

# HiCN Households in Conflict Network

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## **Second HiCN Workshop Summary of Discussions: The Unit of Analysis and the Micro-Level Dynamics of Violent Conflict**

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**First Key Note Speech**  
**Debby Bonnin**

**Researching Political Violence: Reflecting on the 'War' between Inkatha and the UDF in Natal's Urban Townships, South Africa**

- A popular data source is newspaper reports. However, newspaper reports often suffer from severe inaccuracies. People talk about events differently to what was reported in newspapers. When DB explored this topic further, there were problems with newspapers with reporters not understanding facts correctly and not reporting accurately, for example, referring to different names for the same person.
- The common stereotypes were that UDF supporters were young, male and modern, while Inkatha supporters were supposed to be older, from rural areas. These stereotypes didn't stick when DB interviewed in the area, an important outcome resulting from the interviews. The interviews also uncovered a higher level of sexual violence and rape than other accounts suggested. Accounts of the violence give it an economic tone but DB used TRC records which showed the involvement of military involvement to stoke the violence. Existing accounts presented women only as victims to the violence, and not as active participants. However, focus groups and interviews conducted by DB provided a better insight into the (sometimes) multiple roles women had during this period.
- Research ethics in the field: Were there any problems in the focus groups with participants betraying their interests, and how did power dynamics play a role? In the focus groups, no-one would talk about anyone they knew. After this period, young women spoke of being sexually available to their comrades to show alliance. This outcome only showed after the first interview with focus groups had passed. People would rather be silent than betray. If they would have betrayed others, they would have been left out. The focus groups involved different people to those of the interviews. Also, the backgrounds of the focus group participants were unknown, so a lot of stories told are devoid of their history.
- There is an importance of place but is there also importance with the layout within the place? While place was important, there was also a territorial aspect. By the end of the period, the township was clearly defined into Inkatha areas and UDF areas, so DB was also interested in neighbourhoods. Other neighbourhood dynamics included economic success, neighbours' jealousy, and accusations of women being witches resulting in having their houses burnt. Some men went to school together and then developed different political views and friends were pressured not to associate with friends on the opposite side. Intimate relations increased tension of violence.
- Does this in depth knowledge of context help to understand other situations? The deep knowledge of context enables a researcher to ask questions. There are common themes and broad commonalities between different situations.

- Was there more violence directed at outsiders?  
In townships, it was predominantly intra-community but sometimes they would bus people in or go out of the township to source arms. Sometimes it was townships against townships. In Johannesburg, the dynamics were very different to this township, but broader commonalities were present.
- Was there any effect of the race of the researcher? There were advantages and disadvantages. UDF were 'non-racial'. What was most important was that DB had been politically active and involved. Communities in general were more hostile towards intellectuals and in particular white academic intellectuals. They want to know what you are doing with this knowledge as, they claimed to have seen many others come and go but nothing change.

### **First Session: Household Formation and Composition**

Presenters: Tom de Herdt and Olga Shemyakina

- A statistical analysis based on the household is difficult as the criterion 'eat from one pot' is not so clear because men eat separately, often with women eating earlier. The normative unit of analysis should be the individual. Using the household, one often gets information on the household head only, with no detail on other adults within the household. Regarding representivity, households in this area represent this area but also capture phenomena of a larger area.
- There is a lot of literature on hidden households (e.g. how do people deal with hardship?) and a lot of literature on child fostering, where children don't live with their parents. There needs to be a comparison between the own children in the household and the 'hidden' children.
- Why were controls not included in the regression? Cash transfers to the family have not been successful in Colombia, against long-term malnourishment. Controls were included on household income but more could be included, such as literacy status/level.

Is there any deal or negotiation with the mother going back to her own family – is there much discussion on this? This paper looked at malnourishment, would results be the same when looking at education? Need to look in more detail at the mother to enrich the data and analysis in this way.

### **Discussion of Olga Shemyakina's presentation**

- The 'normal' ratio of men/women is close to one. A change in the birth rate affects the ratio of 'marriage ready men'/'marriage ready women' due to the age gap between 'marriage ready men' and 'marriage ready women'.
- Conflict has been used here to explain actions and events that were the result of other factors. Not everything can be explained by conflict; these other factors need to be taken into account. The quality of the man is the least

considered factor in Tajikistan. When considering marriage, the mother of the man looks at the woman and the parents of the woman look at the man's family. Here, qualitative data is required.

- What is the migration behaviour of women? Is marriage behaviour for women who stay in conflict regions different to that of women who move away? There is no information on who died and cause of death, so it would be difficult to look at the household targeted and follow up. One could possibly find information on migration in the census data.
- Does this paper tell us a new story? The Soviet Union had 25% of males missing at the time. It would be interesting to see how the Tajikistan story differs to the Soviet Union. To what extent is polygamy acceptable and would provide a 'solution' (although perhaps not desirable) to the problem?

## **Second Key Note Speech**

### **Stephan Klasen**

#### **Macro and micro issues in the conflict literature: suggestions from an outsider**

The presentation dealt with a reflection on the literature from an economic perspective; what lessons have we learnt and where to move to?

The conflict literature has been a critical addition to the development literature, and by now has, to some extent, 'matured' at least at the macro-cross-country level. The Households in Conflict Network has set an excellent example of fruitful interdisciplinary research. The critical question however is what is next? Research at the macro-level has not always dealt with proper methods; effects of interventions have often been overlooked. A huge problem within the macro-literature is that not enough differentiation has been made between different types of conflict.

#### **Generalisable lessons and Questions:**

Is there scope for combining micro and macro?

There should be more focus on the causes of conflict as the consequences have already been dealt with substantially. However, in order to fully determine its causes, special surveys are required which are often not at hand.

#### **Micro-level Questions:**

Where does conflict start?

Who organises conflict?

Micro-analyses of weapon flows

What are the welfare consequences of conflict for the household?

#### **Possibilities for new research:**

Use different parts of surveys (i.e., maternal height)

Merge classical models with conflict literature

Use micro-simulation tools to assess poverty/inequality impacts of conflict “ex ante”  
Use stylised facts to predict effects/coping mechanisms per type of household. (This type of research has been conducted a lot within a ‘stable environment’. Could we also do this within the conflict lit.?)

### **General lessons:**

Within the macro-literature there are still many problems with causality issues. In addition, we look at average effects in average countries, but we overlook the fact that conflict is more likely to break out in non-average countries. On the other hand, by only looking at the micro-level there is an emphasis on specificity but results are hardly ever generalisable. A potential solution might be to pool micro-economic datasets.

### **Policy lessons:**

- What is the impact of external intervention?
- Evaluate post-conflict reconstruction
- Use program evaluation tools, comparative studies and panel regressions

### **Mainstreaming:**

- The conflict literature stands on its own and is not yet appealing to the standard economic literature, nor is it embedded in any current debates in the economic profession.
- Look at shocks and vulnerability; conflict is a shock. In addition we should look at risk mitigation and coping strategies; distinguish between low and high risk activities that may or may not lead to poverty trap.
- Consumption smoothing versus asset smoothing; households starve themselves to death to keep their assets. What does this do to human capital? Does it lead to spatial poverty traps?
- Use existing theories and econometric methods and demonstrate how results may differ.

## **Second session: Population Displacement**

Presenters: Yvan Guichanaoua, Andrea Velasquez and Abbey Steele

### **Discussion of Yvan Guichanaoua’s presentation**

- There is a lack of acknowledging the diversity of conflicts but there is a similar reversed problem with only looking at the micro level.
- There needs to be a larger focus on the gender analysis, and look at different age groups. Also a distinction needs to be made between conflict and violent conflict.
- Mass violent conflict: we should be aware of the definition, what exactly defines ‘mass’? With respect to micro-simulation, how do you view this, do you think it is a perfectly rational phenomenon?  
Much has been done on behaviour of perpetrators versus welfare consequences of victims of conflict. But what about the other way round, so (coping) behaviour of households versus welfare consequences of combatants. Do they

use some calculus and can you affect this calculus? Should conflict be perceived as a structural break?

- What is missing in most of the (quantitative) research is a notion of history. Indeed history should be taken more into account. In order to identify causes use serious time-series data rather than cross-section or cross country variables. In fact, we should acknowledge that conflict is no structural break but rather something that evolves over time.
- Data is under-utilised, first check what kind of data already exist and then go to the country to check out its relevance in a country-specific context. This provides for the usage of datasets in a more creative way. Country-specific knowledge however is indispensable.
- The importance of the political agenda should not be understated, but we should be aware that political agenda's do change over time.
- We should be careful not to generalise, the idea that we need a typology is conceivable as for example gangs are much different from rebel groups. However, the concept of typologies can be useful but cannot be an explanation in itself as there is a problem of definition to start with: for example the Intearhamwe in Rwanda started off as a youth militia.

### **Discussion of Andrea Velasquez's presentation**

- In addition to the typology aspect, we also need to be careful with respect to the time-frame that we use. We should study the time-frame and discuss what time-frame we need to take into account as analysis and conclusions may differ.
- At the organisational level there may exist a shift of focus from ideology to materialistic incentives. Intuitively this appears at the organisational level.

### **Third session: Conceptual frameworks and PhD proposals**

Presenters: Christine Binzel and Kati Schindler

### **Discussion of Christine Binzel's presentation**

In this paper, the authors identify some of the key issues and gaps in the literature on fragility and explore a micro-economic approach of fragility, focusing on both its causes and effects. They propose a framework for analyzing the impact of conflict and fragility at the household level and discuss policy implications and directions for future research.

In the discussion following C. Binzel's presentation, it is argued that the authors should take into account the impact of household activities on the creation of institutions. The current paper only considers the effects of institutional disruptions caused by conflict or fragility on the actions of households. Actions of households also influence institutions, and that this dynamic aspect can possibly in part explain

how conflicts endure over time since some households profit considerably from a situation of conflict and fragility. The authors respond that it is very hard to trace the influence of households on the prevailing institutional setting. This is definitely a methodological challenge.

How useful is the definition of fragility proposed by the authors? While the authors want to go beyond the state-centred approach towards fragility which currently exists within the donor-community, it is argued that fragility actually is a state problem, and that there is little need for a new and broader definition.

### **Discussion of Kati Schindler's presentation**

In this paper, the authors focus on the channels through which conflict affects households. The paper identifies gaps in the current micro-level literature on conflict and provides a conceptual framework to address these gaps. Finally, the authors apply this framework to widows, an example of a conflict-affected group which typically amounts to a large population share in post-conflict societies.

The audience welcomes the focus on widows and argues that they are indeed a most vulnerable group, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. She points towards the tradition of 'sexual cleansing' of widows as an important factors in promoting HIV/AIDS.

There is a lot of literature on Indian widows, which could be useful for this paper. Would access to credit help widows rebuild their livelihoods and make them more independent from their late husband's family?

One should be careful not to automatically assume that widows are invariably worse-off. Much depends on the institutional setting. Finally, what are the implications for research design and for policy? For now the main goal is to study variations in socio-economic outcomes across widows within a particular country. At a later stage, one could proceed to compare different countries.

### **Fourth session: Agriculture, cattle and health in Central-Africa**

Presenters: S. Chandrasekhar, Florence Kondylis, Tom Bundervoet and Tilman Brück

### **Discussion of Chandrasekhar's presentation**

- You have very good reproductive data, but no conflict data, so the question is whether it is the right choice to compare cohorts. In terms of explaining the trend, there are a few possibilities: During conflict, marriage is often postponed. Also, traditional and illegal marriages often take place during conflict, which are only officially acknowledged at the end of the conflict. Also, people need assets to marry and these tend to be lacking during conflict, and there are of course fewer men available.

### **Discussion of Florence Kondylis' presentation**

- When you are looking at the loss of human capital, have you considered the distinction between general and specific human capital – i.e. that human capital might be specific to certain types of land? This was indeed considered,

but a recommendation to implement training is still useful – for example, training in the Green Revolution was effective across many different types of land.

- Do you have data on where migrants returned from, and on their welfare whilst displaced? This could be significant.
- How do you know that those resettled were involved in production before they left? There is no evidence that they were involved in production before they left. But the problem is approach more intergenerational – parents had often died without having a chance to pass skills on to the younger generation. Although it may also be that people were moved to a different type of land.

### **Discussion of Tom Bundervoet's presentation**

- The use of low yield crops could also be due to the disruption of economic life, rather than just due to increased risk. Do you compensate for this? A variable of access to markets was added to control for this.
- The sample size in the data on conflict areas was significantly smaller than the sample in non-conflict areas – the insignificant result for the conflict sample may be due to this smaller sample size. This indeed is a possible problem.
- Could you have used a multinomial logit analysis, rather than using the amounts of different crops by weight? Can you combine different crops using your method? Is there a reason that you chose not to include tea and coffee in your analysis? Multinomial choice would not be useful because everyone grows many crops – so this method would simply record everyone growing every crop. Tea and coffee were not included in the analysis as production is very localised, and many factories were destroyed in the conflict, so these are no longer major crops.

### **Discussion of Tilman Brück's presentation**

- How can you compare between war and peacetime when you do not have data from the period of war? There are certain things we can learn from the literature on what people did and did not do during the war, so we can make some comparisons between war and peacetime.
- How do you know that education makes little difference to welfare after conflict? Education has a delayed effect which may not be observable until ten years later. Also, how did the qualitative data impact on the results of the paper?

### **Fifth Session: Sarah Staveteig and Mathias Czaika**

Presenters: Mathias Czaika and Sarah Staveteig

### **Discussion of Sarah Staveteig's presentation**

How did you choose the countries?

Are there similarities among them? Are they comparable?

Bosnia is a very different case from the other countries, but these three are examples of contemporaneous genocides and I was looking for time similarities. Bosnia tends to be very different from the other two countries since it is a post democracy transition society

Did you only focus on psychological issues or also on poverty alleviation and livelihood?

The focus of the research is basically on the psychological consequences, but in the household survey the speaker will also look at the poverty implication of the loss of children.

Did you separately consider victimized and not victimized women?

Did you find different fertility rates according to the cohorts of women and the different periods considered? The differences between victimized and not victimized will be taken into account and analysed, as well as differences in behaviour in different cohorts of women.

### **Discussion of Mathias Czaika's presentation**

- Forced displacement has been used as a war strategy after 2003 (when the Marshal law was reintroduced)
- The probability of misreporting is high since the heads of the village do not report the extent to which the village has been affected
- 3.4% does not represent a forced displacement. This is an average number for all village of Aceh. Differences among districts are of course present.
- It was not possible to control for age because no data was available.

### **Sixth Session: Project Session**

General comments on the IPIS and PRIO project:

Both the IPIS and PRIO projects do a good job of following the agenda that Stephan Klasen set out at the beginning of the workshop. It would be useful to compare the PRIO material (which is data over time and intensity) with household surveys. The IPIS material will be helpful as it will allow us to compare households across villages rather than comparing households within the same village.

### **Questions for IPIS:**

- Have you tried talking to MONUC in the DRC? They may be a useful source of information. The speakers have contacts in MONUC, and are trying to get hold of their data.
- Aid is often used simply to relax budget constraints – How does this fuel conflict? We are speaking mostly about humanitarian aid, which can be

exchanged for weapons, for example, rather than development aid which is mostly earmarked and as such may not directly lead to conflict.

- Are you interested in understanding motivations at the group level or at the individual level? How do you distinguish between the two?  
The project will be looking at group level motivations, and looking at leadership.
- Will you have a gender focus in your project? For example, looking at how constructions of gender affect support for war. The project will be looking at group motivations rather than individual motivations, but if you feel that gender is still relevant, the speakers would be interested to get some advice on how to focus on this.
- You are making maps of grievances, do you realise that there are ways to objectivise this, for example making use of CRISE and International Migration Institute Work.

### **Question for MICROCON:**

What do the work packages consist of? What form is their output likely to take? Within Programme Area 2 there are 8 work packages, each one consists of 3 or 4 distinct research projects, making up 28 projects in total. The work package leaders are responsible for drawing the insights from the projects together.

### **Questions for PRIO:**

- Does your project study government – civil violence?  
Yes, this would come under the category of ‘one-sided violence’
- Will you be looking at civil-civil clashes, such as communal violence? The government can often come into the situation in these instances. Will you make such distinctions? We won’t be covering communal clashes at the moment. We are using Uppsala definitions at the moment to make sure we are using the same terminology, which unfortunately means that some things get excluded.

### **Seventh Session: Victims of violence**

Presenters: Damien de Walque and Ouarda Merrouche

#### **Discussion of Damien de Walque’s presentation**

Potential problem with the dataset; maternal mortality is not equal to crude mortality.

The paper needs more history and contextualisation so that its result - the more educated people and those people living in urban areas ran a higher chance to be killed - are placed in the overall picture.

Class and ethnicity were mixed within the Second Republic so it is difficult to disentangle these factors.

## **Discussion of Ouarda Merrouche's presentation**

The paper deals with assessing the long-term impact of war (with long-term impact being defined here as landmine contamination) on human capital (here defined as educational levels and earnings) in Cambodia.

There may have been measurement error (and thus a potential endogeneity problem) with respect to data on land mine contamination as you stated that those areas that were likely to be most heavily contaminated were not accessible to the surveyors of the Cambodia Mine Action Centre. This may lead to a biased estimate of the impact of war.

## **Workshop summary**

Short-term objectives should be:

1. A critical review of methods and datasets; It is surprising how easy it seems to be within the discipline of social sciences to get away with excuses on missing data, and questionable methods, it should be more critically examined.
2. Interdisciplinary research on gaps;
3. More research on food security and conflict.