

Measuring violence in war-torn countries: A political challenge for development, peace and security

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Abstract. This article examines the data, indicators, statistical categories and tools used to measure levels of violence in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It shows that the methodologies used remain an area of contest and can distort the results, making the situation appear worse than it actually is. It therefore calls for a reconsideration of the link between development, peace and security.

Keywords: Armed conflict, body-count, excess-mortality, development, peace, Praia Group

“Statistics don’t bleed; it is the detail which counts [1].”

Adopted in 2015 by the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals are based on indicators that include measuring levels of violence in order to promote stability and prosperity. Homicide rates and battle deaths, in particular, grab attention. Though it is clear that they alone cannot fully encapsulate the complex nature of violence, they do make it possible to identify trends. Homicide rates are thus used, for example, to assess investors’ risks, calculate insurance premiums or define crisis situations that determine the granting of refugee status, the declaration of emergency rules or the threshold which incites the international community to provide humanitarian aid.

The problem is that it is difficult to find standardised indicators that take account of the complex nature of violence. With the Sphere Project, for example, humanitarian organisations attempted to introduce ex-

cess mortality and malnutrition thresholds to assess the intensity of crises, particularly within camps housing refugees and internally displaced people.² The standard was initially set in 1997 at more than one death per day for every 10,000 inhabitants [2]. However, since 2011, it has been adjusted to match regional differences, applying a rate of 0.03 deaths in Europe, 0.15 in Latin America, 0.46 in South Asia and 1.07 in Sub-Saharan Africa, which represents a ratio of 1 to 35 between rich and developing countries.

This article starts by analysing the difficulties in measuring violence when official statistics prove to be inadequate. Based on the three main methodologies applied in such cases, we note that there is a relative academic consensus with regard to the use of excess mortality as an indicator to assess the intensity and evolution of armed conflicts in time and space. Other points of the discussion, however, continue to be highly contentious. The debate not only focuses on the reliability of the data and methodologies used, but also on the findings obtained, on the one hand, and the coding of events and

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²<https://spherestandards.org/>.

victims on the other hand. Particular attention is given to factors that may result in spatial and temporal biases found in some reports by the United Nations and the World Bank. By way of a conclusion, the article then looks at the links between development and security, a debate that remains an area of contest.

1. Difficulties in measuring violence

When comparing crime and wars in time and space, specialists generally focus on the number of deaths resulting directly from deliberate or accidental violence. Depending on the scope of their study, their statistics may therefore include homicides related to crime incidents, victims of armed conflicts and, in some cases, fatalities from road accidents. However, experts usually agree that assigning the same value to a murder or to the theft of a handbag does not really make sense. From this point of view, their methodology differs greatly from the approach taken by the designers of ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data), a project led by an NGO of the same name (Table 1).

Obviously, the accuracy and reliability of the data used are important in the “fog of war”. Under the terms of the Geneva Conventions, the belligerents are supposed to declare the number of deaths among their ranks. However, there are no such obligations with regard to civilians. Commenting on the human impact of the US military interventions in Afghanistan from 2001 and then in Iraq from 2003, which resulted in the deaths of far more civilians than those killed by Al-Qaeda, an American general thus commented that he did not keep records of the fatalities. In his own words: “we don’t do body counts” [3]. In the Sahel, on the other hand, the armies engaged in a “war on terror” have often sought to communicate figures in order to win the hearts and minds of the people. Yet their press releases simply counted the dead among their “friends” and “foes”, without making any mention of civilian victims [4].

Indeed, the release of information on body counts vary greatly from one region and one institution to the next. The United Nations, for example, identifies and names peacekeepers killed in action in order to honour their memory. However, not all international organisations follow this model. In Somalia, the African Union refuses to declare its losses so as to not demoralise its troops [5]. Likewise, the Nigerian army has secretly buried its soldiers in mass graves at the Maimalari barracks, near the town of Maiduguri, to avoid revealing

Table 1
ACLED approximations

Financed by the US Department of State, ACLED is the preferred database of development agencies, the United Nations and the World Bank for the screening of armed conflict³. Its approach focuses on providing figures for political unrest. As a result, some researchers are critical of the fact that it does not draw any distinction between lethal and non-lethal events: killings, arrests, demonstrations, movements of troops, etc. Kristine Eck, for example, points to the bias and fragility of statistics produced by a system that places the Srebrenica massacre and a sniper attack in Sarajevo on the same level [8]. In the same vein, it is noted that ACLED tends to present conflicts as “political” despite their criminal and predatory dimensions. This kind of confusion may give a false impression that the situation is worsening as the scope of the events covered is extended. Another problem is that the data used are not always published and available to be verified by independent researchers. Yet there is a need to investigate and balance the quantity and quality of press reports that are easier to access through digital and social media since 1997, when ACLED started to record conflict incidents. Nevertheless, these approximations do not prevent intergovernmental agencies from continuing to use ACLED without comparing it with the methodologies of other databases that attempt to develop standards under the aegis of an NGO called Every Casualty Counts [9]. Regarding North and West Africa, for example, all the conflict analyses of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) rely on ACLED sources alone. At no point do their researchers offer even the slightest critical reflection on the quality of the methodology and the data used. On the contrary, they undertake to measure the intensity of violence according to the number of incidents recorded, regardless of their degree of lethality, and do not compare their findings with population growth or the size of countries engaged in armed conflict, whether it be Liberia or Nigeria, the most populous country on the continent [10]. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that they go on to conclude that North and West Africa have never before experienced the levels of violence seen during the period from 2014 to 2019. In the same vein, OECD researchers argue that today’s conflicts are more fluid and complex. According to them, they kill a larger proportion of civilians, extend well beyond national borders and are less likely to be shaped by ideologies [10]. Yet such descriptions fit very well with the characteristics of the civil wars that ravaged Liberia and then Sierra Leone between 1990 and 1997, before ACLED started recording conflict incidents.

the number of men lost in the fight against Boko Haram, which is much higher than the official figures [6,7].⁴

The debate is far from over, as the reliability of statistics also depends on the methodologies applied and their sequencing, during or after the hostilities [11]. There is no truly satisfactory approach. Opinion polls,

³<https://acleddata.com/#/dashboard>.

⁴Based on unofficial sources, it is estimated that almost a thousand soldiers have been lost in combat every year since the declaration of a state of emergency in 2013, a figure worth comparing with the fifty men lost by the British troops during their victory over the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903, followed by their military conquest of Nigeria and the unification of its northern and southern territories in 1914 [12].

first of all, only deal with perceptions of insecurity and can provide very different or even contradictory results according to the way in which the questions are framed and translated into local languages. As for victimisation surveys, they risk extrapolating findings based on a single region. Moreover, they are likely to miss families whose members have all been killed, while they can be biased because of a lack of access to certain areas, like in Iraq or the Democratic Republic of Congo [11,13]. There is no “good” sample and victimisation surveys only produce a snapshot of the situation at a given time. As a result, they cannot help in monitoring the situation over time because they are not replicable under similar conditions. Finally, attempts to retrospectively reconstruct the history of violence based on the oral accounts of survivors are also limited by failures of human memory, compounded by age.

Comparing population censuses before and after a war is also not sufficient to estimate excess mortality resulting from armed conflicts. Indeed, the computation relies on subtractions based on the expected number of inhabitants in “normal” times. Such an approach does not take into account the departure of refugees who are not killed but who, once in exile, are no longer counted as national citizens. In the same vein, the ex-post analysis of censuses does not distinguish between the excess mortality resulting directly from violence or from a greater vulnerability to disease due to government corruption and the collapse of public health services.

Judicial investigations are ultimately far more precise as they identify the victims by name thanks to witnesses or forensic medicine when corpses are found in mass graves. However, they are usually performed years after the end of the hostilities, for example within the scope of truth and reconciliation commissions. They therefore do not allow for the continuous monitoring of conflicts with a view to alerting decision-makers and the international community to any sudden deteriorations in the situation. They are also sometimes dependent on political arrangements in favour of the victor.

All in all, the so-called “passive surveillance” systems are the best to monitor armed conflicts, yet with limits. Often relying on open sources, in particular media and human rights organisations reports, they can provide data for early warnings and compensate for the failings of the authorities in unstable environments where there are no official statistics on excess mortality (see Table 2). The challenge for the scientific community is to sustain independent databases on the long run. Such endeavours require both time and money. Hence they are incompatible with the funding of short-term

Table 2

NigeriaWatch, a passive surveillance system under duress

Designed to address the lack of reliable data in Africa’s most populous country, NigeriaWatch is a project based at the University of Ibadan.⁵ It has been running since 2006 and it provides a mechanism for scientific analysis and decision-making in high-risk environments. It helps to identify trends and manage uncertainty by cross-checking available information on lethal incidents in a country that does not have police statistics. The indicators rely on the quantification, qualification and location of homicides and accidental deaths. Continuously updated and available, the database is constantly improving as it gathers information from open sources: 38,000 lethal incidents and over 180,000 deaths were recorded over 16 years, between 2006 and 2022.

However, like the other member organisations of the Every Casualty Worldwide network of body-count practitioners, the NigeriaWatch project faces many challenges. To reconcile contradictory data, first, the system must calculate averages of the numbers of deaths. In case of doubt, it also mentions multiple causes and perpetrators of violence. The main difficulty actually lies in coding the incidents, the status of victims and the reasons behind violence. War, terror attack, riot, community disputes, political assassination, highway banditry: the selection is broad. The NigeriaWatch team obviously does not have the means to conduct police and judicial investigations to apportion responsibility and identify perpetrators. Unlike the ACLED project, it is therefore not intended to just cover incidents deemed to be “political”. In the same vein, it does not classify the dead (who, in many cases, are anonymous) as “civilians” or “combatants” unless press reporters were able to check if they carried weapons at the time of their death. There are many controversies on such issues, as can be seen in the contradictory declarations by the French army and the UN about the victims of a bombing of the village of Bounti in central Mali on 3 January 2021.

Finally, NigeriaWatch is not immune to political manipulations that were experienced by other members of the Every Casualty Worldwide network in Iraq or Peru. Its data have thus been used and extrapolated by Protestant NGOs to promote the idea that a genocide of Christians is taking place in the Muslim-dominated north of Nigeria, an assumption that has been challenged by academics [14,15].

research programmes. Finally, their reliability is still dependent on the quality of the data collected, their geographic coverage and the possibility of cross-checking several conflicting sources. The media often prefer to report high-profile attacks because of their potential audience, while ignoring the story of victims who subsequently succumb to their injuries.

2. The terms of the debate

Yet the academic debates are not limited to issues related to the reliability of the data or the method-

⁵<http://www.nigeriawatch.org/>.

ologies used. They also focus on the interpretation of the findings. Some researchers, for instance, observe a sustained decrease in homicide rates and the lethality of conflicts classified as wars [16–19]. But others reject quantitative approaches to assess global changes in violence. In France, Bertrand Badie thus laments the “short-sightedness” of optimists who proclaim that “war is in decline, when in fact it is becoming multi-faceted, moving away from traditional battlefields” [20]. If it does not venture into collapse theories, this position relies on the idea that, with the emergence of China and developing countries, global disorder became increasingly elusive and less quantifiable since the end of Cold War.

To a very large extent, the academic debate in fact questions the ability of social scientists and security analysts to measure violence in time and space. Many researchers adopted a Europe-centric approach in this regard. Ignoring the specificities of developing countries, they modelled their work on the First World War, a conflict that opposed regular armies and uniformed soldiers of nation states.

Yet the reference to the battles that took place between 1914 and 1918 is an area of contest when it comes to understanding contemporary civil war. Indeed, the First World War was unprecedented in view of the proportion of military victims, compared to civilians, and the fact that soldiers were killed in action rather than succumbing to disease or starvation as was the case before the advances in medicine and transport during the 19th century. In the same vein, the First World War was exceptional because of its scale, even if a few other armed conflicts recorded higher levels of excess mortality. Proportionally speaking, for instance, its human impact was lower than the five million deaths documented by historians during the revolutionary wars that ravaged Europe between 1792 and 1815 [21]. Likewise, the Taiping Rebellion killed between twenty and thirty million people in China between 1851 and 1864.

Historical references to the baseline of one conflict or another can actually disrupt the analysis and monitoring of violence between different countries and time periods. In the wake of the Cold War, for example, many researchers expected to see a pacification of the world as the tensions between the American and Soviet superpowers diminished. Some of them consequently exaggerated the severity of armed conflicts that started after 1990 and that challenged their understanding of violence as proxy wars between the East and the West.

An American political scientist, Mary Kaldor, and a British economist, Paul Collier, thus framed the con-

cept of “new wars” that fit well with the perceptions of disorder following the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in New York in 2001 [22,23]. According to them, modern conflicts were more violent and were mainly fought by criminal groups to loot civilians. Belligerents no longer pursued the geopolitical and ideological objectives of the past to capture territories, defend the free world or start a socialist revolution. Contemporary criminal gangs rather aimed at extorting money, plundering resources and holding the population to ransom.

However, predation by government forces or insurgent groups is an old feature of armed conflicts. “New war” theorists have therefore been criticised because of their historic myopia and their inability to use anthropology tools to make sense of confrontations with highly complex rationales [24–27]. Yet Mary Kaldor persisted [28]. Bolstered by her international audience, she continued to defend her theory on the basis of four elements that made a significant contribution to shaping current views of insurgencies in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa.

To start with, Mary Kaldor insisted on the privatisation, the decentralisation and, ultimately, the fragmentation of armed groups in a context where there were less and less inter-state wars. She also highlighted the importance of the identity-based motivations of insurgents with ethnic and/or religious agendas. Thirdly, she noted, the removal of the financial support of states to guerrillas during the Cold War was not compensated by migrants’ remittances. Therefore, she argued, insurgent groups were more likely to live off the proceeds of trafficking, looting and various criminal activities, not to mention the diversion of international aid. Finally, Mary Kaldor concluded, violence against civilians increased to create an atmosphere of fear, to forcefully recruit combatants and to raise funds through racketeering or kidnapping [28].

All these elements, however, could be found in the past, regardless of the development of international aid and diasporas. “Old” wars were certainly not less deadly for civilians, an observation that applies to current terrorism. In the Sahel, for example, jihadi groups were not the first to carry out indiscriminate attacks against civilians. Moreover, the defence forces of countries such as Nigeria and Cameroon were also known for their brutality, their extra-judicial executions and, sometimes, their massacres [29].

Undoubtedly, the terror attacks carried out in 1970s Europe were more targeted. However, they did not avoid collateral damages. Generally speaking, there have been many massacres of civilians throughout the history

of humanity. From the use of swords to sophisticated weapons, it is therefore advisable to go beyond technical issues rather than jump to hasty conclusions regarding, for instance, the allegedly innovative nature of suicide attacks, a phenomenon that is not specific to jihadi groups, Muslim people, or Africans and Arabs. One need only consider the case of this watchmaker from the town of Senlis who blew himself up in the middle of a crowd at the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, not to mention the anarchists of the late 19th century [30].

3. The reasons behind the perceived increase

The tendency to embellish the past and dramatize the danger of the modern world has, to a very large extent, been brought about by geographical biases and short memory effects. Recent traumas are often more easy to remember, particularly for the generation of those who experienced them. Conversely, it is sometimes more convenient to forget unpleasant and shameful events, a form of historical amnesia, or even denial in the case of the Turkish government with regard to the genocide of Armenians. It all depends on memorial policies. The victims of the Holocaust, for example, were killed out of sight. It was therefore crucial to count them in order to dispel any doubt as to the reality and scale of the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis. By contrast, there was no need for the French to count the victims of the First World War to convince of the cruelty of the fighting and to keep alive the memories of soldiers killed in action and identified on monuments in each village. Although a few pacifists questioned the legitimacy of the use of weapons, the human toll of the hostilities was not disputed. The authorities simply produced a report that was largely intended to organise the payment of compensation to the families of men killed on the front line. No scientist independently attempted to verify the figures provided by the French army, which may have been underestimated and which, in any event, did not include civilian casualties [31].

The propensity to emphasize an increase rather than a decrease in violence also follows bureaucratic rationales. In a world that is generally less ravaged by wars, military and humanitarian organisations may indeed have an interest in broadening their mandate and their intervention criteria in order to justify the continuation of their operations, even if this does artificially fuel the feeling of a worsening of the situation. The cases of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees) and the ICRC (the International Committee of the Red Cross) testify to this. Although fewer refugees were recorded in the late 1990s, the former extended its protection to cover internally displaced people who had not crossed international borders, thereby contributing to the illusion of an increase in the migratory consequences of armed conflicts [32]. As for the ICRC, one of its delegates suggested a dramatic increase in the number of political detainees after starting to report on all detainees visited in jail, including those held under common law [33].

The broadening of protection mandates and the increase in the number of victims' categories thus contributed to inflate the statistics of the impact of wars and insurgencies. The inclusion of deaths that did not result directly from violence also played a role, especially when it comes to diseases and epidemics. For example, the Spanish flu virus, which was spread by soldiers at the end of the First World War, killed more people than the fighting between 1914 and 1918. In Egypt during the Second World War, again, some 50,000 to 70,000 people were killed in fighting against the Germans in Libya in 1942, while 100,000 to 200,000 civilians died of malaria, a situation exacerbated by the medical restrictions of martial law [34].

Obviously, the inclusion of these deaths into the body-count of wars victims pushed the trends upwards. Mathematically speaking, the feeling of an increase in violence has also gone hand-in-hand with demographic growth and improved reporting of human rights violations. Global digitalisation in particular has allowed for the faster processing of data about the victims of armed conflicts. As a result, economist Paul Collier maintained that today's wars last longer and are therefore more deadly [36]. However, his conclusions were based largely on the fact that he did not have data on the number of fatalities of older conflicts; he thus completely ignored the initial phases of the civil war in Sudan in the 1960s [37].

In a global world, many factors have in fact contributed to the perception that the impact of armed conflicts is worsening. With the development of transport and social media, the acceleration of information flows and the proliferation of humanitarian organisations, the number of institutions likely to "capture" and record violent incidents has indeed increased. The number of NGOs, for example, has been on the rise since the 1980s.⁶ As a result, more and more humanitarian work-

⁶As for the number of intergovernmental organisations, it increased from 123 in 1951 to 7,710 fifty years later [35].

ers were deployed in crisis areas, even though there were fewer and fewer wars and famines; such a trend thus confirmed that the provision of international relief, in particular food aid, is primarily determined by supply rather than by demand [38].

At the same time, the development of a universal right to humanitarian intervention has contributed to raising public awareness and making the suffering of “foreigners” more visible. Changes in international relations have also played a role here. At the end of the Cold War, the easing of tensions between the permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council have indeed allowed the vote of more peace keeping operations, thus giving the impression of an increase in the number of conflicts around the world, particularly in Africa.

4. The case of the United Nations and the World Bank

Through the issue of armed conflict, and not just crime, the perception that violence is on the increase is actually shared by many academics and experts, especially in intergovernmental organisations. On the global scale, however, quantitative researchers have shown that the trend is moving downwards [39,40]. Such conclusions lead to rethinking the terms of a debate that often focuses on the reasons for instability in developing countries, rather than on the difficulties in measuring violence. A joint report by the United Nations and the World Bank, a first in the history of the two largest intergovernmental organisations in the world, illustrates this discussion at a time where wars were concentrated in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria [35].

Focusing on the prevention of conflict, it argued that, since 2010, armed violence had been on the increase following a decline at the end of the Cold War. The report claimed that, since 2005, the number of people killed in military operations or terrorist attacks increased tenfold in a decade [41]. According to the United Nations and the World Bank, 2016 was a record year in terms of the number of countries at war: more than at any other time in the last thirty years. Last but not least, the report alleged that violence disproportionately impacted the poorest regions of the world. Developed liberal democracies reportedly remained relatively unaffected, although the United States was the country most often at war if we look at the frequency of its military interventions abroad during the 20th century.

Yet the figures cited in the report did not always back up the findings of the United Nations and the World

Bank. Indeed, they clearly showed that armed conflicts did not peak in the 2010s, but in the 1990s, at the end of the Cold War. Moreover, the United Nations and World Bank experts did not attempt to discuss the heterogeneity, the reliability and the limitations of their statistics and their indicators. Their report rather summarised all the challenges of a quantitative understanding of armed conflicts, especially regarding the units of account, the categories of victims and the various definitions of violence.

Firstly, one can question the relevance of a methodology that consists of listing conflicts with levels of lethality that are not comparable, as if it would make sense to put the millions killed during the Second World War on a par with the few victims of a failed attempt at secession in the island of Anjouan in the Comoros in 1997. In order to calculate an upward trend, the enumeration of countries affected by violence is not meaningful either. Indeed, there are four times as many states now as there were in 1945, before decolonisation. The number of countries at war thus does not tell us much about trends, unless we balance it with the density and the demographic growth of their population.

The different classifications and categories of victims in international humanitarian law also need to be considered. In their report, the United Nations and the World Bank base their demonstration on the increase in the number of combatants killed in action, the so-called “battle deaths”. Historically, however, civilians were usually more affected by conflicts. Focusing only on categories of victims that are easier to identify may thus distort the analysis. Indeed, the Geneva Conventions only require warring parties to publish information on the deaths of the military, not the civilians. In addition, survivors sometimes prefer to declare missing persons as combatants rather than civilians to get pension payments, for instance in Bosnia [42].

To identify trends, researchers actually need to agree upon indicators and categories that enable comparisons and stand the test of time in very different social, cultural, political and economic settings. Along the same lines, rates should not be confused with absolute values. Indeed, an increase in the number of homicides or battle deaths may simply follow demographic growth.

5. Development and security: A disputed link

Studying the evolution of war and crime in time and space is certainly not easy. There are two options: either we consider all the figures to be wrong, a position that

refrains from talking about an increase or a decrease in violence around the world, or we concede that quantitative methodologies have their limitations, yet are robust enough to draw some conclusions. Following the second option takes us away from academic disputes around the assessment of excess mortality resulting from armed conflicts. Indeed, it raises other issues regarding the interpretation of trends and the reasons for an increase or a decrease of war or crime around the world.

According to Andrew Mack and his colleagues, for instance, the human impact of armed conflicts went downward because of the multiplication of peace keeping operations and humanitarian interventions after the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War [16]. In the long run, improved access to healthcare, technological progress, developments in transport, increases in agricultural production and the improvement of international aid also contributed to reduce the death toll of armed conflicts as big famines disappeared since the two world wars and decolonisation [43]. Steven Pinker went even further. According to him, the reduction in the lethality of armed conflicts testified to the success of democratic and liberal models [17].

The debate thus touches upon the issue of development. The idea that there cannot be development without security and, conversely, security without development is firmly rooted in Western democracies that are used to make war overseas, but not on their own territory. Such a point of view is also shared in neoliberal circles that see economic growth as a source of prosperity and peace rather than competition and social inequality. This is particularly true of some conservative economists who focus their analysis on development factors in the belief that poverty has no causes, since deprivation is the natural state of man [44].

Researchers who pay attention to social inequalities obviously have a different opinion. Following the well-known frustration-aggression hypothesis [45], they assume that the frustrations brought about by inequalities ultimately lead to collective revolts or individual attacks. In developed countries, epidemiologists have thus shown that unequal societies generally experience higher homicide rates [46]. Conversely, the frustration-aggression hypothesis can also explain why there are less armed conflicts in a global world where emerging countries currently catch up with rich countries and reduce development gaps.

The link between frustration and violence is certainly not unequivocal and, in his famous essay, Ted Gurr asked why people do not rebel more often in situa-

tions of extreme poverty [47]. Clearly, there are other factors at play which call into question the relationship between development and security. Indeed, the issue of poverty should not obscure the fact that the United States, the former USSR, the United Kingdom and France were the countries most often at war in the 20th century. Moreover, contrary to the assumptions of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, feelings of injustice do not necessarily fuel tensions that trigger “class warfare”. Dissatisfaction in particular is a fairly variable notion depending on the context, and sociologists have been unable to find any systematic correlation with levels of violence [48]. Nigeria is a good example, if ever well-being can be measured. Considered to be one of the most violent countries in Africa, it is home to a population that, according to surveys conducted by Gallup in 2015, shows a degree of optimism unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

Taking this even further, we can question the link between insecurity, development and peace. Indeed, wars can revive economic growth, promote full employment and raise the salaries of workers as a result of them being fewer in number due to the significant losses suffered during hostilities. In some cases, armed conflicts also reduce social inequalities by levelling down people’s incomes, by overthrowing old regimes, by disrupting traditional hierarchies, by mobilising the masses and by killing rich and poor alike [49]. The debate around the link between security and development is far from over in this regard. But one thing is for sure: the question is far bigger than the academic disputes surrounding the methods used to measure changes in levels of violence.

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