Concepts (3)

Measurement of participation in conflict

- this requires additional information
- may be hard to elicit truthful responses

Measurement of victimization

- victims of conflict are not usually randomly chosen
- hence study their conflict-relevant identity
- this must be multi-dimensional: political, social, economic and other factors (probably a mix of all is relevant)
- there are strong ethical implications to ask questions on individual victimization (eg about sexual violence in war)

Measurement of nature of conflict (and its legacy)

- this matters hugely for study of its effects
- perhaps this differentiates conflict from, eg, HIV
- hence harder to develop a standard set of questions

Identifying Conflict: Challenges (1)

Identification

- direct versus indirect effects of war can rarely be traced in surveys
- hence in the past often focus on conflict as a shock (easy to measure!)
- eg death: killed in action or died due to poor medical services

Boundaries

- What is individual, household or community “shock”?
- especially with expectations: one action may affect all households

Location

- aim to specify where conflict occurred
- develop maps of conflict (geo-coding data?)

Intensity and other characteristics

- measure severity and nature of conflict and its component elements

Identifying Conflict: Challenges (2)

Conflict dynamics

- trace events across space and time
- do not measure conflict as a singular shock - rather study conflict cycle

Selection bias

- most conflict action cannot be measured contemporaneously
- ex post measurement suffers from recall error and attrition

Crime versus conflict

- what is difference between looting in war and theft due to high insecurity (eg cattle rustling)?

Linkages with related topics

- measurement of conflict links with measurement of political institution, groups, identity, crime, violence etc

Identifying Conflict: Approaches (1)

Types of conflict questions

- questions about direct effects of conflict (eg asset destruction)
- questions about indirect effects of conflict (eg displacement)
- most basic option: include additional, conflict-relevant answer codes (eg why did you loose this cattle?)

Conflict module or integration of conflict questions?

- conflict module may help to focus
- may help to achieve comparability across surveys
- perhaps better for tracing conflict events and direct effects, less useful for causes and indirect effects
- beware of varying local circumstances
- response rates in separate conflict modules may be lower

Identifying Conflict: Approaches (2)

Conflict-survey versus “normal” surveys

- on the one hand: addition of conflict dimension as a rich source of information in the context of a multi-topic, multi-module survey
- on the other hand: smaller scale, single-topic surveys on conflict can go into more depth
- here the focus is on large scale surveys like LSMS or DHS

Cross-sectional versus panel surveys

- normally, LSMS and DHS are cross-sectional surveys
- much can be learned from them if a few select conflict questions (or answer codes) are added
- for understanding conflict dynamics and dynamics of coping with conflict, panel data with conflict questions in all waves are needed
- this is still a key gap on the literature! (eg survey in Lebanon)

Identifying Conflict: Levels of Analysis

Individual

- randomly selected individuals in household or all individuals (roster)
- also to account for intra-household issues
- especially shocks: death, disability, disease, dislocation, destruction
- also: activities, outcomes and expectations
- could ask about group identification here (eg ethnicity)

Identifying Conflict: Levels of Analysis

Household

- head or other member of household responds on behalf of household
- beware of shifting definitions and compositions of households in times of conflict and over time (and space)
- shocks, access to services and markets, investments, land access and use, social relations and networks

Identifying Conflict: Levels of Analysis

Community

- ask knowledgeable member of community or focus groups
- or aggregate up from individual or household responses
- also focus on policy activities (especially reconstruction)

Identifying Conflict: Priorities

1. Identify conflict-induced losses and damages

- human capital, physical assets, infrastructure etc

2. Identify effects of conflict on people

- changes in coping strategies (“doing”)
- changes in welfare, including food security (“being”)

3. Identify effects of conflict on infrastructure and markets

- including trust, social capital, exchange etc

⇒ **Account for pre-war, war-time and post-war periods**

Thank you for your attention!